

## Chapter IV

### **Gender Dimensions of Employment and Earnings**

Rural Bihar is characterised by its labour surplus economy. There is shortage of employment within the boundary of village economy except during the peak agricultural season in more prosperous villages. The non-availability of jobs in the rural areas, however, is not reflected in open unemployment of the workers. In fact, high participation rate co-exists with high under-employment of the workers. In such a situation, women workers are at a more disadvantageous position because of the burden of their non-economic domestic duties. High level of male work participation rate in backward districts and even high level of female work participation rate among lower castes and classes validates the theory that 'poor can't remain unemployed'. But poverty driven high work participation rate has led to concentration of workers mainly in low profile jobs like agricultural and non-agricultural wage work, caste occupation under *Jajmani* system etc. Lower agricultural productivity and lack of productive non-agricultural work opportunities have led to low level of wages in most of the surveyed villages. However, at low wage rate, the gender gap between male and female wages cannot become substantial. The high level of poverty and lack of employment opportunity even at modest level of wages and earnings has created a vicious circle of underdevelopment and underemployment. Against this background, in this chapter we will examine gender dimension of activity status of population, workers' participation rates, and occupation structure, diversification of workforce, and wages and earnings.

#### **Activity Status of Male and Female Population**

The Activity status of total population is conventionally seen in terms of workforce (WF), labourforce (LF), and non-workers (NW). Workforce is the economically active population, participating in different economic activities for earnings, while unemployed is included in labour force but not in work force [i.e.  $LF = WF + Unemp.$ ]. The proportion of population neither working nor seeking for job is classified as non-workers. The main constituents of non-workers are students, home worker,

retired/pensioner, rentiers, too old or too young, beggars etc. However, it is not easy to classify a person in a single category on the basis of his/her single occupation.

Since a person may be involved in different (generally more than one) types of economic and non-economic activities, his or her occupational status may be determined by taking one or more occupations into consideration<sup>1</sup>. For our analysis, we have taken up to three occupations of every individual. However, the ranking of different occupations into 'primary', 'first secondary', and 'second secondary' has not been done on the basis of time or income considerations, but on the basis of the perception of respondents. The 'second secondary' status has been finally merged with the 'first secondary' status to arrive at more consolidated figure. On the basis of the primary and primary & secondary occupation statuses, the structure of the occupational status of total population in rural Bihar is given in table 4.1.

**Table 4.1. Activity Status of Total Population**

	Primary occupation			Primary + secondary occupations		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
1. Self employed in agriculture & allied activities	17.17	2.98	10.34	19.41	7.87	13.85
2. Self employed in trade & services	6.29	1.62	4.04	6.40	1.73	4.15
3. Casual labour in agriculture	10.52	3.54	7.16	10.59	11.53	11.04
4. Casual labour in non-agriculture	5.21	0.15	2.77	5.28	0.23	2.85
5. Regular wage paid	11.33	0.34	6.04	13.39	1.62	7.72
<b>A. Total work force (1 to 5)</b>	<b>50.52</b>	<b>8.63</b>	<b>30.35</b>	<b>55.07</b>	<b>22.98</b>	<b>39.61</b>
6. Unemployed	0.80	0.00	0.42	3.39	4.56	3.95
<b>B. Total labour force (1 to 6)</b>	<b>51.32</b>	<b>8.63</b>	<b>30.77</b>	<b>58.46</b>	<b>27.54</b>	<b>43.56</b>
7. Students	23.81	15.63	19.87	18.15	14.92	16.59
8. Home work	0.77	48.44	23.72	0.49	27.72	13.60
9. Retired/rentiers etc.	3.18	4.14	3.64	4.20	7.91	5.98
10. Other non workers	20.91	23.16	21.99	20.77	23.16	21.92
<b>C. Total non workers (7 to 10)</b>	<b>48.67</b>	<b>91.37</b>	<b>69.22</b>	<b>43.61</b>	<b>73.71</b>	<b>58.09</b>

Table 4.1 shows that the proportion of non-workers is substantially higher, particularly in case of female. More than half of the population (69% on the basis of primary and 58% on the basis of primary + secondary occupations) is non-workers. Two

important features that emerges very prominently from table 1 are: there is very low reporting of unemployed persons and there is very high proportion female non-workers (both on the basis of primary occupation). When both primary and secondary occupation statuses are taken into consideration, the unemployment rate increase up to 4 per cent (4.56% in case of female), while the percentage of female non-workers decreases by approximately 20 per cent (from 91.37% to 73.71%).

The analysis clearly shows that a substantial proportion of female non-workers join the labour force either as unemployed or workers, when their secondary occupation is also taken into consideration. Yet another important feature that emerges from this table is that, a larger proportion of the female non workers, who join the workforce after considering the secondary occupations, join the work force as self employed in agriculture and allied sector and/or casual non-agricultural wage labour. The percentage of female casual wage labour in non-agriculture increases from 3.54 per cent (primary occupation) to 11.53 per cent (primary + secondary occupations), an increase of approximately 8 per cent.

