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Socio-economic status of tea small-holders in hills of Sri Lanka

H.W. Shyamalie[a]* and A.S. Saini[b]

[a]*Department of Agricultural Economics, Extension Education and Rural Sociology, CSK HPKV, Palampur, Himachal Pradesh, India*
[b]*Agricultural Economics Division, Tea Research Institute, Talawakelle, Sri Lanka*

ABSTRACT: Tea small-holders play a vital role in the economy of Sri Lanka. An attempt has been made here to examine the issues impacting the living style and status of tea small-holders in hilly areas. The study was carried out in tea-growing areas of Nuwara Eliya district. Multiple stage random sampling procedure was followed to select the sample. Twenty five households from each of the selected villages (three) were randomly chosen. The data were collected through well-structured and pretested questionnaire for the year 2007–2008. Tabular techniques were employed. The results revealed that main source of income of the study area is Tea cultivation. Majority of the households belonged to low or medium income groups; the income of 14% of the households does not meet their expenditure. Livelihood of the sample population can be improved by providing knowledge on farming and services of the relevant institutions as well as availability of inputs at reasonable prices.

Keywords: Tea small-holders; Income; Expenditure; Livelihood

Introduction

Tea industry plays an important role in most of the developing countries in earning foreign exchange that contributes in a big way to national income and development; Sri Lanka, one of the finest tea-producing countries, is no exception. The developmental activities and socio-economic progress of Sri Lanka have been closely linked with tea sector for the last two centuries. This sector has contributed a major share in employment (13%), export earnings (13.4) and government revenue (1.2% of total GDP), besides occupying 3.5% of the total land area approx. 8.00% of the cultivated land of the country.[1]

In Sri Lanka, tea plantations are mainly owned by two categories of producers: large corporate sector and small-holders. Small-holders are farmers holding and managing less than 50 acres of land. Total 59% of the tea area (132, 329 ha) belongs to around 3.84 lakhs small-holdings.[2] Their contribution to the national tea production has increased from 39% in 1987 to 73.8% in 2007, despite their inherent socio-economic and technological problems that need special attention of the researchers and policy engineers of the country. Before any policy-making, it is a prerequisite to understand, through incisive insight, the prominent socio-economic pointers of small-holders that affect their status and development as the socio-economic development of particular group basically depends on these factors. Especially, undulating topography and harsh climatic conditions in hilly areas are impediments to development and living conditions of the inhabitants than that in plains. With this background, an attempt has been made to examine and present the vital issues impacting the living style and status of the tea small-holders in hilly areas of Sri Lanka.

Sampling and Data

The study has been carried out in tea-growing areas of Nuwara Eliya district of Sri Lanka. Multistage, simple, random sampling procedure has been followed to select samples for the study. To begin with, tea growing pockets in the selected district were identified on the basis of similar agro-climatic conditions. There are five main tea-growing pockets, namely, Ambagamuwa, Udahewaheta, Kothmale, Nuwara Eliya and Walapane in Nuwara Eliya district. At the first stage, three pockets were randomly selected from the district. At the second stage, one village from each of the selected pockets was chosen randomly. Finally, 25 households from each of the selected villages were randomly selected, making a total sample of 75 households. The data from the selected households were collected through personal interview-method using a well-structured and pre-tested questionnaire during the year 2007–2008. Tabular techniques were employed to analyse data.

Glimpses on Socio-economic Structure

Socio-economic measures at the household level are particularly helpful in examining their status. Moreover, the

*Author for correspondence. E-mail: rchamath@yahoo.com

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Table 1: Age-wise Population Distribution

Age Group (Years)	Female		Male		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0–4	12	7	13	8	25	8
5–14	24	14	25	16	49	15
15–19	16	8	14	10	30	9
20–59	98	58	90	57	188	58
60 and above	20	13	13	9	33	10

differences in social, demographic composition as well as economic entitlement have various implications on small-holders' status at the household level. Therefore, it is quite imperative to examine the socio-economic conditions of sample households.

