

## **Tea Gardens of Dooars & Migration with Uncertainty**

Covid-19 pandemic is much beyond a health crisis as it has had a tremendous socio-economic impact specially in the lives of resource poor and at-risk groups that increased poverty and inequality to a larger scale. Major factors like gender inequality, unemployment, poverty which are also key drivers for unsafe migration, trafficking, child marriages and other gender based violences, school dropouts, and lack of health and hygiene had an unprecedented rise during Covid-19. Additionally, restrictions on movements that put barriers on accessing social security systems; institutional supports further increased the isolation of vulnerable groups (viz. women; girls and victims of violence). The reduced responses from the helplines (police, legal services etc.) made the individuals and communities who were already at risk & those who were previously not less equipped to navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic fell into the trap of debt bondage or had to migrate for livelihoods and many faced exploitation and violence. The major challenges faced by the girls and the families in the tea gardens during Covid-19 were:

1. Prolonged closure of schools made the girls disinterested in education increasing chances of drop outs
2. Nonavailability of text books and lack of awareness regarding the availability of the e-textbook.
3. Paucity of devices with students and teachers.
4. Lack of knowledge of using devices for effective educational purposes. Teachers were not well-versed with On-line teaching methodologies.
5. Poor Internet/ Network Connectivity/Signal.
6. Poverty and less access to food driving families to make the girls work for earning
7. Increase in Gender Based Violence and Unsafe Migration
8. The usage of social media by the children has been increased and enhanced chances of cyber bullying and crime.