The reasons for increase in workers' participation rate (i.e. proportion of workers in total population) on the basis of primary and secondary occupations together may be attributed to two important factors. One, insufficient income of the workers on the basis of primary occupations compels other family members, mainly female non-workers to join the labour force to supplement household income. Two, lack of availability of work in rural areas allow a large number of workers (particularly woman) to remain as non-workers.

### **Worker Participation Rate**

The proportion of work force in population is also termed as Workers' Participation Rate (WPR). Hence, the worker participation rate (WPR) is calculated as the ratio of workers to the total population (i.e.  $WPR = \text{workers/population}$ ). Although WPR for overall population are approximately 30 per cent and 40 per cent on the basis of primary and primary + secondary occupations respectively, it shows a great degree of variations over caste, class, and regions. This variation is more prominent in case of female workers. Following the same arguments as mentioned above, if a person was non-worker as per his/her primary occupation and was a worker as per his/her secondary occupation he/she was classified into workers category for

calculating the WPR as per primary and secondary occupations. The consideration of secondary occupation for calculating the WPR is important particularly in case of female workers. Most of the women are reported as household workers on the basis of their primary occupation although they are involved in different economic activities as per their secondary occupations<sup>ii</sup>.

**Table 4.2: Workers Participation Rates (%) for Males and Females As Per Primary and Primary + Secondary Occupation Statuses by Caste, Class, Land Size, and District (All ages)**

	Primary		Primary + secondary	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Caste</b>				
Upper caste (Brahmin + Kayastha)	49.81	0.20	57.06	6.41
Upper caste (Bhumihar + Rajput)	46.97	0.70	51.30	5.61
OBC I	57.86	13.40	65.83	47.61
Kurmi	51.20	10.20	62.65	42.86
Yadav	52.53	3.19	60.61	37.23
Koeri	55.81	7.14	59.30	28.57
Other OBC II	50.83	15.02	58.26	36.15
SC & ST	54.41	14.87	58.81	48.03
Moslem	48.44	9.06	56.06	37.40
<b>Class</b>				
ALNF	58.10	17.74	60.87	53.44
ALNA	57.14	13.04	59.52	54.35
ALLF	57.39	12.67	63.38	48.44
ALLA	61.54	16.33	66.67	55.10
POORMIDP	55.56	9.86	75.00	33.80
MIDP	50.84	13.50	61.45	52.76
BIGP	49.28	1.72	56.20	8.81
LANDLD	44.33	1.19	52.31	10.98
NONAG	48.45	5.72	55.21	20.78
<b>Size of owned land (in acres)</b>				
nil	56.45	12.45	60.08	42.59
up to 1	51.88	9.65	59.05	35.25
1 to 2.5	45.68	5.15	54.09	22.49
2.5 to 5	49.01	2.60	59.93	11.52
5 to 10	48.24	1.34	57.06	10.07
10 to 20	43.75	0.00	56.25	8.57
20 & above	55.56	0.00	66.67	0.00
<b>District</b>				
Gaya	48.84	9.94	59.30	35.96
Gopalganj	52.09	10.44	55.31	31.33
Madhubani	53.27	6.74	55.65	27.72
Nalanda	53.19	6.34	57.34	38.67
Purnea	53.13	13.17	64.64	34.14
Rohtas	50.48	5.00	57.49	25.50
Total	52.00	8.66	58.62	31.70

The percentage of female workers on the basis of primary occupation is found to be very low (8.66). However, it can be seen from the Table 4.2 that this percentage increases to approximately 32 per cent when the secondary occupation is also taken into consideration. For the male workers the percentage marginally goes up to 58.62 from 52.00. The high difference between percentages of women workers as per primary and primary and secondary occupations is also an indication of acute form of disguised unemployment among them. This shows that most of the women workers are only short-term workers and are not employed for majority part of the year. The lower percentage of women reporting themselves as main workers (considered on the basis of their primary occupations) also reflects women's perception of their economic work as secondary. This is in spite of the fact that in all the villages, women belonging to OBC communities and SC work in agriculture either as hired labour or contribute to household agriculture by their active participation.

*“It is only women from upper caste homes who do not work. In our castes women have always worked. Earlier I used to work within the village, but now, that my husband works in Haryana for long periods, I go to the neighbouring village in peak season and work. I also manage the land (8 katha) that we have bought”.* (A woman from Nuniya community during the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in Kasaila, Purnea district)

The FGDs conducted in the villages corroborate with the survey data and reveal the strong correlation between male and female work participation rates and caste hierarchy. Forward Caste men and women do not work in the fields or engage in any other agricultural operations. On the other hand, both males and females belonging to the lower castes and scheduled castes and tribes perform agricultural and non-agricultural wage work. However, there are differences in the operations performed by men and women. For instance, irrespective of the district, women do not perform the ploughing operation and fewer men perform transplanting operations. Amongst the middle castes, it is evident that there is a fissure, the caste groups that fall under the OBC-I category