Demographic Matrix of Sample Households

Distribution of population, sex composition, family structure and educational status were analysed.

Population Distribution

The age-wise distribution of the family is an important determinant since lesser the proportion of dependents (children below 19 years and old persons above 60 years of age), better will be the economic position of a family. The population age structure of the sample households, as presented in Table 1, revealed that ~32% of population belonged to the age group of below 19 years. People in the age group of 20–59 years, the real earning group of the society, which is known as active workforce, constituted ~58% and the population in the age group above 60 years constituted 10% of sample population.

Sex Composition

The sex composition of the family members is presented in Table 2. The proportion of male population in the age group below 19 years was relatively higher than females. It could be further seen that the proportion of females in the age group of above 60 years was very high, indicating thereby higher dependency as well as life expectancy of females in the study area.

Table 2: Sex Composition of the Household Members by Age (%)

Age Group (Years)	Female	Male
0–4	48.00	52.00
5–14	48.98	51.02
15–19	46.67	53.33
20–59	52.13	47.87
60 and above	60.61	39.39
Average	51.28	48.72

Table 3: Household Size and Gender of Head of Household

Characteristics	No.	%
Gender of the head of household		
Male-headed	62	83
Female-headed	13	17
Household size		
1–4 persons	53	71
5–8 persons	21	28
9–11 persons	1	1
Mean household size		
Male-headed	4.3	
Female-headed	4.0	
Overall	4.3	
Type of family		
Joint	9	12
Nuclear	66	88
No. of observations	75	100

Structure of Sample Households

The details on family size, gender of the head and type of the family show that a large proportion of households were headed by males; only one-sixth of females in the study district were reported to be head of families (Table 3). A female acts as a head of the family in case of death of her spouse, divorce, separation or the absence of the male for extended period due to his job away from home. Another reason may be because of no adult son residing with female head of the family. Generally, the female-headed households had different characteristics than male-headed households; these differences affect household's total available resources, income-generating activities, expenditure pattern and decision-making power in the family, besides insecurity and instability factors. All male-headed sample households tended to

Table 4: Education Level of Adult Household Members (%)

Education Level	Female	Male	Overall
Illiterate	1.71	0.96	1.36
Primary (1–5)	10.26	7.69	9.05
Middle (6–8)	8.55	14.42	11.31
Metric (9–10)	47.01	49.04	47.96
Secondary (11–12)	29.06	24.04	26.70
Graduate	3.41	2.88	3.17
Post-graduate	0.00	0.97	0.45
Total	100	100	100

Table 5: Occupation of Household Members (%)

Occupation	Female	Male	Overall
Farming	25.90	27.68	26.62
Agriculture/ daily wage labour	0.00	17.86	7.19
Defense services	1.61	3.57	1.44
Private sectors	6.02	21.43	12.23
House managers	50.20	0.00	30.94
Unemployed	9.04	7.14	8.27
Government services	4.22	8.04	5.76
Business	2.41	10.71	5.76
Service abroad	0.60	3.57	1.79
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

be larger on an average than female-headed households. Also, female-headed households had a tendency to be small household consisting of four members, against 4.3 members in male-headed households. The mean household size of the sample was 4.3. The household size of majority (72%) of the sample ranged between one and four persons. It was also observed that majority (88%) of the sample households were nuclear families.

Education Status

Education liberates the mind of human beings from all forms of darkness, ignorance and sharpens it for logical thinking. Educational level indicates the quality of human resources and helps to determine the extent of knowledge, managerial skill, ability to understand particular problem and the decision-making ability of the people. Furthermore, education is regarded as the corner state for socio-economic development of the society. Keeping above facts in view, the status of sample smallholder population with regards to the level of education was studied (Table 4).

