



A STUDY OF PRESENT STATUS OF BEEDI INDUSTRY AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO EMPLOYMENT OF BEEDI WORKERS

WEST BENGAL



TRINIKETAN FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPMENT NEW DELHI



**Study conducted by
TRINIKETAN FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPMENT
NEW DELHI**

OUR RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS

Dr. Anila Nair
Ms. Karthika Pillai
Dr. MM Rehman

RESEARCH ASSISTANCE

Paul George
Dular Bar, Ex. M.L.A.
Samsul Alam
Regina Begum
Prasenjit Roy
M. Roy
Shafique Mallick

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge our heartfelt gratitude to Mr. S.S. Sable, President, All India Bidi Industry Federation, Mr. Arjun Khanna, Mr. Umesh Parekh, Ms. Nita Khanna and Mr. C.S. Rampriyadas for sponsoring the study.

Their comments suggestions and continuous guidance have enriched the study

Table of Contents

List of Tables	4
List of Boxes	6
List of Figures	7
PREFACE	7
Chapter One	10
LANDSCAPE OF BEEDI INDUSTRY: AN OVERVIEW	10
1.1. INTRODUCTION	10
1.2. SIZE OF THE BEEDI INDUSTRY	11
1.3. BEEDI INDUSTRY AND EXCISE DUTY	12
1.4 BEEDI PRODUCTION IN INDIA	12
1.5 REVENUE FROM BEEDI INDUSTRY	13
1.6 GROWTH OF EMPLOYMENT IN BEEDI INDUSTRY	13
1.7 FIGURES OF BEEDI WORKERS AS PER DIFFERENCE CENSUSES	14
1.8 BEEDI INDUSTRY: EMPLOYMENT PROFILE	15
1.9 EMPLOYMENT PATTERN IN BEEDI INDUSTRY	16
1.10 STATE-WISE MAGNITUDE OF BEEDI WORKERS	17
1.11 DISTRIBUTION OF BEEDI WORKERS BY GENDER	18
1.12 MAGNITUDE OF BEEDI WORKERS AS PER PERIODIC LABOUR FORCE SURVEY BY NATIONAL STATISTICAL OFFICE (NSO)	20
1.13 DISTRIBUTION OF BEEDI WORKERS BY USUAL LOCATION OF WORKPLACE	20
1.14 DISTRIBUTION OF BEEDI WORKERS BY CASTE GROUPS	21
1.15 EDUCATION LEVEL OF BEEDI WORKERS	22
1.16 DISTRIBUTION OF BEEDI WORKERS BY TYPE OF SECTOR	23
1.17 NUMBER OF BEEDI WORKERS ACCORDING TO PLFS 2022-23	24
1.18 LEVELS OF SKILLS OF THE BEEDI WORKERS: 2018-19	24
1.19 TENDU LEAVES	25
1.20 BEEDI TOBACCO	26
Notes	27
Chapter Two	28
SOCIAL SECURITY AND WELFARE MEASURES FOR BEEDI WORKERS	28
2.1 INTRODUCTION	28
2.2 THE WELFARE FUND ACT, 1976	28
2.3 HEALTH ASSISTANCE	29
2.4 HOUSING SCHEME	30
2.5 EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE	31
2.6 DISPENSARIES FOR TREATMENT OF BEEDI WORKERS	33
2.7 PROVIDENT FUND SCHEME	33
2.8 MINIMUM WAGE	35

Chapter Three	37
LANDSCAPE OF BEEDI INDUSTRY: WEST BENGAL	37
3.1 INTRODUCTION	37
3.2 LANDSCAPE OF BEEDI WORKERS IN WEST BENGAL	38
3.3 DISPENSARY-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF BEEDI WORKERS IN WEST BENGAL	38
3.4 BEEDI ESTABLISHMENT IN WEST BENGAL	39
3.4 MAJOR BEEDI BRANDS	41
Chapter Four	43
SOCIAL SECURITY AND WELFARE MEASURES FOR BEEDI WORKERS IN WEST BENGAL	43
4.1 HEALTH ASSISTANCE	43
4.2 NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES OF HEALTH SCHEME	44
4.3 NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE	45
4.4 HOUSING SCHEME	45
4.5 GAPS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF HOUSING SCHEME	46
4.6 EMPLOYEES PROVIDENT FUND (EPF)	46
Chapter Five	47
SURVEY RESULTS: WEST BENGAL	47
5.1 INTRODUCTION	47
5.2 GENDER PROFILE AND EDUCATION OF RESPONDENTS	47
5.3 AGE PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS BEEDI WORKERS	48
5.4 EDUCATION LEVELS OF THE RESPONDENTS AND THE CHILDREN	49
5.5 COMPARISON BETWEEN THE EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF THE CHILDREN AND THE BEEDI WORKERS	52
5.6 BEEDI ROLLING AS A GENERATIONAL OCCUPATION	53
5.7 EXPERIENCE LEVEL IN BEEDI ROLLING	55
5.8 WORKING HOURS	55
5.9 NUMBER OF BEEDI ROLLED PER DAY	56
5.10 MONTHLY INCOME FROM BEEDI MAKING	57
5.11 IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYMENT	58
5.12 WORK QUANTUM	58
5.13 WORK OPPORTUNITY	59
5.14 GETTING MORE OR LESS WORK	60
5.15 TOTAL FAMILY INCOME PER MONTH	61
5.16 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EARNINGS FROM BEEDI WORK TO THE TOTAL INCOME OF THE FAMILY PER MONTH	61
5.17 SAVING PROFILE	62
5.18 POSSESSION OF CULTIVABLE LAND	63
5.19 HOUSE OWNERSHIP	63
5.20 AVERAGE DAILY EARNING OF THE RESPONDENT	64
5.21 MAJOR ITEMS ON WHICH INCOME FROM BEEDI WAS SPENT	64
5.22 OTHER JOB THAN BEEDI ROLLING	65
5.23 POSSESSION OF IDENTITY CARD	66
5.24 ASSISTANCE FROM WELFARE FUND	67

5.25 PROVIDENT FUND	67
5.26 WHETHER TOOK ANY LOAN FROM THE FUND	68
5.27 MEDICAL BENEFITS FROM LABOUR WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS	68
5.28 HEALTH SERVICES PROVIDING AGENCIES	69
5.29 MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS	69
Chapter Six	72
CASE STUDIES	72
"Dr. Eshak Ali: From Beedi District to Healing Hands - A Tale of Dedication and Service"	72
"Regina Bibi: Beedi to Brilliance - Empowering Lives Through Education and Activism"	73
"The Empowering Journey of Rina Bibi: Beedi Rolling to Education and Pride"	74
Marium's Beedi-rolled Dreams: A Lifeline for her Family.	74
"Rolling Beedis, Keeping Hope Alive: Neena's Tale of Resilience and Survival"	75
Chapter Seven	76
Conclusion	76
7.1 STUDY RESULTS	76
7.2 POSITIVE TRENDS	77
7.3 AREAS OF CONCERN	77
7.4 OUR SUGGESTIONS	78
References & Bibliography	80

List of Tables

	CHAPTER-I
1.1	Growth of Beedi Workers as per Ministry of Labour & Employment Data
1.2	Growth of Beedi Workers as per different census
1.3	Difference between Registered and Unregistered Beedi Companies
1.4	State/UT-wise details of registered Beedi Workers
1.5	Concentration of female Beedi workers by States & Region: 2021.
1.6	Percentage Distribution of Beedi Workers by Employment Status: 2018-19
1.7	Distribution of Beedi Workers by usual Location of Workplace: 2018-19
1.8	Distribution of Beedi Workers by Educational Level, 2018-19
1.9	Distribution of Beedi Workers (in thousand) by Type of Sector and Worker, 2018-19
1.10	Beedi Manufacturing, PLFS 2022-23, Usual Principal and Subsidiary Status Combined (UPSS), Census Adjusted
	CHAPTER-II
2.1	List of Schemes
2.2	Health Schemes for Beedi Workers
2.3	Expenditure on Housing (Labour Welfare Scheme)
2.4	Financial Assistance for children of Beedi Workers
2.5	Expenditure on Scholarship (Labour Welfare Scheme)
2.6	Expenditure on Health (Labour Welfare Scheme)
2.7	Provident Fund Scheme for Beedi Workers: 2017
	CHAPTER-III
3.1	Year-wise figures of patients treated in Kolkata Region
3.2	Details of Identity Cards issued to Beedi and Cine Workers under LWO, Kolkata Region (unit wise)
3.3	Beedi establishment in West Bengal
	CHAPTER-IV
4.1	List of Dispensaries in West Bengal

4.2	Year-wise figures of patients treated in Kolkata Region
4.3	Beneficiaries under the Scholarship, Kolkata Region
4.4	Beneficiaries under the Revised Integrated Housing Scheme (RIHS), Kolkata Region
	CHAPTER- V
5.1	Gender wise distribution of respondents
5.2	Distribution of respondents by age
5.3	Educational wise distribution of respondents
5.4	Education levels of the children of the respondents households
5.5	Sources of funding for the education of the respondents' households
5.6	Occupational profile of earning children
5.7	Past engagement of family members in beedi making
5.8	Distribution of respondents by years of experience in beedi rolling
5.9	Number of working hours per day
5.10	Number of beedi rolled per day
5.11	Earnings from beedis per month
5.12	Importance of beedi in respondents families
5.13	Distribution of respondents whether they are getting sufficient work from employers
5.14	Distribution of respondents who stated that their employers were providing them with sufficient work opportunities
5.15	Getting more/ less work through beedi rolling
5.16	Total income per month earned by the family
5.17	Respondents savings through beedi rolling
5.18	Whether respondents possessed agricultural land
5.19	Distribution of respondents by type of accommodation
5.20	Distribution of the respondents by their earnings per day
5.21	Major expenditure head on which beedi income is spent
5.22	Distribution of respondents by any other job other than beedi rolling
5.23	Distribution of respondents having beedi workers id card
5.24	Distribution of respondents receiving assistance
5.25	Respondents contributed to provident fund
5.26	Whether took any loan from the fund (pf)
5.27	Whether respondents get any medical benefits in the area
5.28	Health services providing agency

List of Boxes

- 1.1 The Estimated number of Beedi Workers
- 1.2 Beedi Industry Landscape: An Overview

List of Figures

- 1.1 Percentage of Distribution of Beedi Workers by Caste Group, 2018-19
- 1.2 Percentage of Distribution of Beedi Workers by Level of Skills, 2018-19
- 3.1 Major Beedi Brands

PREFACE

The journey of the beedi industry has been remarkable. Since the introduction of tobacco cultivation in India by Portuguese merchants, tobacco has been consumed in various forms. In earlier times, the 'hookah' (hubble-bubble) was the primary means of tobacco consumption. Today, one of the most common forms is the tendu leaf-rolled beedi, a practice that is now over a century old. This industry provides employment and livelihood opportunities to some of the most economically vulnerable sections of society, with women making up an overwhelming majority of the workforce.

Since its introduction, the beedi industry has grown significantly, as evidenced by the increasing number of beedi workers over the decades. For instance, the total number of beedi workers was nine lakhs according to the 1961 Census. Today, the total number of registered beedi workers is about fifty lakhs, according to a report by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India. The overwhelming majority of these workers are beedi rollers, most of whom are women. The rest of the workforce includes checkers, labelers, furnace workers, contractors, and loaders/unloaders.

In addition, there are the beedi tobacco farmers, tobacco curers, traders, and those involved in tendu leaf plucking, whose numbers run into several millions across the country. As a result, a significant number of workers in the country are engaged in the beedi industry, both directly and indirectly.

Beedi workers are found in as many as 200 districts across various states. The overwhelming majority (87.01 percent) of these workers are concentrated in seven states: West Bengal (36.71 percent), Tamil Nadu (12.10 percent), Andhra Pradesh/Telangana (9.19 percent), Madhya Pradesh (8.84 percent), Uttar Pradesh (8.28 percent), Bihar (5.96 percent), and Karnataka (5.91 percent).

The present study was undertaken to examine various aspects of the beedi industry in West Bengal. The findings clearly indicate that, despite many challenges, employment in the industry remains robust and continues to grow. The beedi industry is a significant provider of livelihood opportunities to some of the most vulnerable sections of the labor force in the state. The study highlights the importance of preserving and protecting the industry until alternative employment sources emerge. Most importantly, it emphasizes the need to examine the impact of high GST on the structure of these industries and its broader implications.

The study has been divided into seven chapters.

In **Chapter One**, an attempt has been made to provide an overview of the landscape of the Beedi Industry in India.

Chapter Two reviews different social security schemes under the Beedi Workers Welfare Act, 1976.

Chapter Three presents an overview of the Beedi industry in West Bengal.

Chapter Four discusses the social security measures for Beedi Workers in West Bengal.

Chapter Five presents the brief survey results of Beedi workers in West Bengal.

Chapter Six presents case studies of some beedi workers and their wards.

Chapter Seven makes some concluding remarks for the promotion and protection of the Beedi industry.

Chapter One

LANDSCAPE OF BEEDI INDUSTRY: AN OVERVIEW

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The most essential need for survival is the availability of employment. As the population began to grow after the 1800s, particularly in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, the demand for employment for the increasing labor force also grew. However, employment opportunities often could not keep pace with the growing demand, a challenge experienced by many countries worldwide. To address this problem, many nations initiated economic plans. India's First Five-Year Plan clearly defined its goal as 'to initiate a process of development which will raise living standards and open out to the people new opportunities for a richer and more varied life. The problem of developing an under-developed economy is one of utilizing more effectively the potential resources available to the community, and it is this which involves economic planning.' (First Five-Year Plan, Planning Commission, New Delhi).

The main effort of the Government of India and other stakeholders has been to enhance living standards by generating large-scale employment through the development of all economic sectors—the primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors—either simultaneously or successively.

In India, agriculture has historically been the most important means of livelihood. As a result, the growing labor force primarily found opportunities to eke out a living through agriculture and allied activities.

However, change began to occur after the Industrial Revolution. New types of industries emerged in the country, including tea plantations, the jute industry, the cotton industry, and the tobacco industry (including the beedi industry). These industries provided substantial employment opportunities for a growing portion of the labor force.

As tobacco consumption in the form of 'beedi' (also called the country cigarette) became popular, beedi-making evolved into a significant economic activity for an increasing number of workers in both urban and rural areas.

1.2. SIZE OF THE BEEDI INDUSTRY

Initially, beedi-making took place in factory premises, but over time, it gradually became a home-based activity. This shift provided women with a sustainable opportunity to earn their livelihood.