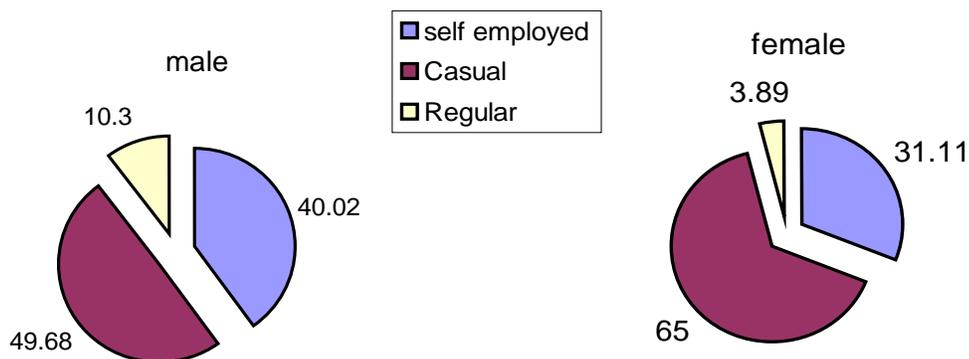
very often allows their women to perform outside agricultural work but permit their women to regularly assist in own agricultural operations. Though the same was true for the OBC-II caste groups, this is slowly changing today. Many of them now impose restrictions, which prevent women from engaging in wage labour. In some cases as in the case of the Koeri of Semhli village in Madhubani district, women have stopped working for wages for the past ten years. However, they still work on their own farms as unpaid family labour.

The variation in female WPR across the districts irrespective of their categorisation as main or as main and subsidiary can be brought out by the following examples. In poorer districts such as Purnea and Madhubani with lower wages and more employment days, more women have joined the workforce out of sheer poverty. On the other, and much more definitely, the much higher out-migration figure for male workers in these districts as compared to Rohtas (see the last section in this chapter) implies that women are left behind to manage on their own and they offer themselves in the labour market without much bargaining.

### Employment Status

Employment status (in terms of ‘self employed’, ‘casual’, ‘and ‘regular’) of workers in age eligible population (i.e. 15 to 59 years) shows a gradual process of casualisation of workforce. In the light of declining trends of permanent labour particularly in agriculture and allied sector there has been increased casualisation of the workforce. However, the employment statuses of the workers and the process of casualisation of workforce are distinctly different for male and female. While the proportion of casual workers among male (40.02%) among female this percentage is as high as 65.56 (Chart 4.1).

**Chart 4.1: Employment Status of Workforce among Males and Females**



There is very low proportion of regular employed among male and female workers both, but among females this percentage is as low as 3.89% against more than 10 per cent in case of male. The proportion of self-employed is also substantially higher among males in comparison to that among females. This lower proportions of self-employed among women workers are mainly accounted by very high proportion of women casual workers among lower castes and class.

The structure of employment status of the workforce also shows differences over caste, land holding size, and districts (Table 4.3).

**Table 4.3: Percentage Distribution of Working Persons\* (15-59 years) by Employment Status and Sex**

	Male			Female			Persons		
	Self Employed	Casual	Regular & others	Self Employed	Casual	Regular & others	Self Employed	Casual	Regular & others
Caste									
Upper caste	62.94	13.96	23.10	60.00		40.00	62.91	13.78	23.31
OBC I	27.94	68.63	3.43	55.00	42.50	2.50	32.38	64.34	3.28
OBC II	48.28	47.51	4.21	43.14	52.94	3.92	47.44	48.40	4.17
SC & ST	11.31	81.98	6.71	10.77	87.69	1.54	11.21	83.05	5.75
Moslem	35.00	63.33	1.67	10.53	84.21	5.26	31.65	66.19	2.16
Size of owned land (in acres)									
nil	17.71	76.66	5.63	18.37	78.57	3.06	17.82	76.97	5.21
up to 1	36.22	50.81	12.97	37.93	60.34	1.72	36.45	52.10	11.45
1 to 2.5	56.89	19.76	23.35	75.00	12.50	12.50	58.47	19.13	22.40
2.5 to 5	79.10	14.18	6.72	42.86	42.86	14.29	77.30	15.60	7.09
5 to 10	87.84	6.76	5.41	100.00			88.00	6.67	5.33
10 to 20	81.25	6.25	12.50				81.25	6.25	12.50
20 & above	100.00						100.00		
District									
Gaya	54.29	34.29	11.43	62.50	37.50		55.28	34.67	10.05
Gopalganj	41.26	48.25	10.49	8.00	84.00	8.00	36.31	53.57	10.12
Madhubani	28.16	56.33	15.51	17.14	77.14	5.71	27.07	58.40	14.53
Nalanda	33.53	55.49	10.98	40.00	53.33	6.67	34.04	55.32	10.64
Purnea	45.69	46.82	7.49	34.92	61.90	3.17	43.64	49.70	6.67
Rohtas	43.62	52.66	3.72	27.78	72.22		42.23	54.37	3.40
Total	40.02	49.68	10.30	31.11	65.00	3.89	38.90	51.60	9.50