Table 6: Land Holdings and Ownership Patterns

Category	No.	%
Landholding (acres)		
0.1–0.5	38	51
0.6–1.5	28	37
1.6–4	9	12
Overall	75	100
Land ownership by sex		
Female	31 (29.09)	41
Male	44 (39.70)	59
Overall	75 (68.79)	100

Table 7: Household Income/Per Capita Income/ Expenditure

Income/Expenditure	US$/Month
Off-farm income	102.64 (77.50)
Non-factor income	1.06 (0.008)
Farming	28.69 (22.48)
Total income	132.41
Average per capita income (per person)	27.78
Average per capita expenditure on food items (per person)	12.59
Average per capita expenditure on non-food items (per person)	6.29

The analysis of general educational level among the adult family members of the sample households revealed that literacy rate was slightly high in the sample population. However, among males and females, ~1% and ~2% of the population was illiterate, respectively.

Occupational Pattern

A critical analysis of the pattern of occupation helps to understand the economic position of the family. So, the pattern of occupation has been discussed in Table 5. Farming was found to be the major source of livelihood, and for ~27% in the sample population occupation is accounting. More than half of women in the sampled households were house managers and they also help in agriculture-related activities. Government service was the main occupation for only 4% of females and 8% of males. Business was reported to be another important sector of employment, particularly for males; it accounts for 2.41% of females and 10.71% of males in the sample. Defense service is another important sector for earning livelihood for 5.32% of males. Interestingly, 1.61% of females also are serving in the military. It is worth mentioning that percentage of women employed in private sector as well as government sector was relatively less.

Land-holding Pattern

The size of land holding by the households determines their status and economic position because it provides

Table 8: Categorization of Household According to Per Capita Income

Income Group	No.	%
Low (below US$ 28.34)	46	61
Medium (US$ 28.35–67.18)	23	31
High (above US$ 67.19)	6	8
Total	75	100

Table 9: Average Monthly Non-Food Expenditure (US$ per Household)

Telephone charges	3.78	13.08
Electricity/fuel charges	3.57	12.44
Water charges	0.10	0.33
Transport charges	3.82	13.29
Health and medical expenses	3.77	13.14
Education fees	6.63	23.08
Clothing expenses	3.01	10.46
Miscellaneous expenses	0.37	1.30
Social functions	3.69	12.88
Total	28.79	100

regular employment as well as income to the rural family.

The operational management and work participation of labour varied according to the size of the holding. Therefore, the present study examined the landholding pattern of sampled households, as presented in Table 6. The average size of land-holding varied from 0.5 acres to 4 acres. Most of the sampled households (more than 50%) in study area owned land below 0.5 acres. The holdings ranging 0.6–1.5 acres were owned by 37% of the sampled households.

Income and Expenditure Pattern of the Sampled Households

Total income comprises farm income as well as off-farm income whereas non-factor income such as pension, government transfers and remittances. The off-farm income mainly depends on the prevailing structure of wage rate and the types of occupation. Table 7 summarizes monthly mean income and expenditure pattern of sampled households. Main source of income of the sampled households was off-farm income that contributed ~77% to the total income. The contribution of non-factor income was negligible in the study area. Farming, which is generally of subsistence type, added 22% to the total household income. Mean monthly per capita income and per capita food and non-food expenditure were US$ 27.78/head and US$ 18.88/head, respectively.

Table 10: Categorization of Household Based on Per Capita Expenditure

Expenditure Group	No.	%
Low (below US$ 18.24)	33	44.00
Medium (US$ 18.25–28.00)	28	37.33
High (above US$ 28.01)	14	18.67
Total	75	100.00

Table 11: Expenditure Pattern (Per Capita) of Different Income Groups (US$ per Month)

Income Group	Food Expenditure	Non-Food Expenditure
Low	10.86 (78.85)	2.91 (21.15)
Medium	12.77 (63.60)	7.30 (36.40)
High	14.06 (62.11)	8.64 (37.89)
Mean	12.59 (60.02)	6.29 (39.98)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate % of total expenditure.

The source of income as well as income level is an important determinant of a household's vulnerability to economic shocks. Poor families are generally more vulnerable to economic shocks, and they are over represented in the lowest income groups. Table 8 explains the distribution of households on the basis of different income levels. Most of the households (61%) were found in the low-income group, followed by medium-income group (31%) and only a few households (8%) in the high-income group.