Before Independence, the beedi industry employed several lakh workers, most of whom were men. However, the employment landscape has since changed, with women now dominating the beedi rolling segment, accounting for more than 75% of the total beedi rollers in the country. Although the beedi sector is part of the large unorganized employment sector, it provides perennial employment opportunities to some of the most vulnerable groups in the country. After agriculture, this industry is a crucial means of survival for the most disadvantaged and has been recognized as such by successive governments.

Box 1.1 **The Estimated Number of Beedi Workers**

"The Census 1981 placed the estimated number of Beedi Workers at 15.62 Lakhs of whom about 67% were rural based. This appears to be an underestimation as the exact numbers of beedi workers are difficult to ascertain due to problems pertaining to their identification (emphasis in ours). Many home-based workers, mostly women and children do not get counted. However, as per the returns received from various state governments, the Ministry of Labour placed the number of beedi workers at 37.31 lakhs in 1991. The largest concentration of Beedi workers were found in Madhya Pradesh (16%) followed by West Bengal (12%), Uttar Pradesh (12%), Bihar (10%) and Karnataka (9.5%). These five states account for more than 60% percent of the beedi workers in the Country" P.86

Source: Government of India (1991) Report of the National Commission on Rural Labour Volume. I, New Delhi, Ministry of Labour

1.3. BEEDI INDUSTRY AND EXCISE DUTY

The beedi industry provides substantial revenue to the government in the form of excise duty. Prior to the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2017, a beedi workers' welfare cess was levied on 1,000 beedis, with the proceeds used for the welfare of beedi workers. However, after the introduction of GST in 2017, the collection of this cess was discontinued, and revenues are now collected through GST and other excise duties. The details of these taxes are as follows:

1. **GST (Goods and Services Tax):** Currently 28%
2. **NCCD (National Calamity Contingency Duty):** Currently Rs. 100 per 1,000 handmade beedis
3. **Central Excise Duty:** 5 paise per 1,000 sticks for handmade beedis

"One of the purposes of imposing a high rate of tax on tobacco is to discourage its consumption in the country. The World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control stipulates that tobacco consumption should be reduced. Additionally, the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply, and Distribution) Act of 2003 imposes various restrictions on tobacco consumption. This act was passed on May 8, 2003, and the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control was adopted shortly after, on May 21, 2003.

These measures have led to a reduction in tobacco consumption to some extent. However, given that the beedi and broader tobacco industries provide employment to a significant number of people in the country, it is essential to strike a balance between addressing the negative health effects of tobacco and the substantial challenge of reskilling millions of beedi workers.

1.4 BEEDI PRODUCTION IN INDIA

Estimating production in an industry as dispersed and underdeveloped as this one poses significant challenges. However, the following estimates are considered representative. Every year, a vast number of beedi sticks are produced in India. The industry produces between 750 billion and 1.2 trillion beedi sticks annually (Nandi, A. Ashok, Guindon G.E., et al., 2013). These numbers have changed significantly since then, with a growing shift towards the unorganized sector.

It was also estimated that there are several hundred large beedi-producing establishments in the country, each producing more than two million branded beedis per year (Arora et al., 2020). Additionally, thousands of unregistered beedi-making establishments are located across various states, and their numbers are growing rapidly.

1.5 REVENUE FROM BEEDI INDUSTRY

Revenue generated by the beedi industry shows significant variance, as demonstrated by the sources below:

- In 2018-19, the total revenue from beedi sticks was INR 54.5 billion per annum. It is also reported that 'Beedi consumption is estimated at 400 billion sticks per annum, including 275 billion duty-paid sticks and 125 billion duty-exempt sticks' (Goodchild, 2020).
- As of February 20, 2023, 'The Indian Beedi Industry is a significant contributor to the country's economy, generating over Rs. 80,000 crores in revenue and providing employment to millions of people.'

It is clear that this industry makes a substantial tangible contribution to the national exchequer while also offering intangible benefits to the lives of millions.

1.6 GROWTH OF EMPLOYMENT IN BEEDI INDUSTRY

The figures in Table 1.1 show that in 1991, the number of beedi workers was over 3.7 million, increasing to 4.9 million by 2023 (see also Box 1.1).

However, Table 1.1 also reveals that between 2010 and 2023, the number of beedi workers has remained almost constant, indicating that the industry is not experiencing growth.

Table 1.1
Growth of Beedi Workers as per Ministry of Labour & Employment Data

Sl. No.	Year	Number of Beedi Workers	Increase over the years
1.	1991***	37,31,000	-
2.	1997****	43,63,520	6,32,520
3.	2000****	44,11,275	47,755
4.	2009****	48,69,417	4,58,142
5.	2010****	49,90,068	1,20,651
6.	2023****	49,82,294	-7,774

Source: ****Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India

1.7 FIGURES OF BEEDI WORKERS AS PER DIFFERENCE CENSUSES

The figures in table 1.2 show that over the decades, the number of beedi workers has steadily increased, providing employment to many households within marginalized groups. To protect and promote the welfare of these workers, the government has enacted two key pieces of legislation: the Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966, and the Welfare Fund Act, 1976.

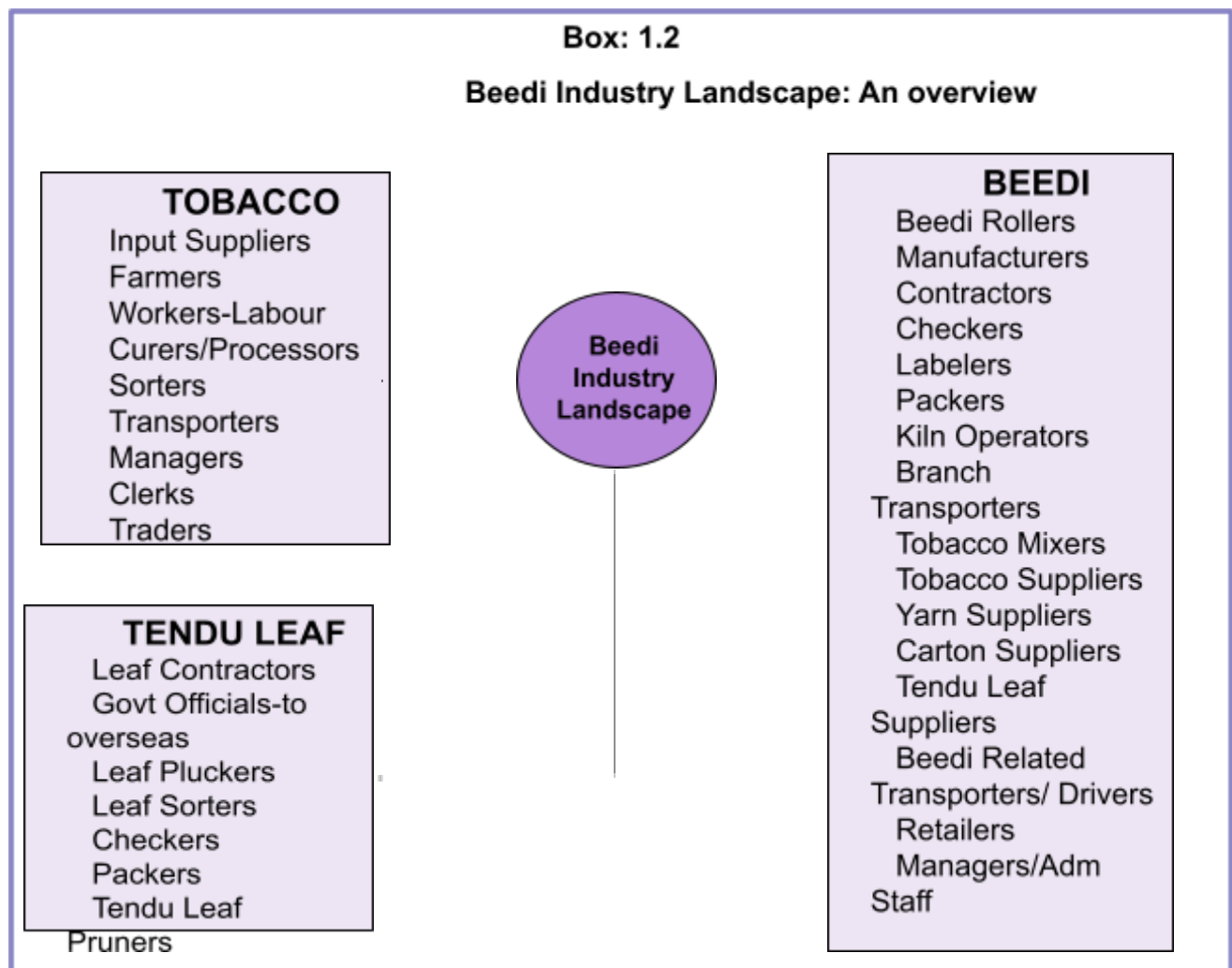
Table 1.2
Growth of Beedi Workers as per different census

Year	Number of Beedi Workers (In Lakhs)	Increase over the years
1961	9,00,000	0
1971	12,72,429	41.38%
1981	16,00,000	25.72%
1991	23,81,556	48.85%
2001	39,90,578	67.57%
2011	40,45,162	1.37%

Source: Census of India, Various reports of the census year

1.8 BEEDI INDUSTRY: EMPLOYMENT PROFILE

Beedi industry employs many workers in different processes of beedi production.



However, the overwhelming majority of workers are engaged in the beedi rolling process, with the total number of workers now around five million. For over a century, this industry has provided employment to millions of workers, helping to uplift them from poverty and deprivation. Most of these workers come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The beedi industry landscape is further illustrated in Box 1.2.

1.9 EMPLOYMENT PATTERN IN BEEDI INDUSTRY

The pattern of employment in the beedi industry can be categorized into two forms: factory-based employment and contractual/home-based employment.

As noted earlier, today the overwhelming majority of beedi workers are home-based, with only a small number employed in factory premises. Several factors contribute to this pattern. For instance, the beedi rolling process can be carried out anywhere, as it does not require machinery or electricity. Due to the flexibility in both time and space, beedi-making workers are found in over two hundred districts across the country (Rehman and Rehman, 2023; Varma and Rehman, 2005).

Table 1.3
Difference between Registered and Unregistered Beedi Companies

Nature	Registered	Unregistered
Annual sales	Rs. 20,00,000/-	Less than Rs. 20 Lakhs
Excise Duty ¹	Bound to pay excise	Exempt from paying excise duty
Branding	Branded. They operate through formal and informal networks of contractors to reach out to beedi rollers. They sometimes have branch offices who then work through contractors.	Unbranded
Relations with workers	Direct formal, direct informal, indirect formal and indirect informal	Informal – direct and indirect
Labour laws	Legally bound	Not bound to adhere social security laws

¹ Prior to imposition of GST

Issuance of IDs	Yes	No
Place of production	Factories, work sheds, households, small units	Work sheds, households, small units

Source: Beedi Industry and Welfare of Workers in India, Review of Policies and Literature by Priya John (John, 2017).

1.10 STATE-WISE MAGNITUDE OF BEEDI WORKERS

As an accurate estimate of beedi workers in the country is not available, only the data collected by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, is the main source. The same is presented in the following table.

The figures in Table 1.4 show that the highest number of beedi workers is concentrated in West Bengal, followed by Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and Telangana. Even in Uttaranchal and Haryana, the incidence of beedi workers has been reported, though the numbers are insignificant.

Table 1.4
State/UT-wise details of registered Beedi Workers

Sl. No.	Name of Region	Name of State/UT	Total	%
1.	Ahmedabad	Gujarat	39011	0.78
2.	Ajmer	Rajasthan	38791	0.77
3.	Lucknow	Uttar Pradesh	412757	8.28
4.	Bangalore	Karnataka	295501	5.93
5.	Bhubaneswar	Odisha	208212	4.18
6.	Hyderabad	Andhra Pradesh/Telangana	458040	9.19
7.	Jabalpur	Madhya Pradesh	440556	8.84
8.	Kolkata	West Bengal	1829203	36.71
9.	Guwahati	Assam	24398	0.48
10.	Thiruvananthapuram	Kerala	40276	0.80
11.	Nagpur	Maharashtra	155089	3.11
12.	Patna	Bihar	296972	5.96
13.	Raipur	Chhattisgarh	3893	0.08
14.	Tirunelveli	Tamil Nadu	603076	12.10
15.	Ranchi	Jharkhand	136519	2.74

Sl. No.	Name of Region	Name of State/UT	Total	%
Total			49,82,294	100.00

Source: Government of India (2023), Annual Report:2022-23. New Delhi, Ministry of Labour and Employment

1.11 DISTRIBUTION OF BEEDI WORKERS BY GENDER

The figures in Table 1.5 indicate that 72.77 percent of beedi workers are female. Over the decades, the proportion of female beedi workers has been increasing across various states in the country.

The state-wise distribution of female beedi workers shows that the highest concentration is in the Kolkata region (West Bengal), with 39.74 percent, followed by Tirunelveli (Tamil Nadu) at 12.40 percent, and the Hyderabad region (Andhra Pradesh/Telangana) at 11.27 percent. In several other states, including Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, and Bihar, the concentration of beedi workers is 8.84 percent, 5.87 percent, and 5.69 percent, respectively.

The table also shows the proportion of female beedi workers relative to the total number of beedi workers in each state. It can be observed that the highest proportion of female beedi workers is in Andhra Pradesh/Telangana (89.24 percent), followed by Odisha (86.16 percent), and Chhattisgarh (81.89 percent), among others.

The majority of beedi workers come from rural areas and economically disadvantaged sections. Employment in beedi rolling provides them with a steady source of income. With a flexible wage payment system, beedi workers typically opt for weekly payments, which helps them cover daily expenses such as food, children's education, clothing, and other needs.

During an interaction with a beedi worker in Kapasdanga village, Lalbagh, Murshidabad District, West Bengal, researchers asked Sulekha Bibi how important her beedi-making employment is to her. Her response was revealing: 'Beedi making is our life, like the need for water. We would be in a dire crisis without beedi rolling. It is our main source of

survival,' she said. She also added, 'Our children's education and our daily needs are met by our regular income from beedi.'