\* including migrating workers

Most of the upper caste workers are either self-employed or regular (approximately 63% and 23% respectively), while workers among SC & ST, Muslim and OBC I constitute largely of casual wage earners (Table 4.3). This feature is again more prominent in the case of female workers. Among OBC I, the percentage of casual

workers is higher among males in comparison to that among females (68.63% and 42.50% respectively). The reason is that OBC I is the lower middle caste in the caste hierarchy with some small size of land holdings. Among these castes the women workers' participation is more prominent as self-employed in agriculture and animal husbandry. Male members participating in the casual wage labour market supplement this minimal income. In the case of 'land holding class of the households', landless and marginal farmer workers are mainly casual wage earners while middle and big farmers are mainly self-employed and regular employed. Hence employment status of the workers more or less follows the pattern of a direct relationship with their social positioning in the caste hierarchy.

This pattern is even clearer with land holding size of the households. With increase in land holding size, the proportion of self employed increases while that of casual decreases both for male and female. As far as regular employment is concerned, this again increases with the increase in land size. However, this proportion falls with increase in land holding size of more than 10 acres. This is quite obvious because large holdings are able to give more employment to workers as self-employed. However, in case of female workers, there is always increase in the proportion of regular employment with the increase in land holding size. Here it is worth mentioning that since most of the big land holding households belong to the upper castes where women are not allowed to work in agriculture, they increasingly resort to some kind of non agricultural regular employment. However, because of very low opportunity of getting such types of employment they remain within their homes as unemployed and non-workers.

There is also a wide variation in the pattern of employment status across the districts. The proportion of self-employed is substantially higher both for male and female in Gaya. In case of female the proportion is as high as 62.50. In Nalanda also the proportion of female self-employed is higher than that in other districts. On the other hand proportion of female self-employed in Gopalganj is only 4 per cent, causing a huge concentration of female workers as casual labour. The lower percentage of regular workers (both male and female) in Rohtas and Purnea (3.72% and 7.49% respectively) explains about two contrast picture of development. Since the district of Rohtas is

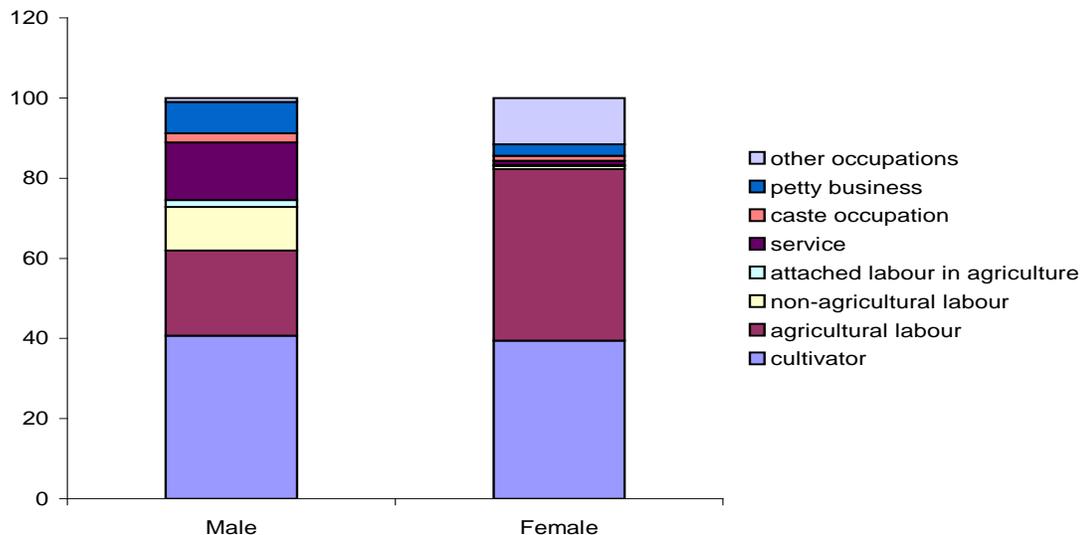
known for higher level of agricultural development and consequently also for one of the highest and most monetised agricultural wages, most of the female workers in the districts are either self-employed or free labourers in agriculture and non-agriculture activities. On the other hand, Purnea has one of the lowest agricultural development and consequently low agricultural wages. Because of low agricultural productivity in the district the labour employment elasticity is also very low in the district. As a result, the intensity of casual as well as attached labour in agriculture is also low in the district. The intensity of casual as well as regular workers is the highest in Madhubani (15.51%). In fact the district is known for very high intensity of attached labour in agriculture<sup>iii</sup>.