Table 9 presents data on the break-up of mean monthly non-food expenditure of the sampled households; the results indicated that the main non-food expenditure was allocated to education. Allocation for other non-food expenditures such as telephone charges, clothing and expenses for social ceremonies remained more or less similar. However, sampled households allocated 12.88% for social functions.

Higher mean expenditure of the household does not indicate high per capita expenditure as it mainly varies with the size of the household. Moreover, it may not give a clearer picture of vulnerability of the households. Therefore, in the present study per capita expenditure was compared under three categories namely low, medium and high (Table 10). Majority of the sampled households fell in the low expenditure group (44%).

Table 11 compares the expenditure pattern of households according to their income levels. Household expenditure pattern generally varies with the level of income. The implications of Engle's law of consumption are found true in the study area as the highest propor-

Table 12: Housing Structure of Sampled Households

Type of House	No. of Households	%
"*Pucca*"	18	24.00
Semi-"*Pucca*"	23	30.67
"*Kuchha*"	34	45.33
Total	75	100.00

Table 13: Facilities Available in Houses of Sampled Households

Sources	No. of Households	%
Own pipeline	63	84.00
Common pipeline/well	12	16.00
Availability of electricity	67	89.33
Bathroom facility	16	21.33
Laterine facility		
Sanitary (water-sealed)	19	25.33
Pit latrine	34	45.33
Unsanitary (temporary)	17	22.67
None/open field	5	6.67
Fuel for cooking		
Gas	1	1.34
Gas + firewood	16	21.33
Firewood	58	77.33
Road facility		
Footpath	47	62.67
Cemented/stone	28	37.33

tion of total expenditure on food items was found in low income group and the same was the lowest in case of high income group. Interestingly, the reverse was found true in case of expenditure on non-food items, indicating thereby the share of food expenditure from the household budget decreases with the increase level of income while share of non-food expenditure increases.

Housing Structure

House is a place where the entire family takes shelter at night after doing hard work for earning livelihood. As such, the study of type of house is imperative to examine the status of the family as it is the place which protects the family members in case of some natural occurrences like rain, earthquake, cold and heat. For these reasons, housing structure of the sampled households was examined in the study area (Table 12). It was found that ~24% of sampled households were "*pucca*" houses which were made of concrete (cement, tiles, stone and bricks); ~56% were "*kucha*" in nature being made of mud-bricks and rest of houses were of semi-"*pucca*" type.

Facilities Available in the Houses of Sampled Households

The basic amenities such as access to safe water, sanitation, availability of electricity and the energy used for cooking are the important pointers that considerably impact the health of the family and its socio-conomic position.

Table 14: Daily Frequency of Food Intake

Food Group	Average	SD
Cereals	2.96	0.20
Roots and tubers	1.21	0.57
Pulses	1.04	0.72
Meat	0.10	0.00
Fish	1.51	0.75
Egg	0.13	0.00
Milk/milk products	1.02	0.13
Vegetables	2.18	0.82
Fruits	0.13	0.33
Fats and oils	2.94	0.23
Sugar	2.57	0.55

Note: SD, Standard Deviation.

In order to know the extent of disparity in case of basic amenities across the sampled households, availability of these amenities was studied and presented in Table 13. Drinking water supply is one of the basic needs of the people. It was observed that a majority of the sampled households (84%) were having tap-water facility in their own houses. All the sampled villages have been electrified, and all the households except a few (11%) have got connection. Regarding bathroom facility, Only 21% of sampled households have bathroom facility. Approx. 71% of the sampled households had water-sealed or pit latrine facilities. Use of an unsanitary or open latrine

Table 15: Age-wise Mean Calorie Intake and Calorie Adquecy Ratio (CAR)