Table 1.5
Concentration of female Beedi workers by States & Region: 2021

Sl. No.	Region/ State	Total Number of Beedi Workers	Number of Female Beedi Workers	(%) to the total female workers
1.	Allahabad/ Uttar Pradesh	4,12,757	3,02,514 (8.84)**	77.65
2.	Ahmedabad/ Gujarat	39,011	6074 (0.15)	15.56
3.	Ajmer/ Rajasthan	38,991	3574 (0.09)	9.21
4.	Bangalore/ Karnataka	2,95,501	2,13,165 (5.87)	72.13
5.	Bhubaneshwar/ Odisha	2,08,212	1,79,400 (4.94)	86.16
6.	Hyderabad/Andhra Pradesh- Telangana	4,58,040	4,08,755 (11.27)	89.24
7.	Jabalpur/ Madhya Pradesh	4,40,556	1,49,949 (4.13)	34.03
8.	Nagpur/ Maharashtra	1,55,089	1,02,810 (2.83)	66.29
9.	Ranchi/ Jharkhand	1,36,519	97,972 (2.70)	71.76
10.	Patna/ Bihar	2,96,972	2,06,510 (5.69)	69.53
11.	Raipur/ Chhattisgarh	3893	3188 (0.08)	81.89
12.	Kolkata/ West Bengal	18,29,203	14,41,173 (39.74)	78.78
13.	Guwahati/ Assam	24,398	98,519 (0.51)	75.90
14.	Tirunelveli/ Tamil Nadu	6,03,076	4,49,849 (12.40)	74.59
15.	Cannanore/ Kerala	40,276	24,210 (0.66)	61.11
Total		49,82,294	36,25,662 (100.0)	72.77

**Annexure referred to in reply to part (a) of Lok Sabha unstarred question no. 4357, 22.03.2021., Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India.*

Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentage from the total female beedi workers

***figures in bracket are percentage from the total*

1.12 MAGNITUDE OF BEEDI WORKERS AS PER PERIODIC LABOUR FORCE SURVEY BY NATIONAL STATISTICAL OFFICE (NSO)

● EMPLOYMENT STATUS

The figures in Table 1.6 reveal that in 2018-19, the total number of beedi workers was 27.69 million, with 26.11 million being female. The distribution of workers by usual status shows that a significant majority (93.0 percent) were self-employed, followed by unpaid family workers (2.5 percent), casual workers (2.4 percent), and regular workers (2.1 percent). This employment pattern indicates that the overwhelming majority of beedi workers are unorganized, home-based, and predominantly female.

There are several reasons for this trend:

1. With changing work scenarios, many male family members have either taken up other local jobs or migrated to different areas.
2. For women, beedi rolling has become a crucial source of livelihood, providing a steady income. Additionally, it offers the flexibility to work from home.

Table 1.6

Percentage Distribution of Beedi Workers by Employment Status: 2018-19

Usual Status	Male	Female	Total
Self-employed: Own Account (Beedi Rollers)	71.7	94.3	93.0
Self-employed: Unpaid Family Worker (aiding rollers)	2.7	2.5	2.5
Regular Workers – in a Factory Premises ²	15.8	1.3	2.1
Casual Workers - in a Factory Premises ³	9.7	1.9	2.4
Total (Percent)	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total (Numbers in thousand) ⁴	157.5	2611.4	2768.9

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), 2018-19

² Note-I (At the end of the chapter)

³ Note-II (At the end of the chapter)

⁴ Note-III (At the end of the chapter)

1.13 DISTRIBUTION OF BEEDI WORKERS BY USUAL LOCATION OF WORKPLACE

Table 1.7 shows that 73.8 percent of beedi workers are home-based in rural areas, while 21.8 percent are in urban areas. These figures indicate that the majority of beedi workers are now concentrated in rural areas. Initially, the industry was factory-based, with most workers employed on factory premises. However, the situation has changed, and beedi making has become a significant manufacturing activity even in remote areas of the country.

Table 1.7
Distribution of Beedi Workers by usual Location of Workplace: 2018-19

Area	Location	Numbers (in thousand)*	Percentage
Rural	Home-based	2045	73.8
	Own enterprise but away from own dwelling	9.7	0.3
	Employer's dwelling	4.2	0.2
	Employer's enterprise but outside employer's dwelling	26.8	1.0
	Others	29.4	1.1
Urban	Home-based	603	21.8
	Own enterprise but away from own dwelling	13.1	0.5
	Employer's enterprise but outside employer's dwelling	23.8	0.9
	Others	14.3	0.5
Total		2768.9	100.0

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), 2018-19

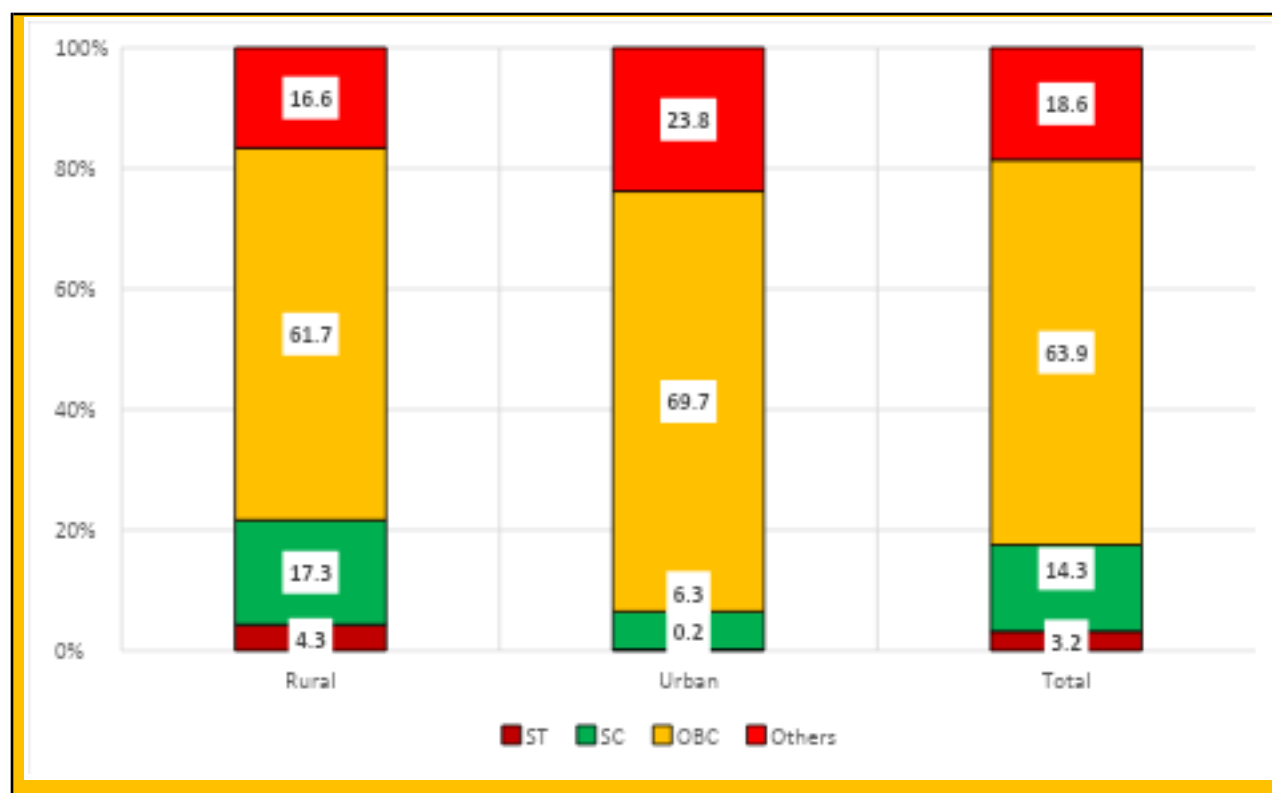
**Numbers are adjusted with census population projected for the year 2018-19.*

1.14 DISTRIBUTION OF BEEDI WORKERS BY CASTE GROUPS

According to the PLFS 2018-19, as presented in Figure 1.1, the distribution of beedi workers is as follows: 3.2 percent are Scheduled Tribes, 14.3 percent are Scheduled Castes, 63.9 percent are Other Backward Classes, and 18.6 percent are categorized as Others. These figures highlight a crucial aspect of the beedi

industry: the majority of workers come from socio-economically disadvantaged sections of society. Given this stark reality, employment in the beedi industry serves as a vital means of survival and livelihood for these disadvantaged groups in the country today.

Figure 1.1
Percentage distribution of Beedi Workers by Caste Group: 2018-19



1.15 EDUCATION LEVEL OF BEEDI WORKERS

According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey 2018-19, as presented in Table 1.6, the education levels of beedi workers are as follows: 68.2 percent have attained primary education or below, 27.7 percent have completed middle to secondary education, 2.6 percent have completed higher secondary education, 1.4 percent are graduates, and 0.1 percent have postgraduate or higher qualifications. These figures highlight a concerning scenario regarding education levels. Despite various efforts, beedi industry workers have limited access to

formal education. This situation underscores the need to explore and implement strategies to improve educational opportunities for these workers.

Table 1.8
Distribution of Beedi Workers by Educational Level, 2018-19

Educational Level	Numbers (in thousand)			Percentage		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Primary or below	109.6	1778.1	1887.7	69.6	68.1	68.2
Middle to Secondary	28.3	739.5	767.8	17.9	28.3	27.7
Higher secondary	9.4	62.9	72.4	6.0	2.4	2.6
Graduate	10.0	28.1	38.1	6.3	1.1	1.4
Post-graduate & above	0.0	2.8	2.8	0.0	0.1	0.1
Total	157.5	2611.4	2768.9	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), 2018-19

1.16 DISTRIBUTION OF BEEDI WORKERS BY TYPE OF SECTOR

The employment sector is categorized into two sectors: organized and unorganized. Currently, more than 90 percent of workers are in the unorganized sector, and beedi workers are no exception. The figures in Table 1.9 show that the majority of beedi workers are in the unorganized sector, with only a small number in the organized sector. Being part of the unorganized sector, beedi workers are generally deprived of benefits such as access to provident fund schemes, minimum wages set by various state governments, and Employment State Insurance Schemes, among others.

Table 1.9
Distribution of Beedi Workers (in thousand) by Type of Sector and Worker, 2018-19

Gender	Sector	Informal Workers	Formal Workers	Total
Male	Unorganized Sector	142.7	0.7	143.4
	Organized Sector	7.1	7.1	14.2
	Total	149.8	7.7	157.5
Female	Unorganized Sector	2574.8	0.0	2574.8
	Organized Sector	29.1	7.5	36.6
	Total	2604.0	7.5	2611.4

Total	Unorganized Sector	2717.5	0.7	2718.2
	Organized Sector	36.2	14.5	50.8
	Total	2753.7	15.2	2768.9

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), 2018-19

1.17 NUMBER OF BEEDI WORKERS ACCORDING TO PLFS 2022-23

In Table 1.10, according to the PLFS 2022-23, the total number of beedi workers is 3,715,262. The age distribution reveals that the overwhelming majority of beedi workers (88.90%) are in the 18-59 age group, while 9.05% are 60 years and older.

(Note: Usual Activity Status refers to a person's activity status during the 365 days preceding the survey date. Subsidiary Economic Activity Status pertains to any economic activity a person engages in for 30 days or more in addition to their usual principal activity during this period.)

Table 1.10
Beedi Manufacturing
PLFS 2022-23

Usual Principal and Subsidiary Status Combined (UPSS) Census Adjusted

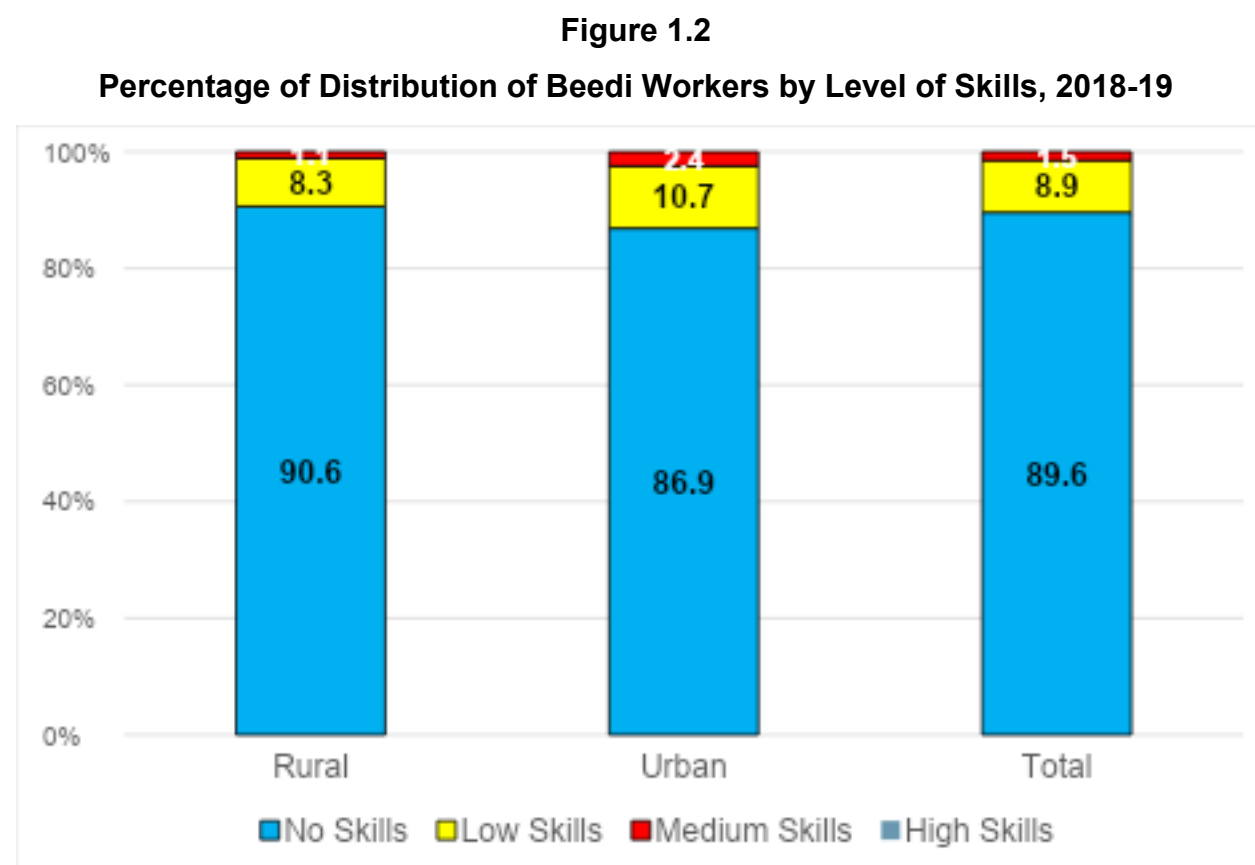
Gender	Age (Years)	Self Employed: Own Account Worker cum Employer	Self-employed : unpaid family worker	Regular Salaried	Casual Labourer	Total	%
Person	5-13	0	5373	0	0	5373	0.14
	14-17	1612	68578	0	0	70190	1.88
	18-59	2852084	268182	138338	44535	3303139	88.90
	60 and Above	287599	45072	2144	1745	336560	9.05
	Total	3141295	387205	140481	46280	3715262	100.00

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey: 2022-23

1.18 LEVELS OF SKILLS OF THE BEEDI WORKERS: 2018-19

Figure 1.2 shows that according to PLFS 2018-19, of the total beedi workers, 89.6 percent did not possess any certified skills, 8 percent had low skills, 1.5 percent had medium level of skills, and none had any high level of skills. (see Figure 1.2)

Note: Data collected by Census survey and National Sample Office (NSO) are different because both the organizations use different definitions.



Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), 2018-19

1.19 TENDU LEAVES

Another important component of beedis is Tendu leaves, which are used as a high-quality wrapping material. The leathery texture of Tendu leaves makes them the preferred choice for beedi wrappers across the country. Tendu plants typically grow in forests on degraded land (Lal, 2012).

As a crucial component, Tendu leaves provide a significant livelihood for millions of collectors across various states in India. Tendu plants are found in Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal (Sharma, 2020; Rehman and Rehman, 2023). Although the exact number of Tendu leaf collectors is not available, estimates suggest there are between 6 to 7 million collectors. They typically find employment for about three months each year. The majority of these collectors come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Sharma, 2020; Lal, 2012; Centre for People's Forestry).

1.20 BEEDI TOBACCO

Every type of tobacco cannot be used as beedi flakes. There are special varieties which are used for beedi making. Beedi Tobacco is cultivated in three states of India, namely Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Gujarat.

- ❖ **Karnataka:** Beedi tobacco in Karnataka is grown in three talukas, namely Chikodi, Hukkeri and Gokak in District Belagavi. The total production of beedi tobacco was about 9815000 kg. The total area of beedi tobacco cultivation is 6500 hectares.
- ❖ **Gujarat:** The highest amount of beedi tobacco is grown in Gujarat. The production of beedi tobacco was 452 million kg. A total area of 1.52 lakh hectares was devoted to the cultivation of beedi tobacco. “The production of beedi tobacco is largely concentrated in the middle Gujarat comprising Kheda, Anand and Vadodara districts besides a small area in Panchmahal district.”⁵

⁵ Madhav, M.S.; Patel, J.N.; Bai, P. Pulli; Matiwade, P.S.; Rao, C.C.; Kumari, B.K. and Flora, S.; (2023) India Beedi Tobacco. All India Network Project on Tobacco, ICAR-Central Tobacco Research Institute, Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh

Notes

1. Currently, beedi manufacturing units operational in the country can be grouped into two categories viz.
 - (a) registered companies and,
 - (b) unregistered companies. The registered companies are the large entities producing two million branded beedi per year, are bound to pay excise duty on their product and are largely bound to follow labour law (Arora et al 2020).
2. Regular Workers are workers employed in an establishment on a monthly wage/ salary on an ongoing basis.
3. Casual workers are workers who are employed from time to time according to exigencies of work (NSO definition). Usual Principal Statuses combined unit level data from PLFS, 2018-19, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India.

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2018-19.

Chapter Two

SOCIAL SECURITY AND WELFARE MEASURES FOR BEEDI WORKERS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

During the last quarter of the 20th century, the Government of India and various state governments gradually began to introduce social security programs for the population in general and workers in particular. Despite having some shortcomings, these programs have provided significant assistance to many people, including workers.

Keeping this in view, the Government of India, with financial contributions from the beedi industry, established a Welfare Fund and formulated several schemes for beedi workers across the country.

This chapter provides an overview of the welfare programs funded by the beedi industry's contributions. Previously, funds for the welfare of beedi workers were collected through a cess on beedis. These welfare measures are implemented and administered by the Ministry of Labour and Employment through various Labour Welfare organizations established in different regions of the country.

2.2 THE WELFARE FUND ACT, 1976

The Government of India enacted the Beedi Workers' Welfare Fund Act, 1976 in 1976 and it came into operation w.e.f. 15.02.1977. The main purpose of the Act was to provide welfare measures to improve the living conditions of the labourers engaged in beedi making activities.

Under the Welfare Fund, the following schemes are operated. (See Table 2.1). Now the Group Insurance and Recreation Schemes have been dropped and merged with

Government's other Social Security Schemes, like, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Suraksha Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, etc.

Table 2.1
List of Schemes

List of Schemes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Assistance • Group insurance Scheme (withheld) • Housing Scheme • Education Assistance Scheme • Recreation Scheme (withheld)
--

2.3 HEALTH ASSISTANCE

It may be seen that under the Health Assistance, as many as eleven schemes are being operated. Since the inception of these schemes, the amount under each has also continuously been revised keeping in view the rising cost of living and treatment, etc. (See Table 2.2)

Table 2.2
Health Schemes for Beedi Workers

Sl. No.	Health Scheme	Salient Features
1.	Health facilities are being provided to Beedi, Cine and Non-Coal Mines workers and to their families through 09 Hospitals and 234 Dispensaries located across the country.	Reimbursement of expenditure for specialized treatment taken under Government recognized Hospitals in case of critical disease.
		Cancer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reimbursement of expenditure up to Rs. 7,50,000/- on treatment, medicines and diet changes incurred by workers, or their dependents.
		Tuberculosis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reservation of beds in T.B Hospitals and domiciliary treatment for workers. Subsistence allowance of

		Rs.750/- to Rs. 1000/-p.m. is granted as per the advice of the treating physician.
		Heart Disease: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reimbursement of expenditure up to Rs. 1,30,000/-to workers.
		Kidney Transplantation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reimbursement of expenditure up to Rs. 2,00,000/-to workers. Hernia, Appendectomy, Ulcer, Gynecological diseases and prostate diseases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reimbursement of expenditure up to Rs. 30,000/-to workers and their dependents.

Source: Director General, Labour Welfare, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India

2.4 HOUSING SCHEME

The lack of proper housing has been found quite acute among the beedi workers. To alleviate this problem, the Welfare Fund revised the integrated housing scheme at present.

“Revised Integrated Housing Scheme (RIHS)- 2016 was introduced w.e.f. 22.03.2016 to provide subsidy of Rs.1,50,000/-(per beneficiary) in three installments at 25:60:15 ratio i.e., Rs. 37,500/-, Rs. 90,000/- and Rs. 22,500/- respectively to Beedi Workers for construction of pucca houses. The scheme has been converged with Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) and all Welfare Commissioner were directed on 25.09.2018 not to issue new sanction of 1st installment under RIHS and send the pending applications to the concerned Blocks/ULBs for sanction under PMAY. The sunset of the scheme (pending applications) is fixed as 2022-2023”. (DGLW, 2023)

2.4.1 Expenditure on Housing

The figures in table 2.3 show that in 2019-20, the number of beneficiaries of the housing scheme was 3485 which increased to 4785. The expenditure in 2019-20 was 8.48 crores and in 2023-24, it increased to 41.55 crores. The housing scheme has been of great help to a large number of beedi workers across the country.

Table 2.3
Expenditure on Housing (Labour Welfare Scheme)

SI No.	Financial Year	Number of Beneficiaries	Expenditure (In Crores)
1	2019-20	3485	28.48
2	2020-21	7854	45.94
3	2021-22	4824	16.64
4	2022-23	10266	31.27
5	2023-24	4785	41.55

Source: Directorate General, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, 2024.

2.5 EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

The beedi workers being financially weak, most often fail to send their children to school. To help them avail education for their children, four types of schemes are being operated at present.

At present, the assistance amount varies from Rs. 1000/- to Rs.25000/- per student per annum. The benefits under this scheme are being transferred through the DBT system and the applications under this scheme are invited and processed through the **(National Scholarship Portal /NSP)** <https://scholarships.gov.in> (see Table 2.4).

Table 2.4
Financial Assistance for children of Beedi Workers

	Scholarship w.e.f. 2022-23 (Amount in Rs. Per Annum per student)
Class	Both girls and boys
I to IV (for purchase of dress and books etc.)	1000
V TO VIII	1,500
IX	2,000
X	2,000
Class XI and XII	3,000
ITI	6,000
Polytechnic	6,000
Professional Courses (BE/MBBS/MBA)	25,000

Source: Director General, Labour Welfare, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, 2023.

2.5.1 Details of expenditure on Scholarship

It can be seen in Table 2.5 that in 2019-20, the number of student beneficiaries was 161,572, with an expenditure of Rs. 26.98 crores. However, the number of beneficiaries declined in 2023-24 to 96,051, and the expenditure increased to Rs. 30.68 crores. It was reported by the respondents that, due to the online survey application process, many beedi workers were unable to apply for scholarships.

Table 2.5
Expenditure on Scholarship (Labour Welfare Scheme)

Sl No.	Financial Year	Number of Beneficiaries	Expenditure (In Crores)
1	2019-20	161572	26.98
2	2020-21	110456	17.01
3	2021-22	117230	19.45
4	2022-23	105277	39.37
5	2023-24	96051	30.68

Source: Director General, Labour Welfare, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, 2023.

2.6 DISPENSARIES FOR TREATMENT OF BEEDI WORKERS

The Government of India set up 285 dispensaries across the country for the health care of the beedi and other workers. Some dispensaries are also mobile. The objective of the visit of the mobile dispensaries to different locations of beedi workers is to provide medical care. This has been helping many beedi workers over the years and is currently also rendering much needed medical assistance.

2.6.1 Expenditure of Health

With regard to health, it could be seen in table 2.6 that in 2019-20 the total number of beneficiaries was 1641516 and the total expenditure was 8.62 crores. In 2023-24 the number of beneficiaries increased to 1802000 and the amount to expenditure was 8.50 crores.

Table 2.6
Expenditure on Health (Labour Welfare Scheme)

SI No.	Financial Year	Number of Beneficiaries	Expenditure (In Crores)
1	2019-20	1641516	8.62
2	2020-21	1657645	10.30
3	2021-22	2009095	10.04
4	2022-23	1880034	9.70
5	2023-24	1802000	8.50

Source: Director General, Labour Welfare, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, 2023.

2.7 PROVIDENT FUND SCHEME

The Government of India enacted the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act in 1952. The main aim of the Act is to provide social security coverage to industrial workers in the country. Under the Act, several schemes are operated, such as:

- a) Employees' Provident Fund Scheme, 1995 (EPF); and
- b) Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance Scheme, 1976 (EDLI).

In India, there are about five million beedi workers. By the nature of their employment, they are eligible for the Provident Fund Scheme, and many have enrolled in the scheme, as revealed in Table 2.7. The table shows that in 2017, a total of 4,167,883 beedi workers were covered under the Provident Fund Scheme, as reported by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India.

The figures in the table also show that among the states with beedi workers concentration, 'the number of beedi workers covered by the provident fund scheme was highest in West Bengal, (23.94percent), followed by Telangana (23.11 percent), Tamil Nadu (17.28 percent), Karnataka (15.65 percent) and so on. (See table 2.7)

However, a recent communication reveals that in 2023, “only 12,92,342 beedi workers were enrolled in the Provident Fund Scheme. This indicates a huge gap in enrollment of eligible workers in social security schemes framed under the Employee’s Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provision Act, 1952.”

Table 2.7
Provident Fund Scheme for Beedi Workers: 2017

Sl. No.	Name of the States	Number of Beedi Workers covered under the Employee’s Provident Funds Scheme as on 31.12.2017	
		Number of Beedi Workers	(%) from the total
1.	Andhra Pradesh	9766	0.23
2.	Assam	1665	0.03
3.	Bihar	35,712	0.85
4.	Chhattisgarh	18,207	0.43
5.	Gujarat	810	0.01
6.	Jharkhand	72,717	1.74
7.	Karnataka	6,52,376	15.65
8.	Kerala	69,562	1.66
9.	Madhya Pradesh	2,20,951	5.30
10.	Maharashtra	1,95,022	4.67
11.	Odisha	1,62,782	3.90
12.	Rajasthan	25,963	0.62
13.	Tamil Nadu	7,20,546	17.28
14.	Telangana	9,63,413	23.11
15.	Tripura	269	-
16.	Uttar Pradesh	20,072	0.48
17.	West Bengal	9,98,050	23.94
Total		41,67,883	100.00

Source: Statement referred to the reply to part (a) of Lok Sabha unstarred Question No. 3895 for reply on 19. 2018 by Shri. Sadashiv Lokhande, M.P regarding P.F Scheme for Beedi Workers.

There are 10,79,076 provident fund subscribers under EPF and MP Act 1952.⁶ Thereafter a campaign was launched to make more beedi workers subscribers to the Provident Fund and as a result in 2017, the number of subscribers went up to 41,67,883.

⁶ As per a statement from Lok Sabha unstarred question 1900 dated 24th May 2017

2.8 MINIMUM WAGE

The Government of India enacted the Minimum Wage Act in 1948. It is a landmark legislation that aims to provide a minimum level of wage to workers in any enterprise. The purpose is to ensure that no workers are deprived of fair remuneration. There are many occupations in which the Minimum Wage Act is applicable. The beedi rolling activity is also covered by the provision of the Minimum Wage Act, 1948.

Ever since the legislation of the Minimum Wage act, 1948 there has been continuous demand by the beedi workers that they should also get Minimum wages as prescribed by different States in the country. There is also a consistent demand that the level of Minimum wage should be 'one' across the country. This demand has not been met yet so far.

However, Minimum Wage is given in the registered beedi establishments "In the beedi making establishments, enforcement of the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 is mostly confined to the establishments falling under the Scheduled Employment Tobacco (including Beedi Making) Manufacturers" Licensed under the Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966. The beedi establishment working without such licenses do not receive the attention of the enforcement authority" (Government of India, 2015).

Labour being a concurrent subject, every state government has its own jurisdiction regarding deciding the minimum wage for the beedi workers, including the beedi rollers. Here, we have presented the minimum wage prevailing at present for the beedi rollers in West Bengal.

- In West Bengal, the Minimum wage for beedi rollers per day from 1st March 2020 to 31st August 2020, was in the range of Rs. 253.03 to Rs. 278.58. From January 1st to 30th June 2023, the minimum wage for beedi workers was Rs. 294.00. per day and monthly wage was Rs. 7651 per month.

- From 1st July 2023 to December, the Minimum wage is Rs. 302 per day and the monthly wage is now Rs. 7859.00 Further details are given in Box 2.1. The latest figures show the minimum wage. With the effect till December 31, 2024 which is Rs. 320/- for unskilled workers, Rs. 352 for semi skilled workers and Rs. 387 for skilled workers.

- **Agreement wage**

An agreement was reached in 2021, on September 21, which decided the wages of beedi workers. at the rate of Rs. 176.00. Before 2021, the agreed wage rate was 152. Recently, no wage agreement has taken place.

Chapter Three

LANDSCAPE OF BEEDI INDUSTRY: WEST BENGAL

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the status of beedi workers in West Bengal, the state which is now the home to the largest number of beedi workers in the country. During the last two decades the number of beedi workers has increased dramatically in the State.