### Occupational Structure

To examine the broad trends of occupational structure of eligible working population, workers in the age group of 15 to 59 years have been taken into consideration. The occupations of the workers have been classified into eight major categories<sup>iv</sup> viz. agriculture & allied activities, agricultural labourer, non-agricultural labourer, attached labour in agriculture, service, caste occupation, business and others<sup>v</sup>.

The occupational structure shows labour market segmentation in terms of Sex. The concentration of workers in occupations like agricultural and non-agricultural labour, caste occupations, other occupations such as collection of wild products, animal grazing, etc. is more prominent in case of female (Chart 4.2).

**Chart 4.2**



The percentage of female agricultural labour is higher in comparison to that of the male in all the districts. But the difference is the highest in Rohtas (53.33 for female and 21.74 for male) followed Nalanda (57.80 for female and 33.95 male), and Gopalganj (33.33 for female and 14.88 for male). Hence even in agriculturally developed districts there is acute form of gender bias in terms of concentration of female workers in low quality occupations. The percentage of female workers involved in the service is negligible. In all, female participation in service is very negligible. Interestingly, as far as other occupations are concerned female participation is always higher than male participation. In the districts of Madhubani and Purnea female participation in other occupation is as high as 24.84 and 12.82 per cent respectively (Table 4.4).

**Table 4.4: Occupational Structure of Adult Workers (15-59 years) by District**

Districts		Occupational structure (primary + secondary)							
		cultivator	Agricultural labour	non-agricultural labour	attached labour in agriculture	service	caste occupation	petty business	other occupations
Gaya	Male	37.79	17.44	2.91	4.07	16.86	5.81	13.37	1.74
	Female	47.83	43.48						8.70
	Person	41.29	26.52	1.89	2.65	10.98	3.79	8.71	4.17
Gopalganj	Male	50.41	14.88	11.57	0.83	17.36	1.65	1.65	1.65
	Female	46.97	33.33		3.03	1.52	3.03	3.03	9.09
	Person	49.20	21.39	7.49	1.60	11.76	2.14	2.14	4.28
Madhubani	Male	29.06	17.95	23.50	1.71	18.38	2.14	5.98	1.28
	Female	30.07	35.95	1.96		0.65	2.61	3.92	24.84
	Person	29.46	25.06	14.99	1.03	11.37	2.33	5.17	10.59
Nalanda	Male	33.33	33.95	5.56	3.09	13.58	3.70	6.17	0.62
	Female	28.44	57.80	1.83		3.67	0.92	2.75	4.59
	Person	31.37	43.54	4.06	1.85	9.59	2.58	4.80	2.21
Purnea	Male	45.61	21.75	8.42	1.05	12.28	0.70	9.47	0.70
	Female	46.15	36.54				0.64	3.85	12.82
	Person	45.80	26.98	5.44	0.68	7.94	0.68	7.48	4.99
Rohtas	Male	50.54	21.74	9.78		9.24	0.54	8.15	
	Female	43.33	53.33			1.11		2.22	
	Person	48.18	32.12	6.57		6.57	0.36	6.20	
All	Male	40.67	21.33	10.79	1.73	14.42	2.25	7.86	0.95
	Female	39.49	42.79	0.75	0.30	1.05	1.20	2.85	11.56
	Person	40.24	29.17	7.13	1.21	9.54	1.86	6.03	4.82

Note: Occupations have been taken on the basis of Primary + Secondary Occupations

The variation in the occupational structure of the workforce and the gender discrimination is more prominent over different castes and class groups. Workers

belonging to upper caste and class are generally employed in occupations such as self cultivation, service, business etc. while workers from the lower castes and classes are more concentrated in occupations such as agricultural and non-agricultural labour, caste occupations, other occupations etc (Table 4.5 and Table 4.6).

From Table 4.5 it is evident that the more than 80 and 65 per cent of the workers from upper and upper middle castes respectively are employed in self cultivation & allied activities and service sector. In the case of SC/ST, this percentage is only around 20. Approximately 70 per cent of the SC/ST workers are engaged in occupations such as labour, traditional caste occupations, and other occupations. The conditions of Muslims is more or less similar to that of the SC/ST as a large proportion of them are engaged in either casual wage work or in occupations such as collection of wild products from ponds, rivers, common property etc. It is interesting to note that as high as 27 per cent of the male workers from Muslim households are non-agricultural labour. These workers are engaged in occupations such as construction, brick kilns, earth cutting etc. Attached labour in agriculture mainly comes from SC/ST, OBC Muslim households, and I. Although there are a few male attached labour in agriculture from other castes also, female attached labour come only from SC/Stand OBC I castes (Table 4.5).