Age Group (yrs)	Mean Daily Intake Female	Mean CAR	Mean Daily Intake Male	Mean CAR
1–3	705	0.75	950	0.92
4–6	948	0.81	1154	0.89
7–9	1367	0.88	1196	0.86
10–12	1710	0.88	1499	0.87
13–15	1870	0.89	2073	0.97
16–19	1866	0.90	2119	0.92
20–39	2055	1.07	2942	1.16
40–49	1888	1.05	2501	1.04
50–59	1671	0.98	2676	1.20
60–69	1844	1.22	2810	1.39
≥70	1163	0.87	2245	1.27
Average	1553	0.94	1950	1.04

Table 16: Categorization of Nutritional Status

Categories (energy needs met)	Female	Male
0–25%	1.25	0.00
25.1–50%	8.13	5.08
50.1–75%	19.38	19.49
75.1–less than 100%	30.63	27.97
≥100% (food secure)	40.63	47.46

was noticed in 27% of sampled households. Only ~1% of sampled households used gas; ~21% of households used gas with fire wood as the energy for cooking. Fire-wood was the main source of fuel for 77% of the sampled households.

Consumption Pattern

The consumption pattern of the people is also an important indicator deciding their health status and economic position. Besides, consumption pattern is one of the main characteristics of local cultures: it reflects local food availability, purchasing power of a household, people's knowledge and perceptions; consumption pattern varies across the regions, countries and different income groups.

Dietary Diversity. Table 14 displays the mean number of different food groups consumed per day (dietary diversity) over a period of 24 hr. Cereal, fat/oil and sugar were the most common food groups consumed in the study area, with a median value of three times per day. Roots, tubers, importantly, pulses were found to be commonly consumed by the people of the study area. Sampled households consumed fish and vegetable more frequently. It can be seen from Table 14 that the frequency of consumption of protein- and vitamin-rich food items like meat, eggs and fruits was very low.

Table 17: Ranking of Components According to Their Relative Contribution to Entrepreneurial Behaviour

Components	Mean Score	Rank
Achievement motivation	8.46	I
Management orientation	8.43	II
Risk-taking ability	6.60	VIII
Self-confidence	6.67	VII
Leadership ability	7.40	IV
Farm decision-making	7.37	V
Utilization of available assistance	5.97	X
Ability to co-ordinate farm activities	7.41	III
Knowledge of farming	6.93	VI
Cosmopoliteness	6.23	IX
Innovativeness	1.26	XI
Entrepreneurial behavioural index	72.72	

Table 18: Contribution of Women to Household Income and Expenditure

Indicators	US$/ Month
Average farm income	21.25
Average off-farm income	17.28
Average total income	38.53
Income share of women on household income	
Farm income (%)	74.00
Off-farm income (%)	16.84
Women's income share on household expenditure (%)	44.39

Calorie Intake and Calorie Adequacy Ratio. Adequate nutrition enhances the physical health of the people and thereby improves their labour productivity and efficiency. Moreover, the calorie requirement of individual depends upon several factors like age, body composition and level of physical activity on daily basis, sex and the stage of the life cycle. The mean calorie adequacy ratio, as per the recommended requirements of individuals (males and females), is given in Table 15. The energy requirements are given separately for various age groups like adults and children. The mean calorie intake of male and female was 1950 kcal day^{-1} and 1553 kcal day^{-1}, respectively. It can be visualized that the overall average calorie adequacy ratio of females was 0.94%. Table 15 further revealed that overall calorie adequacy ratio of males was greater than females. Calorie adequacy ratio of males in the age group of above 20 years was one or above which implies that the said group of males gets energy as per the recommended requirement. It is important to note that both male and female children in the study district were the most disadvantaged group in terms of calorie allocation. Further, in comparison to male counterparts, female chil-

Table 19: Shocks to Livelihood Security (%)

Type of Shocks	No. of Affected Households
High electricity charges	28.00
Food prices increase	33.33
Unemployment risk	6.67
Increasing school fees	10.67
Long illness of family members	13.33
Sudden death of income earner	1.33

dren as well as adults suffered more in terms of energy allocation, indicating thereby, inequality in the calorie allocation and it was more skewed in favour of males.