There is no clear evidence as to when the beedi industry was established in West Bengal. However, it is claimed that the first beedi establishment was set up in Dhulian in Jangipur Subdivision of District Murshidabad. The name of the establishment was Belal Beedi Industry. It was the beginning of the beedi industry in West Bengal; and finally, the industry began to flourish from 1920 with the establishment of Biswa Bijoy Beedi (Dawn and Sarkar, 2022). Since then, the industry in West Bengal has been continuously expanding. And today the footprint of the industry could be found in all the districts of the State, and in hundreds of villages and towns. The socio-economically disadvantaged sections of the State find an important means of livelihood in the beedi industry. In fact, the beedi industry has been a source of livelihood for people especially women who cannot afford to migrate to any other places nor have any other skills for other employment.

Several research studies show that in many districts of West Bengal, many female workers are largely dependent on beedi rolling (see Nandi, et al. 2014; Iti, 2018; Rahmatullah, 2022; Dawn and Sarkar, 2022; Sardar, 2019; Varma and Rehman, 2005; Bhardwaj, et al., 2023 and Gaur, et al., 2021)

In the following section, district-wise figures of beedi workers have been presented.

3.2 LANDSCAPE OF BEEDI WORKERS IN WEST BENGAL

According to the Director General of Labour 2022-2023, of the Ministry of Labour and welfare, Government of India, the total number of beedi workers in West Bengal was 18,29,203.

The figures in Table 3.1 reveal that in 2020-2021 almost two lakh patients were treated in different dispensaries in the Kolkata region. The figures of patients treated rose to 1,94,941 in 2021-22 but declined in 2022-23 as could be seen in the table.

Table 3.1
Year-wise figures of patients treated in Kolkata Region

Year	No. of Patients
2020-21	171640
2021-22	194941
2022-23	162886

Source: Director General, Labour Welfare, Kolkata, Region, Government of India, Ministry of Labour and Employment.

3.3 DISPENSARY-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF BEEDI WORKERS IN WEST BENGAL

As per data shared by the Regional Commissioner, Kolkata Region, Director General, Labour Welfare, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, it can be seen in Table 3.2 that out of total beedi workers, the highest proportion of workers is concentrated in Nimtita Unit, District Murshidabad, and the next highest concentration could be found in Kaliachak Unit, District Malda. In Cooch-Behar unit, the percentage of concentration of beedi workers is 6.79 percent, followed by Barasat unit (24 Parganas North) (5.85 percent), Jhalda (District Purulia (5.98 percent), Krishna Nagar (5.05 percent) (Distt. Nadia), Domohana unit (5.06 percent) (Distt. North Dinajpur), Magrahat unit (4.11 percent) (Distt. 24 Parganas North) and so forth. In the rest of the units, the concentration of beedi workers is less than 4.00 percent.

The figures in the Table 4.3 also show that two agencies have identified beedi workers in the State i.e., the Labour Welfare Organization had issued Identity Cards to 7,50,206 workers, while the State Government of West Bengal had issued Identity Cards to 10,79,597 beedi workers. It may be seen in the table that 60.00 percent of the total beedi workers have been issued Identity Cards by the State Government of West Bengal, while the rest by the Labour Welfare Organization in Kolkata Region.

Table 3.2
Details of Identity Cards issued to Beedi and Cine Workers under
LWO, Kolkata Region (unit wise)

Name of Unit	Identity cards issued by LWO, Kolkata	Identity cards issued by State Govt.	Total of Beedi Workers/ Beneficiaries	% of Col 4 from Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Bankura	26,339	11,023	37,362	2.08
Barasat	26,246	80,941	1,07,187	5.85
Berhampore	18,394	-	18,394	1.00
Contai	42,013	82,256	1,24,269	6.79
Cooch Behar	23,973	47,478	71,451	3.90
Domohana	16,501	75,110	91,611	5.06
Jhalda	65,338	44,198	1,09,536	5.98
Kakdwip	21,068	-	21,068	1.15
Kalichak	1,64,776	2,44,401	4,09,177	22.36
Kankra	5,050	-	5,050	0.27
Karimpur	23,801	-	23,801	1.30
Kolkata	16,376	29,970	46,346	2.53
Krishnagar	46,469	46,096	92,565	5.05
Kharagpur	47,943	9,334	57,277	3.13
Magrahat	31,904	43,367	75,271	4.11
Naihati	3,047	-	3,047	0.16
Nimtita	1,33,524	3,28,038	4,61,562	25.22
Panskura	5,560	-	5,560	0.30
Salar	4,760	-	4,760	0.26
Suri	25,726	37,385	63,111	3.44
Maslandapur	559	-	559	0.03

Name of Unit	Identity cards issued by LWO, Kolkata	Identity cards issued by State Govt.	Total of Beedi Workers/ Beneficiaries	% of Col 4 from Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Nandakumar	839	-	839	0.04
Total	7,50,206	1079597	1829803	100.00

Source: Director General, Labour Welfare, Kolkata, Region, 2023.

3.4 BEEDI ESTABLISHMENT IN WEST BENGAL

The beedi industry began to flourish in the West in the first quarter of the 20th Century in Murshidabad district. Today the industry has its footprints in all the districts of West Bengal as could be seen in Table 3.3. Being widely dispersed, the beedi making establishments are able to generate employment even in remote areas of the State.

There are many Beedi establishments in West Bengal. A district-wise details of the same is given below:

Table 3.3
Beedi establishment in West Bengal

Sl. No.	District	Number
1.	Murshidabad	144
2.	Kolkata	131
3.	North 24 Parganas	37
4.	Howrah	33
5.	Malda	25
6.	Midnapore	25
7.	Nadia	20
8.	Purulia	19
9.	Jalpaiguri	14
10.	South 24 Parganas	11
11.	Hooghly	10
12.	Burdwan	9
13.	Dakshin Dinapur	8
14.	Uttar Dinajpur	8
15.	Cooch Behar	7
16.	Bankura	5
17.	Siliguri	5
18.	Bardhaman	4

19.	Asansol	2
20.	Darjeeling	2
21.	Haldia	2
22.	Barasat	1
23.	Durgapur	1
24.	Kalyani	1
25.	Paschim Medinipur	1
26.	Purba Medinipur	1
27.	Birbhum	3
	TOTAL	529

3.4 MAJOR BEEDI BRANDS

There are many Beedi brands- some are large and some small. Here in Figure 3.1, names of some major beedi brands are mentioned.

Figure 3.1
MAJOR BEEDI BRANDS

Alaka Beedi	Padma Beedi	Goutam Beedi	Surya Beedi	Mama Beedi
Pather Sathi Beedi	Modern Beedi	Debur Beedi	Janapriya Beedi	Janata Beedi
Robin Beedi	Kamal Beedi	Barasater Beedi	Chanchal Beedi	Jamai Beedi
Tekka Beedi	Misti Beedi	Rupa Beedi	Subol Beedi	Smriti Beedi
Wazir Beedi	Moen Beedi	Haribar Beedi	Pataka Beedi	Mohan Beedi
Raja Beedi Factory	Ashok Beedi	Dev Mohan Beedi	Biren Beedi	Jeet Beedi
Aloka Beedi	Bakshi Beedi	Aloka Beedi	Golbarir Beedi	Birbhum No. 1 Beedi

Chapter Four

SOCIAL SECURITY AND WELFARE MEASURES FOR BEEDI WORKERS IN WEST BENGAL

4.1 HEALTH ASSISTANCE

As noted earlier, the beedi industry's unique feature is that it has devised some popular and accessible welfare measures for its workers around health care. Since many

workers are from economically vulnerable groups, they are quite often subjected to malnutrition and are deprived of medical care. To meet this essential need, the Government has set up many Static-cum-Mobile dispensaries throughout the country as well as West Bengal.

Table 4.1 shows that there are 23 Dispensaries, located at different places of West Bengal for providing much needed medical assistance to the beedi workers. These dispensaries have been providing both OPD services and advice for both tertiary and secondary care. The Government of India has also set up a 65 bedded Central Hospital at Dhulian, in Distt. Murshidabad, West Bengal.

Table 4.1
List of Dispensaries in West Bengal

Sl. No.	List of Dispensaries
1.	Static-cum-Mobile Dispensary, Bankura, Distt. Bankura
2.	Static-cum-Mobile Dispensary, Cooch Behar, Distt. Cooch Bihar
3.	Static-cum-Mobile Dispensary, Magrahat, Distt. 24 Parganas (N)
4.	Static-cum-Mobile Dispensary, Barasat, Distt. 24 Parganas (N)
5.	Static-cum-Mobile Dispensary, Jhalda, Distt. Purulia
6.	Static-cum-Mobile Dispensary, Krishnanagar, Distt. Nadia
7.	Static-cum-Mobile Dispensary, Karimpur, Distt. Nadia
8.	Static-cum-Mobile Dispensary, Kharagpur, Distt. Midnapur
9.	Static-cum-Mobile Dispensary, Kalichak, Distt. Malda
10.	Static-cum-Mobile Dispensary, Kakdwip, Distt. 24 Parganas (South)
11.	Static-cum-Mobile Dispensary, Berhampur, Distt. Murshidabad
12.	Static-cum-Mobile Dispensary, Contai, Distt. Midnapur
13.	Static-cum-Mobile Dispensary, Domohana, Distt. West Dinajpur
14.	Static-cum-Mobile-Medical Unit, Nimitita, Distt. Murshidabad
15.	Chest-Clinic, Nimitita, Distt. Murshidabad
16.	Static-cum-mobile medical unit, Naihati, Distt. Nadia

Sl. No.	List of Dispensaries
17.	Static-cum-mobile medical unit, Kankurgachi, Distt. 24 Parganas (North)
18.	Static-cum-mobile medical unit, Panskura, Distt. Burdwan
19.	Static-cum-mobile medical unit, Kankra, Distt. 24 Parganas (North)
20.	Static-cum-mobile medical unit, Maslandapur, Distt. 24 Parganas (North)
21.	Static-cum-mobile medical unit, Salar, Distt. Murshidabad
22.	Static-cum-mobile unit, Suri, Distt. Birbhum
23.	Central hospital, Dhulian, Distt. Murshidabad

Source: Director General, Labour Welfare, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, 2023.

4.2 NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES OF HEALTH SCHEME

During Covid-19 Pandemic, the dispensaries played a very important role. However, it was reported by many stakeholders like the beedi rollers, contractors, trade union activists, manufacturers, and individuals that though the dispensaries have been helping the beedi industry workers the services are largely not adequate in terms of medicines and diagnosis. They suggested that more Static-cum-mobile dispensaries, properly equipped, should be opened in localities of concentration of beedi workers in the State.

4.2.1 Year wise statement of patient treated in Kolkata Region

The figures in table 4.2 states that in 2020-21, a total 1,71,640 patients were treated in different dispensaries. This was indeed a great relief to a large number of beedi workers. Similar numbers of patients were treated in 2021-22 and 2022-23 also.

Table 4.2
Year-wise figures of patients treated in Kolkata region

Year	Number of Patients
2020-21	1,71,640
2021-22	1,94,941
2022-23	1,62,886

Source: Directorate General Labour Welfare, Ministry of Labour and Employment, government of India, Kolkata Region 2023.

4.3 NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Table 4.3 shows that in 2020-2021, 67,055 students were provided scholarships, while in 20221-2022 and in 2022-2023, the figures accounted for 67,881 and 61,589 respectively.

Table 4.3
Beneficiaries under the Scholarship, Kolkata Region

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Scholarship	67055	57881	61589

Director General Labour Welfare, Kolkata Region, 2023

Earlier a large number of beedi worker children used to apply for scholarships. However, after digitalisation and the online application process, the number of applications for the scholarship has declined a great deal. This has been widely reported by the Beedi workers during the survey.

4.4 HOUSING SCHEME

Beedi workers are socio-economically disadvantaged. Their housing needs are quite high. To meet this need, the Government of India has been providing financial assistance to Beedi workers through a scheme, namely the Revised Integrated Housing Scheme (RIHS). Over the years, many beedi workers have availed benefits under this scheme in West Bengal. The figures in Table 4.4 Show that in 2022-2023, 159 and 1354 beneficiaries received a second installment for constructing their houses.

Table 4.4
Beneficiaries under the Revised Integrated Housing Scheme (RIHS), Kolkata Region

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
RIHS 2007	75	0	159

RIHS 2016	0	0	1354
-----------	---	---	------

Director General Labour Welfare, Kolkata Region, 2023

4.5 GAPS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF HOUSING SCHEME

For several years, the Government of India is planning to subsume the housing scheme for beedi workers in the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awas Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Shehri Aawas Yojana. As a result, there is a decline in the allotment of funds for the housing schemes.

4.6 EMPLOYEES PROVIDENT FUND (EPF)

It is found that though there are a large number of Beedi workers in West Bengal, yet many of them do not have EPF accounts. According to EPFO data available for Beedi Workers for the year 2017, the total number of Beedi Workers covered are 9,98,050 Lakhs as could be seen in table 2.7 in Chapter Two.

Chapter Five

SURVEY RESULTS: WEST BENGAL

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of different aspects of sample respondents and their households which include respondents' age, education, family members, income, etc. The information regarding the above aspects were collected by administering a semi-structured questionnaire. In addition, efforts were made to elicit information from beedi workers through Focus Group Discussion and meetings. The main purpose is to highlight the conditions of the workers and the contribution of employment in the beedi industry and future trends. A total 304 households were surveyed to underline the different aspects of employment of beedi workers in West Bengal.

5.2 GENDER PROFILE AND EDUCATION OF RESPONDENTS

Gender wise distribution of respondents is presented in Table 5.1. A huge proportion of beedi workers are female who are involved in the beedi industry. The Table 5.1 confirms that 98.35 percent respondents were females and only 1.64 percent respondents were male. However, it was not the case earlier. Just several decades ago the beedi industry used to employ a substantial number of male workers. In due course of time, the beedi industry's major stakeholders have become women who in their home continue to roll millions of beedi sticks, thereby earning their livelihood without spending much time on transportation and spending virtually nothing on work related tasks. It requires, "A pair of scissors and '3/4' metallic substance (generally of iron of which one end is flat and other rounded, and yarn and a basket made of bamboo...." (Roy, 1989). Besides, beedi rolling though labour intensive, it, however, does not require very arduous labour. One learns it by rolling beedi for a week or so.

Table 5.1
Gender Wise Distribution of Respondents

Sl. No.	Gender	Total	Percentage
1.	Male	5	1.64
2.	Female	299	98.35
Total		304	100.00

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.3 AGE PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS BEEDI WORKERS

Table 5.2 presents a comprehensive breakdown of beedi workers based on their age groups, shedding light on the demographic distribution within the industry. The data reveals a significant concentration of workers in the age group of 30-50 years, accounting for 59.21 percent of the workforce. This age bracket emerges as the primary cohort contributing to the beedi industry, indicating that a substantial portion of an individual's productive years is invested in this manual labour.