**Table 4.5: Occupational Structure of Adult Workers (15-59 years) by Caste**

		occupational structure (primary + secondary)							
		cultivator	agricultural labour	non-agri. labour	attached labour in agri	service	caste occupn.	Petty business	other occupan.
Caste group									
Upper caste	Male	56.90	1.41	7.32	0.56	23.38	1.69	6.48	0.56
	Female	85.00				2.50		2.50	10.00
	Person	59.75	1.27	6.58	0.51	21.27	1.52	6.08	1.52
OBC II	Male	52.55	9.80	7.84	0.39	12.55	2.75	8.63	1.57
	Female	60.36	17.75			2.96	0.59	7.10	11.24
	Person	55.66	12.97	4.72	0.24	8.73	1.89	8.02	5.42
OBC I	Male	29.53	24.35	11.40	2.59	12.44	5.18	5.70	1.04
	Female	43.79	38.56		0.65		2.61	1.31	12.42
	Person	35.84	30.64	6.65	1.73	6.94	4.05	3.76	6.07
SC & ST	Male	19.08	46.56	12.21	4.20	6.11	0.76	2.67	0.76
	Female	17.98	72.37	0.88	0.44	0.44	1.32		6.14
	Person	18.57	58.57	6.94	2.45	3.47	1.02	1.43	3.27
Moslem	Male	30.11	11.83	26.88	1.08	12.90	1.08	8.60	1.08
	Female	25.00	39.47					5.26	27.63
	Person	27.81	24.26	15.98	0.59	7.10	0.59	7.10	13.02

There are also some workers from Muslims, OBC II, and upper caste households who are engaged in petty business. However, there is again difference in the quality of works among these workers. Most of the workers from OBC II and upper caste households are engaged in some settled business such as small shops, Muslim workers are mainly engaged as street vendors, traders etc. The caste wise analysis of the occupational structure shows that there has been a concentration of caste groups in occupations. Broadly speaking, we can say that although agriculture or related activities has been the most widely practised occupation for almost all the landed castes, yet the next important occupation, the choice seems to be different for different castes. On the one hand, the FC, Kurmi and Koeri were more involved in service and on the other hand, the other OBC-II in business, the Muslims, SC/ST and OBC-I practised agriculture or non-agriculture labour as their main occupation.

Similarly occupational structure also show great deal of variations in terms of quality of occupations over class and land holding size of the households. Table 4.6 presents details of the occupational structure of the workers belonging to different social and land size class. It is evident that workers from lower class and lower land holding households are largely concentrated in occupations such as agricultural and non-agricultural labour, caste occupations, and other occupations, while those from upper class and land holding size are in self cultivation, service and petty business etc.

Although the pattern of occupational distribution of the workers is consistent with other studies in the region, it is still important to note certain features and trends. For instance, a very low percentage of workers is in caste based occupations. Similarly, the proportion of attached labour in agriculture is very low (only 1.21%) and is largely limited to the regions of either less developed agriculture or northern Bihar. The PRA reports also reveal that increasingly fewer people are opting to work in caste based or attached labour occupations.

**Table 4.6: Occupational Structure of Adult Workers (15-59 years) by Class and Land Holding Size**

		occupational structure (primary + secondary)							
		cultivator	agri. labour	non-agri. labour	attached labour in agri	Service	caste occupn.	petty business	other occupan.
Class									
AL	Male	24.61	48.24	11.52	3.52	6.64	1.17	3.71	0.59
	Female	26.38	65.14	0.92	0.46	0.23	0.69	0.92	5.28
	Person	25.42	56.01	6.65	2.11	3.69	0.95	2.43	2.74
POOMIDP	Male	70.00				12.50	10.00	0.00	7.50
	Female	72.73					4.55	4.55	18.18
	Person	70.97				8.06	8.06	1.61	11.25
MIDP	Male	72.97				12.16		6.76	8.11
	Female	77.63				2.63		1.32	18.42
	Person	75.33				7.33		4.00	13.24
BIGP	Male	69.03				15.30	1.12	7.84	6.71
	Female	74.36				7.69		5.13	12.82
	Person	69.71				14.33	0.98	7.49	7.21
LANDLD	Male	48.03			1.32	32.89	0.66	16.53	1.32
	Female	68.42				2.63	2.63	10.53	15.79
	Person	52.11			1.05	26.84	1.05	14.53	4.21
NONAG	Male	4.46		30.36		25.00	10.71	26.79	2.68
	Female	32.73	1.82			0.00	5.45	12.73	45.45
	Person	13.77	0.60	20.96		16.77	8.98	22.16	16.77
Size of owned land (in acres)									
Nil	Male	20.45	61.65	1.42	0.57	0.00	1.42	2.56	11.93
	Female	15.96	49.00	10.72	2.12	6.73	2.99	6.61	5.86
	Person								
up to 1	Male	44.79	19.24	9.78	0.95	15.14	1.89	6.94	1.26
	Female	53.59	28.23			0.96	1.44	3.35	12.44
	Person	48.29	22.81	5.89	0.57	9.51	1.71	5.51	5.70
1 to 2.5	Male	70.55	3.42	0.00		16.44	0.68	4.79	4.22
	Female	82.35	5.88	0.00		1.47		4.41	5.88
	Person	74.30	4.21	0.00		11.68	0.47	4.67	1.87
2.5 to 5	Male	64.54	3.55	2.13		18.44		11.35	
	Female	60.00	20.00			12.00			8.00
	Person	63.86	6.02	1.81		17.47		9.64	1.20
5 to 10	Male	75.95				17.72		1.27	1.27
	Female	55.56				11.11			33.33
	Person	73.86				17.05		1.14	4.55
10 & above	Male	70.00			10.00	5.00		5.00	5.00
	Female	100.00						0.00	
	Person	73.91			8.70	4.35		4.35	4.35