Nutritional Status of Sampled Households. Nutritional status in terms of energy was grouped into five categories (Table 16). The first category includes those individuals (~1%) who meet their energy up to 25% of total energy requirement. The second category includes those individuals who could meet their energy requirement ranging 25.1–50% and this category comprised ~8% females and 5% males. Overall, it can be concluded from the findings that ~41% females and ~47% males in study villages are secure on energy front.

Entrepreneurship

Economic independence is the main contributory factors for their overall status in the family as well as in the society. Of the major rural enterprises, tea cultivation has been regarded as an important instrument of economic and social change to supplement the income and employment to the rural sector. However, the progress of farming depends on the entrepreneurial behaviour of growers. Keeping the above facts in view, the present study attempted to examine the entrepreneurial behaviour of smallholdings.

Components of Entrepreneurial Behaviour

It can be reviewed from the past studies that there are 11 components of entrepreneurial behaviour such as innovativeness, management orientation, achievement motivation, knowledge of farming, utilization of available assistance, risk-taking ability, farm decision making, leadership ability, self-confidence, ability to coordinate farm activities and cosmopolitanism.[3] However, these components are not equally important to the entrepreneurial behaviour of individual. So, the present investigation looked into the relative contribution of different components to entrepreneurial behaviour and results are summarized in Table 17. Results revealed that achievement motivation was the most important aspect of entrepreneurial behaviour with highest score of 8.46. The next important aspect was management orientation (8.43 average score). The ability to coordinate farm activities was ranked at third place. Fourth and fifth component of entrepreneurial behaviour were leadership ability and farm decision-making ability, respectively. Knowledge of farming, self-confidence, risk-taking ability, cosmopolitanism, utilization of available assistance and innovativeness were other variables in the descending order of their contribution to entrepreneurial behaviour. Higher score of entrepreneurial behaviour index (72.12) indicated that their entrepreneurial behaviour was relatively better.

Involvement of Women in Different Activities

Women folk are considered as the backbone of a nation and the better-half of man in almost all spheres of life, of which hilly areas of Sri Lanka are not the exception. Sharing of productive activities by women is neither a new phenomenon nor a new development. Moreover, their productive involvement has created beneficial impacts in uplifting their own status and that of their families, improving nutritional status and in alleviating rural poverty. In this background, ensuing section has attempted to examine a disaggregated picture of women's involvement in various activities.

Involvement of Women in Income-earning Activities

The main income-earning activity of rural women is agriculture and livestock as it has also been regarded as an important instrument of economic and social change to supplement income and employment to the rural sector. It was revealed that ~62% of work related to farming had been done by women. Average monthly income per woman was US$ 38.53, out of which ~55% was earned from agriculture. It was further revealed that female farm workers added 51.5% and 74% to the total farm income. The contribution to the total off-farm income by women in study area was 16.84%. The share of women to the total income was 29%, and their contribution to household expenditure was 44.39% (Table 18).

Livelihood Security

The shocks to livelihood security of small tea growers as well as shocks to management strategies were assessed/worked (Tables 19 and 20).

Livelihood Security Shocks

A shock, which is an event that has impact on the household's livelihood security, is normally transient and can be viewed as a rapid departure from norm of a given factor. The shocks to livelihood that were reported by the households were presented in Table 19. The main shocks among these were the increasing prices of food and electricity charges. These shocks were reported by one-third of the sampled households. Another important shock reported by 7% of sample household was unemployment risk. Other shocks experienced by households were increased school fees, long illness of family members and sudden death in the family.

Table 20: Strategies Followed by Households to Manage Shocks (%)

Strategies for Coping	No. of House-holds
Strategies to cope with limited food	
Borrowed food or money to buy food on credit	33.33
Rely on less preferred food as a substitute	34.67
Reduce no. of meals per day	1.33
Reduce quality of meals	4.00
Strategies to cope with reduced expenditure	
Avoid spending on health care	10.67
Reduce expenditure on education	4.00
Reduce expenditure on water and electricity	0.00
Reduce expenditure on transport	0.00
Coping with insufficient income	
Seeking more work	8.00
Meet from savings	5.33
Pawn jewelry	4.00

Shocks Management Strategies

The capacity of the households to cope with the livelihood insecurity depends upon the severity of the exposure to hazards and the quantity and quality of assets of the household as well as ability of families to mitigate the paucity.