Furthermore, the statistics indicate that 22.36 percent of beedi workers fall below the age of 30, showcasing the diverse age range of individuals engaged in this occupation. This suggests that the beedi industry provides employment opportunities not only to those in their prime working years but also to a considerable number of younger individuals.

It is noteworthy that the beedi workforce extends beyond the conventional retirement age, as indicated by the 13.15 percent of workers in the 51-60 age group and the 5.26 percent in the 61 and above age group. This demographic distribution underscores the industry's capacity to absorb individuals well beyond the typical retirement age, contributing to employment stability. The manual nature of beedi work also highlights its inclusivity, providing a source of income for individuals who may not be engaged in more physically demanding occupations. This inclusivity is reflected in the diverse age

groups represented in the workforce, emphasizing the industry's ability to accommodate individuals from various walks of life.

In summary, the data in Table 5.2 not only illustrates the prevalence of beedi workers in the age group of 30-50 years but also emphasizes the industry's role in providing employment to a wide demographic range, including individuals both before and after traditional retirement age. This highlights the adaptability and inclusivity of the beedi industry in utilizing manual labour from a diverse pool of workers.

Table 5.2
Distribution of Respondents by Age

Sl. No.	Age group	Number of respondents	Percentage
1.	Below 30	68	22.36
2.	30-50	180	59.21
3.	51-60	40	13.15
4.	61 and above	16	5.26
Total		304	100.00

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.4 EDUCATION LEVELS OF THE RESPONDENTS AND THE CHILDREN

Indicators like the education of a person is an important aspect for understanding a person's present status and future potential for development. Here an attempt has been made to examine the level of education of the sample respondent beedi workers. Table 5.3 shows the distribution of respondents by education level. It can be noticed that 11.57 percent of respondents were illiterate, followed by 58.55 percent who had education up to primary level. 17.93 percent of respondents had education up to middle level, followed by 5.92 percent each who had education up to secondary and higher secondary level. Only 0.65 percent of respondents were graduates. It can be inferred from the table that a major proportion of respondents had a very poor level of education. It can be noted here that beedi workers of younger age are more educated than women in higher age groups.

The poor economic conditions are reported to be the main reason for such a low level of educational attainment by the respondents. It may, however, be noted that there is an urge on the part of the respondents to obtain some skill training as was mentioned during the researcher's interaction in the meetings and discussions.

It was also reported by many participants that due to precarious economic conditions of the parents, distant location of schools and of apathy of the parents and teachers, they could not understand the value of education.

But now they are very much aware of the need for education and making their best effort to send their children to both private and government schools. In fact, during focused group discussion it was revealed by the participants that they preferred to send their children to private schools rather than Government schools.

Table 5.4 reveals a positive landscape in terms of the educational levels of children within the surveyed households. A substantial portion of households, comprising 34.63% and 41.95%, have children enrolled in primary and middle education levels, respectively. This suggests a strong foundational emphasis and a commitment to intermediate education, laying the groundwork for a well-rounded educational journey. Additionally, the presence of children in secondary (16.58%) and higher secondary (6.80%) education levels indicates a dedication to progressing through the academic stages. Overall, this analysis suggests a positive trend in educational commitment and diversity within the surveyed households, encouraging a holistic view of educational achievements and paths.

Table 5.3
Educational Wise Distribution of Respondents

Sl. No.	Age group	Number of respondents	Percentage
1.	Illiterate	35	11.51
2.	Primary	178	58.55

Sl. No.	Age group	Number of respondents	Percentage
3.	Middle	53	17.43
4.	Secondary	18	5.92
5.	Higher Secondary	18	5.92
6.	Graduate	2	0.65
7.	Postgraduate	0	0
8.	Technical Education	0	0
9.	Others	0	0
Total		304	100.00

Source: Survey by the researchers.

Table 5.4
Education Levels of the Children of the Respondents Households

Sl. No.	Education level	Number of households	Percentage of the total
1.	Primary	71	34.63
2.	Middle	86	41.95
3.	Secondary	34	16.58
4.	Higher Secondary	14	6.80
5.	Graduate	0	0
6.	Postgraduate	0	0
7.	Others	0	0
8.	Not Available	99	32.56
Total		304	100.00

Source: Survey by the researchers

Table 5.5
Sources of Funding for the Education of the Respondents' Households

Sl. No.	Sources of funding	Number of households	Percentage of the total
1.	Scholarship	1	0.51
2.	Government Aid	0	0

3.	Income from Beedi	181	93.29
4.	Others	12	6.18
5.	Not Available	110	36.18
Total		304	100.00

Source: Survey by the researchers.

Table 5.5 indicates the sources of funding for the education of the respondents' households. 93.99 percent of respondent households met their education expenses through income from the beedi industry. 6.18 percent households had other sources of income for meeting educational requirements. Only one respondent household got a scholarship; and 36.18 percent of respondents' households had no sources of income to get education.

5.5 COMPARISON BETWEEN THE EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF THE CHILDREN AND THE BEEDI WORKERS

From comparison between table 5.4 and 5.5 the beedi industry has directly provided employment to individuals with low literacy levels and varied educational background. The information suggests that economic hardships were a major impediment to education for beedi workers, and their precarious financial situation hindered their understanding of the value of education. Despite these challenges, there is an indication of an earnest desire on the part of the respondents to obtain skill training, and the passage mentions efforts to send their children to both private and government schools.

It can be inferred that, over time, the income generated from the beedi industry has played a crucial role in improving the educational prospects of the workers and their families, there is an acknowledgment of awareness of the importance of education and efforts to send children to school implies that the economic conditions may have improved, allowing for investment in education. The money earned from the beedi industry appears to have been a driving force enabling these individuals to break the cycle of low literacy and provide educational opportunities for their successors.

Table 5.6
Occupational Profile of Earning Children

Sl. No.	Occupation of Earning Children	Number of Children	Percentage from Total
1.	Daily Labour	6	23.07
2.	Mason Labour	4	15.38
3.	Shop	4	15.38
4.	Service	12	46.15
Total		26	100.00

Source: Survey by the researchers.

Table 5.6 highlights the occupational profile of earning children. It can be noted that 46.15 percent of children earned their income from service, followed by 23.07 percent children who were daily labour and 15.38 percent each child were performing mason work and earning their income from petty shops.

As we have noted earlier in Chapter One, the beedi industry is now more than a century old. Ever since its appearance in India, the industry has been a great livelihood opportunity for many workers. And it is providing this opportunity to people generation after generation. To study this aspect, an attempt has been made to elicit information from the respondents, whether their parents, grandparents and other members of their families were engaged in beedi rolling in the past. The findings have been presented in Table 5.7

5.6 BEEDI ROLLING AS A GENERATIONAL OCCUPATION

Table 5.7 clearly illustrates that beedi work has been deeply ingrained as a generational occupation within the surveyed community. The data reveals a multi-generational involvement, with family members across different age groups having participated in beedi making. Mothers, constituting a significant majority at 60.89%, have played a pivotal role in this occupation, suggesting a sustained tradition passed down from one generation to the next. Fathers, accounting for 19.72%, also contribute substantially, indicating the involvement of both parents in the beedi-making profession.

Grandmothers (7.26%) and grandfathers (12.11%) further emphasize the generational aspect, showcasing the occupation's persistence across family lines.

Table 5.7
Past Engagement of Family Members in Beedi Making

Sl. No	Relation to the Respondent	Number	Percentage
1.	Grand Mother	21	7.26
2.	Grand Father	35	12.11
3.	Father	57	19.72
4.	Mother	176	60.89
5.	No Family Members Working	15	4.93
Total		304	100.00

Source: Survey by the researchers.

Table 5.8
Distribution of Respondents by Years of Experience in Beedi Rolling

Sl. No.	Experience	Number	Percentage
1.	0-3	23	7.62
2.	4-6	34	11.37
3.	7-12	130	43.47
4.	13-18	62	20.73
5.	19 and above	50	16.70
6.	Not available	5	1.64
Total		304	100.00

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.7 EXPERIENCE LEVEL IN BEEDI ROLLING

Table 5.8 depicts the distribution of respondents by years of experience in Beedi Rolling. It can be noted that 43.47 percent respondents were engaged in beedi rolling for 7-12 years, followed by 20.73 percent respondents who were involved in beedi rolling for 13-18 years, 16.70 percent were working in the industry for more than 19 years, 11.37 percent respondents rolled beedi for 4-6 years and 7.62 percent respondents were in this industry for less than 3 years.

Table 5.9
Number of Working Hours Per Day

Sl. No.	Hours	Number	Percentage
1.	1-2	15	4.93
2.	3-4	38	12.50
3.	5-6	127	41.77
4.	7 and above	124	40.73
Total		304	100.0

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.8 WORKING HOURS

The data reveals a positive trend among female beedi workers who are predominantly homemakers. A significant proportion, 82.50 percent, works for 6 hours or fewer per day, with 41.77 percent dedicating 5-6 hours to beedi making. This flexibility suggests an effective integration of work into daily domestic routines. Additionally, 40.73 percent of respondents work for more than 7 hours a day, reflecting a subgroup's commitment to their employment. The diversity in working hours (1-2 hours, 3-4 hours, 5-6 hours, and more than 7 hours) underscores the adaptability of beedi making to various schedules. Overall, the data suggests that beedi making provides a flexible and accommodating source of income for female workers, allowing them to balance domestic responsibilities while contributing to their households economically. (Table 5.9)

Table 5.10

Number of Beedi Rolled Per Day

Sl. No.	Beedi Rolled	Frequency	Percentage
1.	500	93	30.59
2.	700	7	2.30
3.	1000	185	60.85
4.	1200	4	1.31
5.	1500	6	1.97
6.	No reply	9	2.96
Total		304	100.0

Source: Survey by the researchers.

Average of 800+ Beedi/ Day

5.9 NUMBER OF BEEDI ROLLED PER DAY

The distribution of respondents by the number of beedi rolled per day can be seen in Table 5.10. A large chunk of beedi workers (60.85 percent) rolled 1000 beedis everyday followed by 30.59 percent respondents rolled 500 beedis daily and 2.30 percent who rolled 700 beedis per day. 1.97 percent respondents rolled 1500 beedis daily and 1.31 percent respondents rolled 1200 beedis every day. 2.96 percent of respondents did not give any response. It may be noted here that quite often several members joined in rolling beedis. This helped them roll some time more than the 1000 beedis.

Moreover, the mention that several members often join in rolling beedis, leading to an increased output beyond the reported numbers, highlights the collaborative nature of this work. This collective effort not only contributes to productivity but also underscores the social and familial dimensions of the beedi-making occupation. Overall, the data offers valuable insights into the work patterns and collaborative dynamics within the beedi industry, which can inform discussions on labour conditions, productivity enhancement strategies, and potential interventions to improve the well-being of workers in this sector.

Table 5.11
Earnings from beedis per month

Sl. No.	Amount in Rs.	Frequency	Percentage
1.	501-1000	3	0.98
2.	1001-1500	39	12.82
3.	1501-2000	73	24.01
4.	2001-3000	115	37.82
5.	3001-4000	19	6.25
6.	4001-5000	3	0.98
7.	5001-6000	1	0.32
8.	6001-7000	44	14.47
9.	No reply	7	2.30
Total		304	100.0

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.10 MONTHLY INCOME FROM BEEDI MAKING

The distribution of respondents by their earnings from beedis per month is illustrated in Table 5.11. The data show that 37.82 percent respondents earned between Rs. 2100-3000 per month, followed by 24.01 percent who earned between Rs. 1501-2000 every month, 14.47 percent respondents' monthly income was between Rs. 6001-7000 rupees, 12.82 percent whose per month income from beedi rolling was between Rs. 1001-1500, and 0.98 percent each respondent earned between Rs. 501-1000 and Rs. 4001-5000 respectively. 2.30 percent of respondents did not reply.

Table 5.12
Importance of beedi in respondents families

Sl. No.	Head	Numbers	Total Respondents	Percentage from total
1.	It is important for the Survival of my Family	304	304	100.00
2.	It is important for the well-being of the Children and Family Members	304	297	97.69

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.11 IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYMENT

Effort was made to understand the role of beedi work in the lives of the workers by eliciting response. The figures in Table 5.12 clearly show that it is very important for their own as well as their family members' survival. Of the total respondents, all of them reported that it is most important for them.

The insights gathered during the Focus Group Discussion shed light on the pivotal role that beedi rolling plays as the primary source of security for the participants. Despite the modest nature of the wages earned through this occupation, the participants emphasized that these earnings are instrumental in addressing their daily needs. Beedi rolling serves as a financial lifeline, enabling these women to meet essential expenses such as food, healthcare, and crucially, the education of their children. The participants expressed a sense of reliance on the stability provided by the consistent income from beedi making, acknowledging its significance in sustaining their households. This underscores the socio-economic importance of beedi rolling beyond its immediate role as an employment opportunity, illustrating how it serves as a cornerstone in supporting the necessities and aspirations of these workers and their families.

“Whenever I need to purchase vegetables for cooking, at least I have some amount with me which I get every weekend from rolling beedi. I do not ask my husband for expenses”, said one of the participants in a focus Group Discussion in Sagar.”

5.12 WORK QUANTUM

The distribution of respondents “whether they are getting sufficient work from employers” is presented in Table 5.13. Out of the total respondent's 59.53 percent reported that their employers provided them with ample opportunities of work in the beedi industry, whereas 40.46 percent respondents informed that they were not getting sufficient options for employment in the beedi industry.

Table 5.13
Distribution of respondents whether they are getting sufficient work from employers

Sl. No.	Head	Numbers	Percentage
1.	Yes	181	59.53
2.	No	123	40.46
Total		304	100.0

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.13 WORK OPPORTUNITY

Table 5.14 indicates the distribution of respondents who stated that their employers were providing them with sufficient work opportunities. Out of the total, 50.92 percent respondents got 4 weeks work, while 18.75 percent got work for 3 weeks, followed by 15.46 percent respondent could get work for only 1 week, 10.52 percent respondents received work opportunities for 2 weeks and 4.27 percent respondents did not reply. These findings suggest a resilient workforce with access to relatively consistent job opportunities, contributing to both financial security and potentially enhanced job satisfaction within the surveyed community.