In terms of caste structure too, caste based restrictions play a very decisive role as far as male and female main occupations are concerned. As a result a relatively lower

percentage of women in the FCs and a negligible proportion of FC men work as agricultural and other manual labour. Both survey results as well as the PRA reports indicate that many caste groups amongst the OBC-II are upwardly mobile and this explains the lower female WPR amongst these groups. Today, it is a well-proven phenomenon that the first thing that an upwardly mobile caste group does is to slowly remove their women folk from publicly productive activities. Also, interesting is the fact that a larger proportion of women work as agricultural labour as compared to men, and in the case of the upwardly mobile castes the same is true in the first category of agriculture and allied activities. As the families in these caste groups try to assimilate assets, both men and women work hard and try to save a large amount to buy assets such as land and animals and as they reach their goals, they begin to withdraw their women from the workforce.

### **Educational Status of Workers**

Among the workers (primary and secondary occupations taken together) 59.91 per cent are illiterate (44.44 and 87.97 per cent of the males and females respectively) while in the other categories more than 25 per cent had an education level up to middle school (15.22 per cent up to primary and 9.97 per cent up to middle). Only 5 per cent of the workers (approximately 9 per cent male and only 1 per cent female workers) are graduates and above. The educational status of the workers shows that the occupational category is directly linked with the level of education. The workers with higher levels of education are concentrated more in occupations like service and business while workers with lower levels of education are more concentrated in the occupations like agricultural labour and other manual labour.

From Table 4.7 it is evident that in the service sector only 22.23 per cent of the workers are illiterate. Among the workers in this occupation, 22.19 per cent (22.29 per cent of the male workers and 19.09 per cent of the female workers) had education levels up to high school and another 18.89 per cent (18.68 and 25.45 per cent of the male and female workers respectively) had education level up to graduate. On the other hand, amongst the agricultural labour, approximately 85 percent of the workers (80.45 per cent male workers and 98.46 per cent female workers) are illiterate. In the same way in the

case of other labour, 53.78 per cent of the workers are illiterate and only 12 per cent of the workers have education levels beyond the middle school. In the caste based occupation category although the percentage of illiterate male workers was 38.64, all the female workers (100.00 per cent) in this occupation have been found to be illiterate. The lower rates of illiteracy, amongst people following the caste-based occupation may be attributed to the presence of Brahmins (*Purohit*) in this category.

**Table 4.7: Educational Status of Workers by Occupation and Sex**  
Major Educational Categories

Occupational Structure		illiterate	up to primary	up to middle	up to high school	up to graduate	up to post graduate
Agr & All	Male	38.98	17.86	16.85	14.99	10.44	0.88
	Female	91.79	4.85	1.19	1.42	0.75	
	Total	45.69	16.21	14.86	13.27	9.20	0.77
Ag. Lab.	Male	80.45	10.74	5.10	2.50	1.21	
	Female	98.46	1.17	0.06		0.31	
	Total	84.46	8.61	3.98	1.94	1.01	
Non-aAg. Lab.	Male	52.99	21.66	13.33	8.69	3.33	
	Female	73.08	7.69	6.41	12.82		
	Total	53.78	21.11	13.06	8.85	3.20	
Service	Male	21.79	16.26	17.56	22.29	18.68	3.40
	Female	39.09	3.64	8.18	19.09	25.45	4.55
	Total	22.33	15.86	17.26	22.19	18.89	3.44
Caste Occup	Male	38.64	27.81	12.31	13.16	8.07	
	Female	100.00					
	Total	46.68	24.17	10.70	11.44	7.01	
Business	Male	26.87	19.88	19.64	19.58	13.07	0.96
	Female	76.58	6.31	11.71	5.41		
	Total	29.96	19.04	19.15	18.70	12.26	0.90
Others	Male	87.31	10.71	0.99	0.99		
	Female	94.48	4.50			1.02	
	Total	90.51	7.94	0.55	0.55	0.46	
<b>All</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>44.44</b>	<b>19.30</b>	<b>14.37</b>	<b>12.19</b>	<b>8.78</b>	<b>0.90</b>
	<b>Female</b>	<b>87.97</b>	<b>7.83</b>	<b>1.97</b>	<b>1.41</b>	<b>0.77</b>	<b>0.04</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>59.91</b>	<b>15.22</b>	<b>9.97</b>	<b>8.36</b>	<b>5.94</b>	<b>0.59</b>

By comparing the agricultural labour and other labour category, it is evident that in the former category the percentage of illiterate workers was much higher than that in the latter category. The difference is much sharper in the case of male workers (80.45 per cent in case of agricultural labourer and 52.99 per cent in case of other labour) than in case of female workers (98.46 per cent in case of agricultural labourer and 73.08 per

cent in case of other labour). This may be because the other labour category includes a substantial number of migrant male workers who are educated up to primary or middle school.