Table 20 presents three categories of strategies followed by households namely coping with limited food, expenditure reduction and income related strategies. Borrowing food was the main strategy followed by almost all the sampled households. Approx. 35% of households in the sample curtailed expenses by eating less preferred foods. Reduced number of meals and quantity per meal was the last strategy followed by sampled households. Strategies to reduce expenditure was followed by 11% of households by avoiding expenditure on health care. In addition to seeking more work (8%) other strategies followed by sampled households were meeting exigencies from savings (5.33%) and pawn jewelry (4%).

Hindrances Faced by Small Tea Growers

A majority of small-holders indicated that lack of knowledge about financial institutions, support from concerned organizations and high cost of raw materials as the major constraints in their being entreprenures (Table 21). Lack of knowledge about training institutions as a constraint in farming was also felt badly by the households (57%). Lack of knowledge about marketing linkages was yet another problem perceived highly by households in the study area (57%). Households further expressed their problem about the lack of knowledge about schemes of various departments related to farming. This problem was felt by 67% of households. Lack of knowledge about financial institution was emphatically and critically expressed by ~76% of households. Poor knowledge about farming leads to reduced profit of the enterprise. This problem was felt by ~43% of the sampled households in Nuwara Eliya district. Considering problems related to institutions and marketing, difficulty in getting loan was more intense (52%). Lack of financial institutions was another constraint faced by 12%. Lack of requisite support from concerned organizations was reported vocally by 56%. Approx. 43% of households in Nuwara Eliya districts expressed that lack of demand in local market was a constraint to them. Other problems revealed from the data were lack of marketing centres and competition from larger and well established centres. Problem of lack of marketing centres was felt by 14.29% of household. Another 32% of sampled household reported that competition from larger and well established centres was a constraint to them.

Table 21: Hindrances Faced by Small Tea Growers

Strategies for Coping	%
Problems related to knowledge and awareness	
Lack of knowledge about training institutions	57.14
Lack of knowledge about marketing linkages	57.14
Lack of knowledge about schemes of various departments related to farming	67.67
Lack of knowledge about fiinancial institutions	76.19
Poor knowledge about farming	41.43
Problems related to institutions and marketing	
Difficulty in getting loan	52.43
Lack of financial institutions in the area	12.38
Lack of requisite support from concerned organizations	56.19
Lack of demand in local market	43.86
Lack of marketing centres	14.29
Competition from large and well-established centres	32.38
Problems related to input	
Non-availability of raw materials	42.90
High cost of raw material	76.19
Untimely supply of raw materilas	33.33
Untimely availability of labour	33.33

Data regarding problems related to inputs revealed that ~43% sampled households faced problem of non-availability of raw materials. High cost raw materials was reported as one of the major problems faced by households (76%). Another 33% of sampled households reported untimely supply of raw materials, untimely availability of labour was another one faced by them.

Conclusion and Policy Options

Economic independence is one of the main contributory factors of the overall status of the tea small-holders. Tea cultivation has been found to be the major source of income and occupation of considerable proportion of the sampled households in the study area. Average per capita income from farming was US$ 28.70. However, most of the sampled small-holdings were found in low per capita income group (below US$ 28.34) followed by medium per capita income group (US$ 28.35–67.12). Approximately 14% of the holders' per capita income does not meet the per capita expenditure.

Even though educational level among the small-holders is high, the important attributes of entrepreneur such as knowledge on farming, utilization of available assistance and innovativeness were lacking. Therefore, improving knowledge on farming, services rendered by the related institutions and availability of the required inputs at reasonable prices is an important intervention to be offered by the concerned organizations for the betterment of the small-holders in the study area.

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