Table 5.14
Distribution of respondents who stated that their employers were providing them with sufficient work opportunities

Sl. No.	Days	Number of respondent	Percentage
1.	1 Week	47	15.46
2.	2 Weeks	32	10.52
3.	3 Weeks	57	18.75
4.	4 Weeks	155	50.92
5.	No Reply	13	4.27
Total		304	100.00

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.14 GETTING MORE OR LESS WORK

Table 5.15 provides a positive perspective on the distribution of work options within the beedi industry among the surveyed respondents. A significant 86.18% of respondents reported receiving more work than their demand, indicating a prevailing situation where most individuals have access to sufficient employment opportunities. This positive aspect suggests a robust demand for labour within the beedi industry, which can contribute to economic stability and improved livelihoods for the surveyed population. The fact that only 13.81% reported receiving less work than their demand, while still noteworthy, underscores the overall positive trend of ample work opportunities. This analysis implies that, for the majority, the beedi industry serves as a reliable source of employment, offering a favorable environment for income generation and economic well-being within the surveyed community.

Table 5.15
Getting more/ less work (percentage) through beedi rolling

Sl. No.	More	Less	Percentage
1.	More	262	86.18
2.	Less	42	13.81
Total		304	100.0

Source: Survey by the researchers.

Table 5.16
Total income per month earned by the family

Sl. No.	Amount in Rs.	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Rs. 2000 and below	5	1.71
2.	2001-3000	112	38.30
3.	3001-4000	81	27.70
4.	4001-5000	16	5.47
5.	5001-6000	18	6.16
6.	6001-7000	6	2.05
7.	7001-8000	5	1.71
8.	8001-9000	13	4.45

9.	9001-10,000	28	9.58
10.	10,000-11,000	1	0.34
11.	No Reply	19	6.25
Total		304	100.0

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.15 TOTAL FAMILY INCOME PER MONTH

Table 5.16 illustrates the distribution of respondents by their total income per month. It can be noted that out of the total, 38.3 percent respondents' total monthly income was between Rs. 2001-3000, followed by 27.7 percent whose income was between Rs. 3001-4000, 9.58 percent respondents' total income per month was Rs. 9001-10,000, 6.16 percent respondents' total monthly income was between Rs. 5001-6000 and only one respondent (0.34 percent) total income per month was between Rs. 10,000-11,000. In fact, for a large number Rs. Households, the share of income from beedi rolling constituted a substantial portion.

5.16 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EARNINGS FROM BEEDI WORK TO THE TOTAL INCOME OF THE FAMILY PER MONTH

The distribution outlined in Table 5.11 reveals that 37.82 percent of respondents earned between Rs. 2100-3000 per month from beedi rolling. In contrast, Table 5.16 shows that 38.3 percent of respondents had a total monthly income between Rs. 2001-3000. This suggests that, for a significant portion of respondents, the earnings from beedi rolling essentially constitute the entire income within this bracket.

Additionally, when considering the Rs. 1501-2000 monthly income range, Table 5.11 reports 24.01 percent from beedi rolling, while Table 5.16 shows 27.7 percent for the total monthly income. This indicates a notable reliance on beedi income for those falling within this bracket as well.

Furthermore, the distribution in Table 5.11 demonstrates that 14.47 percent of respondents earn between Rs. 6001-7000 per month from beedis. Comparing this with Table 5.16, which shows 9.58 percent with a total monthly income in the Rs. 9001-10,000 range, highlights that a considerable proportion of this income bracket is derived from beedi rolling.

In essence, these comparisons underscore the significant contribution of Beedi Money to the overall monthly income of households in specific income brackets, emphasizing its crucial role in shaping the financial well-being and quality of life for these households.

5.17 SAVING PROFILE

The distribution of respondents by their savings is depicted in Table 5.17. Out of the total, 94.73 percent respondents reported that they had no savings while 5.26 percent stated that they had some savings.

Table 5.17
Respondents savings through beedi rolling

Sl. No.	Head	Number	Percentage
1.	Yes	16	5.26
2.	No	288	94.73
Total		304	100.0

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.18 POSSESSION OF CULTIVABLE LAND

In Table 5.18 the distribution of respondents by whether they possessed agricultural land, is shown. It can be noted that out of the total respondents, 88.81 percent were landless, whereas only a small proportion of respondents (11.18 percent) reported having agricultural land.

Table 5.18
Whether respondent possessed agricultural land

Sl. No.	Responses	Number	Percentage
1.	Yes	34	11.18
2.	No	270	88.81
Total		304	100.00

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.19 HOUSE OWNERSHIP

Table 5.19 displays the distribution of respondents based on their accommodation type. A significant majority, accounting for 98.02 percent of the total respondents, reported owning their houses, while a smaller proportion, 1.64 percent, resided in rented accommodations. It is crucial to observe that despite the prevalence of homeownership, the conditions of the houses indicate a need for considerable improvement.

Table 5.19
Distribution of respondents by type of accommodation

Sl. No.	Head	Number	Percentage
1.	Own	298	98.02
2.	Rented	5	1.64
3.	No Reply	1	0.32
Total		304	100.00

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.20 AVERAGE DAILY EARNING OF THE RESPONDENT

The distribution of the respondents by their earnings per day is shown in Table 5.20. Out of the total respondents, 36.10 percent were earning Rs. 151-200 daily, followed by 33.60 percent who earned Rs. 101-150 rupees per day, 14.23 percent respondents' daily earning was between Rs. 71-100 rupees, 13.19 percent earned rupees Rs. 50-70 every day and 2.77 percent respondents earned more than Rs. 201 rupees daily. Overall, this distribution provides insights into the economic landscape of the surveyed population, highlighting both moderate income prevalence and diversity in earnings.

Table 5.20
Distribution of the respondents by their earnings per day

Sl. No.	Earnings	Frequency	Percentage
1.	50-70	38	13.19
2.	71-100	41	14.23
3.	101-150	97	33.60
4.	151-200	104	36.10
5.	201 and above	8	2.77
6.	No Response	16	5.26
Total		304	100.00

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.21 MAJOR ITEMS ON WHICH INCOME FROM BEEDI WAS SPENT

Table 5.21 presents a comprehensive overview of how respondents allocate their income from beedi rolling across various key aspects of daily life. Notably, all respondents, constituting 100 percent, report that their beedi income is primarily directed towards meeting food expenses, underscoring the critical role this source plays in sustaining basic needs. Additionally, 95.36 percent allocate funds for clothing, highlighting the significance of beedi earnings in addressing essential personal and family requirements. Further insights emerge as 71.52 percent of respondents use their beedi income for festivals and ceremonies, emphasizing its role in facilitating cultural and social activities.

The data also reveals that 63.24 percent prioritize medical care, showcasing the vital contribution of beedi work to healthcare access. Furthermore, 40.72 percent of respondents allocate a significant portion of their beedi income to their children's education, indicating the role of this occupation in supporting educational pursuits within the surveyed population. Overall, the findings underscore the multifaceted impact of

beedi income, addressing both immediate needs and contributing to broader aspects of familial well-being, education, and cultural participation.

Table 5.21
Major expenditure head on which beedi income is spent

Sl. No.	Items	Number	Percentage
1.	Food	304	100.00
2.	Clothing	288	95.36
3.	Education of the Children	123	40.72
4.	Medical Care	191	63.24
5.	Festival/Ceremonies	216	71.52
6.	Others	26	8.60

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.22 OTHER JOB THAN BEEDI ROLLING

The distribution in Table 5.22 outlines respondents' engagement in additional occupations apart from beedi rolling. Notably, a substantial majority of respondents, comprising 88.40 percent, reported exclusive involvement in beedi rolling without pursuing any other job. Conversely, 10.85 percent indicated having supplementary employment alongside beedi rolling, encompassing diverse activities such as sewing or vending. This data infers that a significant portion of the surveyed population relies exclusively on beedi rolling for their livelihood, underscoring the occupation's central role in their economic pursuits. However, a noteworthy minority engages in diverse supplementary jobs, reflecting a degree of occupational diversity within the surveyed community.

Table 5.22
Distribution of respondents by any other Job other than beedi rolling

Sl. No.	Head	Response	Percentage
1.	Yes	33	10.85
2.	No	269	88.40

3.	No Reply	2	0.65
Total		304	100.00

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.23 POSSESSION OF IDENTITY CARD

The data in Table 5.23 show the distribution of respondents by whether they had beedi workers Identity Card. It can be noted that out of the total, 59.21 percent respondents did not have beedi workers Identity Card, while 40.78 percent respondents reported that they possessed beedi workers ID Card. During the last several years beedi workers have not been issued identity cards by either by the Central Government or by the State Government implying that the vast number of workers are from the unorganized sector.

Table 5.23
Distribution of respondents having beedi workers ID card

Sl. No.	Head	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Yes	124	40.78
2.	No	180	59.21
Total		304	100.00

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.24 ASSISTANCE FROM WELFARE FUND

The distribution respondents by whether they received any assistance from Government's Beedi Workers Welfare Fund, is presented in Table 5.24. Out of the total, 64.54 percent respondents stated that they were receiving Education Assistance for their wards, followed by 27.49 percent who got other types of Assistance, 3.98 percent each respondents received Medical Assistance and House Building Grant, respectively and 17.43 percent respondents did not reply.

Table 5.24
Distribution of respondents receiving assistance

Sl. No.	Assistance	Number	Percentage
1.	Educational Assistance	162	64.54
2.	Medical Assistance	10	3.98
3.	Housing Building Grant	10	3.98
4.	Any Other	69	27.49
5.	No Reply	53	17.43
Total		304	100.00

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.25 PROVIDENT FUND

Table 5.25 shows the distribution of respondents by whether they contributed to the Provident Fund. It can be noticed that 39.47 percent respondents reported in affirmation, whereas 60.52 percent respondents did not contribute to the Provident Fund. It may be mentioned here that respondents who are working in the vicinity of beedi factories are reported to be enrolled in the Provident Fund Scheme, while those in outlying areas are not which implies that as the outlying areas give benefits to these areas will be scarce.

Table 5.25
Respondents contributed to provident fund

Sl. No.	Response	Number	Percentage
1.	Yes	120	39.47
2.	No	184	60.52
Total		304	100.00

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.26 WHETHER TOOK ANY LOAN FROM THE FUND

Table 5.26 illustrates the distribution of respondents by whether they took any loan from the Fund (PF). It can be noted that 100 percent of respondents said that they did not take any loan from the Provident Fund.

Table 5.26
Whether took any loan from the fund (PF)

Sl. No.	Response	Number	Percentage
1.	Yes	0	0
2.	No	304	100
Total		304	100

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.27 MEDICAL BENEFITS FROM LABOUR WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS

The distribution of respondents by whether they got any medical benefits from the dispensaries in their area, is represented in Table 5.27. Out of the total, 54.93 percent respondents reported that they received medical benefits in their area, whereas 45.06 percent respondents said that they did not get any medical benefits in their area. As we have mentioned earlier in many areas, mobile dispensaries are also not adequate.

Table 5.27
Whether respondents get any medical benefits in the area

Sl. No.	Response	Number	Percentage
1.	Yes	167	54.93
2.	No	137	45.06
Total		304	100.0

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.28 HEALTH SERVICES PROVIDING AGENCIES

Table 5.28 shows the distribution of respondents by whether there is any health Services Providing Agency in their area. It can be noted that out of the total, 54.93

percent respondents confirmed that there are Government Hospitals in their area, while 45.06 percent reported that they did not have any such facility/agency in their area.

Table 5.28
Health services providing agency

Sl. No.	Response	Number	Percentage
1.	No Services	137	45.06
2.	Government Hospitals	167	54.93
	Total	304	100.00

Source: Survey by the researchers.

5.29 MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

1. The beedi industry predominantly employed female workers, with 98.35% of respondents being women. Historically, the industry employed many men, but over time, women have become the primary workforce. The labour involved in beedi rolling is relatively straightforward, requiring minimal tools and skills that can be acquired quickly.
2. The majority of beedi workers (59.21%) fall within the 30-50 age bracket, indicating that many invest a significant portion of their working years in this industry. A notable 22.36% are under 30, and 18.4% are above 50, showing the industry's capacity to accommodate workers beyond traditional retirement age. This inclusivity highlights the industry's role in providing stable employment for a diverse age range.
3. Educational attainment among beedi workers is generally low: 11.57% are illiterate, 58.55% have only primary education, and just 0.65% are graduates. Economic constraints are a major factor behind this low educational level. However, there is a growing awareness and effort to improve educational outcomes for their children, with many preferring private schools. While beedi workers have low educational levels, their children are increasingly pursuing education, reflecting an improvement in economic conditions and a stronger

focus on educational attainment. The beedi industry's income plays a crucial role in supporting these educational efforts.

4. Children of beedi workers show a positive trend in education, with 34.63% in primary and 41.95% in middle school. Funding for education mainly comes from beedi earnings, though 36.18% of households lack additional income sources for education.
5. Beedi rolling is a generational occupation, with significant involvement from mothers (60.89%), fathers (19.72%), grandmothers (7.26%), and grandfathers (12.11%). This demonstrates a deep-rooted tradition of beedi making within families.
6. Most beedi workers have considerable experience, with 43.47% having worked for 7-12 years. Experience levels vary, indicating a mix of long-term and newer workers in the industry. The majority of respondents (60.85%) roll 1000 beedis daily, with some rolling more, reflecting the industry's high output and the collaborative nature of the work.
7. Earnings from beedi rolling vary, with 37.82% earning between Rs. 2100-3000 monthly. The data highlights the income range and its critical role in sustaining households. Beedi rolling is vital for the survival of workers and their families. Despite modest wages, it supports essential needs like food, healthcare, and education. It provides significant financial stability and a sense of self-reliance. 98.02% of respondents own their homes, though the conditions of these homes often need improvement.
8. 59.53% of respondents reported sufficient work opportunities from their employers, while 40.46% felt they had insufficient work, indicating a need for improved job availability. 50.92% of respondents received work for four weeks, reflecting a relatively stable employment pattern. However, 15.46% only had work for one week, showing variability in job availability. A significant 86.18% reported receiving more work than their demand, indicating robust labour demand in the beedi industry and overall positive job security.

9. Most respondents (38.30%) have a total monthly income between Rs. 2001-3000. This suggests that beedi rolling constitutes a substantial portion of household income. A vast majority (94.73%) have no savings, reflecting financial instability despite regular income from beedi rolling. Respondents' daily earnings show a range, with 36.10% earning Rs. 151-200 and 2.77% earning more than Rs. 201. This illustrates moderate income levels among beedi workers.
10. 88.40% of respondents rely solely on beedi rolling, while 10.85% engage in additional work, reflecting a dependence on beedi rolling as the primary income source. 59.21% of respondents do not have a beedi workers' identity card, indicating a lack of formal recognition and support from government bodies.
11. 64.54% receive education assistance, while 27.49% receive other forms of support from the Beedi Workers Welfare Fund. Few receive medical assistance or house building grants.
12. 39.47% of respondents contribute to the Provident Fund, with a disparity between those working in factories (more likely to be enrolled) and those in outlying areas (less likely to benefit). None of the respondents reported taking a loan from the Provident Fund, indicating potential barriers to accessing these funds.

Chapter Six

CASE STUDIES

I

"Dr. Eshak Ali: From Beedi District to Healing Hands - A Tale of Dedication and Service"



Dr. Eshak Ali was born in Aurangabad, District Murshidabad, which has been a significant hub of the beedi industry in West Bengal for over a century. Many generations in the district have been involved in beedi production-related activities. Dr. Ali's father, a 'Munshi,' ensured that his children received an education. Achieving higher education, especially in medicine, was challenging, but it became possible partly due to the dedicated Al Ameen Mission. In Dr. Ali's own words, "I studied at the mission's school from class 5 to 12. The expenses were minimal, and I didn't have

to spend much."

Dr. Ali received his MBBS degree from S.S.K.M. Hospital, Kolkata. When offered the position of a medical officer, he chose to serve in his home district of Murshidabad. He is currently working as a medical officer at the Beedi Worker Welfare Dispensary in Nimtita, Murshidabad. Nimtita is a location where many beedi workers are concentrated.

II

"Regina Bibi: Beedi to Brilliance - Empowering Lives Through Education and Activism"

"Without income from Beedi rolling, it would have been impossible for me to achieve what I have achieved." She said with pride.



Regina Bibi, aged 55, started rolling beedis at the age of 19. She learned the craft from her mother. After her marriage, she continued rolling beedis for 20 years. She also attended school and completed class nine. Regina has three children: two sons and one daughter. One son passed the 12th standard and is now employed in hospital services. Another son graduated and works as a computer operator. Her daughter completed graduation but did not pursue further education; she is now married.

As Regina narrated, she faced significant struggles in her life, and earnings from beedi rolling were her family's main source of income. Her husband, a mason, had irregular earnings that were often insufficient. It was her steady income from beedi rolling that allowed her to meet various family expenses. Her children occasionally received scholarships from welfare fund educational schemes, which were a great help. Today, Regina is much better off than she was a few years ago. She no longer rolls beedis, as she now has a full-time job with the Integrated Child Development Scheme. However, she remains an activist and organizer for beedi workers. With her knowledge of various schemes meant for beedi workers, she assists many others in her area.

III

"The Empowering Journey of Rina Bibi: Beedi Rolling to Education and Pride"

Rina Bibi, aged 55, has been rolling beedis for over 25 years. Her husband, a mason, had irregular work, so the responsibility of supporting the family fell largely on her. The income from rolling beedis was her primary source of livelihood.

Rina Bibi has two sons and two daughters. Although she only completed her education up to the fourth grade, she managed to educate her children. Her eldest son has completed the 12th standard and works as a skilled mason. Her daughter was also educated up to the 12th standard and is now married.

Her youngest son graduated from Bangabasi College, a prestigious institution in Kolkata. He is now a sub-inspector, currently posted in Murshidabad district. Securing this position through a competitive examination has brought great pride and enthusiasm to the family. Rina Bibi believes that without her employment in beedi rolling, it would have been impossible to educate her children. Her work remains a cornerstone of her family's survival.

IV

Marium's Beedi-rolled Dreams: A Lifeline for her Family.

Mrs. Marium, aged 45, began rolling beedis at the age of 12. In her village, beedi rolling is a crucial economic activity alongside agriculture, providing essential income to meet her family's expenses. She was married at 19, and upon moving to her new home, she continued her beedi rolling work. Her husband is a marginal farmer with very little cultivable land and mostly works as agricultural labor, which provides insufficient and seasonal income.

Marium's income from beedi rolling offers a more stable financial base. With this income, she has been able to meet many of her household needs. She has married off her daughter and purchased a "van"—a tricycle used for transporting agricultural goods from the village to the market. Her son now drives the van and earns a good amount each day.

Beedi rolling has become an integral part of her daily life. Although she has acquired a beedi worker's identity card from the labor welfare commission's office, she has not received any benefits so far. This is largely due to her lack of awareness about available welfare benefits and the absence of an agency to assist her.

V

"Rolling Beedis, Keeping Hope Alive: Neena's Tale of Resilience and Survival"

Mrs. Neena, aged 40, is a mother of two children who began rolling beedis from a very early age. Her earnings were crucial during her marriage and also helped support her parents and siblings before she married.

Today, she earns between Rs. 100-130 per day from beedi rolling. She fits this work around her domestic responsibilities. Sometimes, she rolls beedis early in the morning, after which she prepares breakfast and sends her children to school. She resumes rolling beedis until lunchtime, continues after lunch, and occasionally rolls beedis before going to bed. On average, she produces between 500-700 beedis daily. She collects tendu leaves, beedi flakes, and threads from a designated shop in the market and deposits the finished beedis with the shop owner.

When asked how her earnings have benefited her household, she replied: "Without this income from beedi work, my family would have starved. Beedi rolling is a boon for us. We wouldn't survive without this work!"

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

West Bengal currently has the largest number of beedi workers in the country. Out of the total registered beedi workers (49,82,294), 39.74 percent are concentrated in West Bengal. Within the state, 38 percent of these workers are located in District Murshidabad. The overwhelming majority of beedi workers in the state are female. The beedi industry is the second-largest employer in West Bengal, following agriculture.

7.1 STUDY RESULTS

The employment in the beedi industry, especially in the beedi rolling activity is an important source of livelihood for almost two million workers in the State. The earning from this employment has impacted the living standards of lakhs of families over the decades and is still impacting very positively by providing a perennial source of income.

Though many beedi rollers were illiterate in the past and even today, their children are no more illiterate, as they are receiving education, and many have received higher levels of education.

In many sectors employment opportunities in the State may be declining, for example, agriculture. But in the beedi industry employment opportunities have remained stable.

Because of the regular employment in the Beedi rolling, the impact of the pandemic Covid 19, could be felt less in the Beedi industry.

Hence given the overall employment situation in the country in general and West Bengal in particular, the opportunity in the beedi industry cannot be underplayed. There is evidence that the increased level of the GST and other duties imposed by the Government have impacted the industry to some extent.

The industry will have to rebrand its products and will have to explore ways and means to minimize the negative side by scientific research and investigation. Simply imposing a crippling tax burden would not help, rather strategy must be so formulated that the employment generating activity of the industry remains stable.

7.2 POSITIVE TRENDS

1. **Consistent Employment:** The study reveals that beedi rollers typically enjoy year-round employment, indicating the stability of this work compared to seasonal alternatives.
2. **Enhanced Education Opportunities:** Our profile of beedi workers and their successors suggests improved educational prospects for the next generation.
3. **Access to Social Sector Schemes:** Those involved in beedi work and their families benefit from social sector schemes, contributing to an enhanced quality of life.
4. **Remote Work Benefits:** Beedi work offers the advantage of remote work, providing flexibility and curbing the need for relocation to urban areas, consequently mitigating migration trends.

7.3 AREAS OF CONCERN

Revenue Decline:

- In the fiscal year 2018-19, the annual revenue generated from beedi sticks amounted to INR 54.5 billion. Beedi consumption was estimated at 400 billion sticks per year, which includes 275 billion duty-paid sticks and 125 billion duty-exempt sticks (Goodchild, 2020).
- This results in a revenue loss of 31%, equivalent to INR 24.77 billion.

Current Loss Projection:

- The ongoing growth of losses, estimated at 31%, is anticipated, this will reach to approximately 1500-2000 Crores in West Bengal.

GST Impact:

- Calculated based on Goodchild's estimate (31%), the GST loss is approximately 900 Crores per year in West Bengal.

Absence of Social Security for Unorganized sector Beedi Workers:

- The unorganized nature of beedi work has led to a continual increase in the number of workers without access to social security benefits.

7.4 OUR SUGGESTIONS

To safeguard and nurture the industry, given its distinctive impact on both rural and urban areas by generating employment, it is imperative for the government to consider the following:

- **Rationalizing GST:**

To curb evasion and enhance compliance, there is a proposal to reduce GST on beedis. This reduction will not only mitigate the likelihood of tax evasion but also yields financial benefits for the state. Additionally, it will facilitate the social well-being of beedi workers through access to benefits such as PF, Gratuity, etc.

- **Reskilling Existing Beedi Workers:**

The essential development of beedi rollers necessitates a focus on skill enhancement. Reskilling and upskilling initiatives are crucial, offering beedi workers opportunities for both self-employment and wage employment in alternative sectors. This proactive approach ensures their continued growth and adaptability in the evolving job market.

In this above backdrop, the concern expressed by ILO is very pertinent, *“The Beedi Industry is also under pressure due to public health concerns against the growing tobacco use. Since there are millions of workers engaged in tobacco and tobacco*

related industry, any move towards the banning of tobacco products and discouraging tobacco use must begin with finding and promoting alternatives for workers involved in this industry. The failure to do so would not only create social problems but will also be an infringement on the right of livelihood of those workers.”⁷

Similar concern was expressed by AF Development Care as well:

“There are nearly 5 million women Beedi Rollers in India, who are the part of 93% of the workforce, who work in the unorganized sector. They must be given priority in the skill development Programme of the government to contribute to the overall economic development. However, the government has not been effective. For example, the Government data of 2019 shows only 1025 of the 2223 women Beedi rollers trained (out of nearly 5 million in the country) shifted to alternative jobs in 2019.”⁸

The above concerns must be addressed systematically so that the already vulnerable Beedi workers do not become more vulnerable which may jeopardize their livelihood and survival.

⁷ The International Labour Organization, 2003, “Beedi Sector in India: A Note”

⁸ AF Development Care, July 2020, Knowledge Gap in Existing Research on India’s Women Beedi Rollers & Alternative Livelihood Options

References & Bibliography

- 1) Alamelumangal, S (2020), A Survey of Health Status of Women Beedi Workers in Mukkudal: Minor Research Project. School of Education, Manonmaniam Sunder University, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu.
- 2) Arora, Harshika (2023), "Beedi Industry Trends for Employment and Wage", Issue, Feb. 20, 2023.
- 3) Arora M., Datta P., Barman A., Sinha P., Bhumik S., Nazar GP and Tullu, F. (2020), "The Bidi Industry Trends in Employment and Wages Differentials in Public Health Vol. 8, 2020.
- 4) Centre for People's Forestry (NIL), "Tendu Leaves". NTFP Enterprise and Forest Governance, Bhopal.
- 5) Goodchild, Mark; Munish, Vineet Gill, Sinha, Praveen, Tullu, Fikrul Tesfaye and Paul, Jeremiah (2020) Revisiting the tax treatment of Bidis in India, In the Tobacco control, Vol. 31 Issue 3.
- 6) Government of India (2015). *Evaluation Study on the Implementation of Minimum Wages Act, 1948 in Beedi Making Industry in Madhya Pradesh*. Chandigarh, Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour and Employment.
- 7) Government of India (2019), Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), New Delhi, Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation.
- 8) Iti, Burman Poulomi Nikhil Kumar (2018). "Beedi Industry in Murshidabad District of West Bengal: An Empirical Study." In Business Studies, vol. XXXIX, No. 1 & 2, July, 2018.
- 9) John, Priya (2017). Beedi Industry and Welfare of Workers in India. Centre for Health and Social Justice, Saket, New Delhi.
- 10) Khator, Smita (2023) "How Women Beedi Workers' Health goes up in Smoke." The Wire, April 05, 2023.
- 11) Lal, P. (2012). 'Estimating the size of Tendu Leaf and Beedi Trade using a simple Back-of-the-Envelope Method.' National Library of Medicine.
- 12) NCEUS (2006) Social Security for Unorganized workers: Report. National Commission in the Unorganized sector (NCEUS), Government of India, New Delhi.
- 13) O'malley, L.S.S. (1997). *Bengal District Gazettes: Murshidabad*, Calcutta, Government of West Bengal.
- 14) Raffi, Mohammed (ed.) (2022). *Bonding through Beedi: A Glimpse in to Lives of the Poor Beedi Workers of India*. Karnataka, Karavali Beedi Workers' Union ® (HMS) and South Kanara-Udupi District Beedi Contractors' Union ®, Mangaluru.
- 15) Rehman, M.M (2007) Operations of Welfare Fund for Beedi Workers in Madhya Pradesh: Profile, Problems and Prospects, Noida, V.V. Giri National Labour Institute, Government of India, Ministry of Labour and Employment.

- 16) Rehman M.M and Rehman, K. (2022) *Indian Labour: a compendium*, New Delhi, Nation Press.
- 17) Roy, A.K. (1989). *A Report on Socio-Economic Conditions of Beedi Workers in Sambalpur – At a Glance*. Sambalpur, Zonal Labour Office, Odisha.
- 18) Sen, Vinod and Patel, Manish Kumar (2014), “Contribution of Beedi Industry in the economic development of Madhya Pradesh”, In Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences, June 1, 2014.
- 19) Singh, J.K., et al. (2014). “Occupational Health Problems Amongst Women Beedi Rollers in Jhansi, Bundelkhand Region, Uttar Pradesh.” *Journal of Ecophysiology and Occupational Health*, 14(1-2), 17-22 <https://doi.org/10.18311/jeoh/2014/1668>.
- 20) Shamim Ansari, Mohd & Raj, Aparna (2015). “Socio-Economic Status of Women Beedi Workers in Bundelkhand Region of Uttar Pradesh: An Empirical Analysis, *UTMS Journal of Economics, University of Tourism and Management, Skopje, Macedonia*, vol.6(1) pages 53-66.
- 21) Sharma, U.K. (2020). *‘Tendu Leaves: Trade and Management Practices in India’*, Dehradun, Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy.
- 22) Tigari, Harish and Nazneeni Taj S.K. (2019). “Economic activities and Livelihood: A case of Beedi Workers”. In *EPRA International Journal of Research and Development*. vol. 4, Issues 5, May 2019.
- 23) The Hindu (2022) “In India’s beedi hub of Murshidabad, an exclusive hospital for workers of the industry lacks doctors and facilities.” December 17, 2022.
- 24) Tobacco Board (2023) *Annual Report: 2021-22*. Government of India.
- 25) Varma, Uday Kumar and Rehman, M.M. (2005). *Tobacco, Tendu Leaf and Beedi Workers in India*. Delhi, Shipra Publications and V.V. Giri National Labour Institute, NOIDA, U.P.
- 26) Vasuki, Vibha and Rambhatla, Shiva Prasad (2021) *A Study on Lack of Alternate Employment for Women Beedi Rollers*. The Mysore Beedi Mazdoor Association®, Mysore.
- 27) World Bank (2011) *Social Protection for a changing India: Vol. I*, Washington, D.C.