Table 4.7 also reveals that in all the occupations the percentage of illiterate female workers is always higher than their male counterparts and consequently one finds a larger concentration of them in low level occupations like agricultural and non-agricultural labour, caste occupations and other occupations.

As far as the levels of education is concerned it is only in case of the service sector and other labour that the percentage of female workers are higher than that of the male workers for the graduate and high school category.

### **Employment and Labour Market**

Total labour supply also shows variations over the years with increased gender bias in terms of labour participation and types of concentration of male and female workers. Table 4.8.1 presents labour supply by caste. It shows labour supply by caste is higher in case of scheduled caste and backward caste I households for both male and female. Hardly one-tenth of upper caste women is involved in outside work and their male counterpart also reports the lowest participation in hiring out. Backward caste II and upper caste males are largely cultivators whereas in case of backward caste I, scheduled caste and scheduled tribes and Muslims both males and females are largely wage labourers.

In comparison to the 1980s, the current survey does not reveal much (see tables 4.8.1 and 4.8.2) variation in labour supply scenario by caste/religion. In case of females, upper caste participation continues to be the lowest. The highest and second highest work participation rate of females are that of scheduled caste and backward caste I as before.

Females of the above mentioned caste groups continue to be involved in wage labour more than any other castes. But participation of wage labour by Muslim females shows a substantial rise. Male wage labour continues to be mainly scheduled caste and backward caste I. Tradition continues to debar females of upper caste away from wage labour. However, between two surveys, female labour participation rate of upper caste

has fallen by more than half from low level of earlier survey. Even female labour participation rate of backward caste II and I also show substantial fall from the previous survey. As a result, the gender gap of labour participation rate has gone up between the two survey periods.

**Table 4.8.1: Labour Supply by Caste (all ages), 1999**

<i>Caste</i>	<i>Workers(all)/Adults</i>		<i>Cultivator (All)/Adults</i>		<i>Wage Labour (all)/Adults</i>	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Muslim	88.64	65.72	37.05	21.25	60.51	51.21
Upper Caste	84.37	10.83	51.26	2.15	10.82	4.97
Backward II	89.22	59.86	56.10	34.52	34.93	31.39
Backward I	95.00	77.61	40.36	27.03	66.61	54.94
S.C.	92.79	81.17	32.22	25.58	80.68	80.56
All	89.65	56.13	44.36	21.23	48.45	55.26

**Table 4.8.2: Labour Supply by Caste (all ages), 1982**

<i>Caste</i>	<i>Workers(all)/Adults</i>		<i>Cultivators(All)/Adults</i>		<i>Wage Labour (all)/Adults</i>	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Muslim	99.92	64.83	77.89	31.59	65.05	28.99
Upper Caste	92.96	22.84	76.88	8.17	21.17	0.23
Backward II	93.46	49.42	76.46	32.77	30.37	12.32
Backward I	99.45	68.73	64.11	43.66	82.24	45.80
S.C.	94.75	83.48	65.46	50.79	83.98	63.82
All	93.86	55.50	71.34	30.27	51.97	29.23

Annual average persondays of casual employment in rural Bihar works out to be only 95 days per worker. The availability of casual employment is the highest in Nalanda and the lowest in Gopalganj. However, there is again a great degree of gender bias in terms of availability of casual employment. While in case of male workers the average annual days of employment available are 95, it is only 46 in case of female.

**Table 4.9: Average Annual Persondays of Casual Employment Per Worker**

	Persondays of employment		Ratio of female to male employment
	male	female	
District			
Gaya	98.04	65.74	1.49
Gopalganj	73.11	36.56	2.00
Madhubani	93.22	22.16	4.21
Nalanda	115.81	70.95	1.63
Purnea	95.15	48.92	1.95
Rohtas	95.08	42.54	2.24
All	94.57	46.40	2.04

The gender bias calculated in terms of ratio of female employment to male employment come to be highest in Madhubani (4.21) followed by Purnea (2.24). The gender bias in casual employment is low in Gaya and Nalanda. In fact the gender bias in female employment is related to regional caste concentration pattern. Upper caste and Muslims largely dominate the districts of Madhubani and Purnea, where female participation in casual employment is very low. On the other hand the districts of Gaya and Nalanda are SC/ST and OBC castes are represented more and female participation in casual employment is higher among those castes.

In terms of contribution of employment from farm and non-farm sector approximately 70 per cent of total employment comes from farm sector (Table 4.10). However, there has been substantially higher diversification of employment to non-farm sector during the intervening period in case of male workers in comparison to female workers.

**Chart 4.3: Percentage of Adult workers Engaged in Farm and Non Farm Activities by Sex**

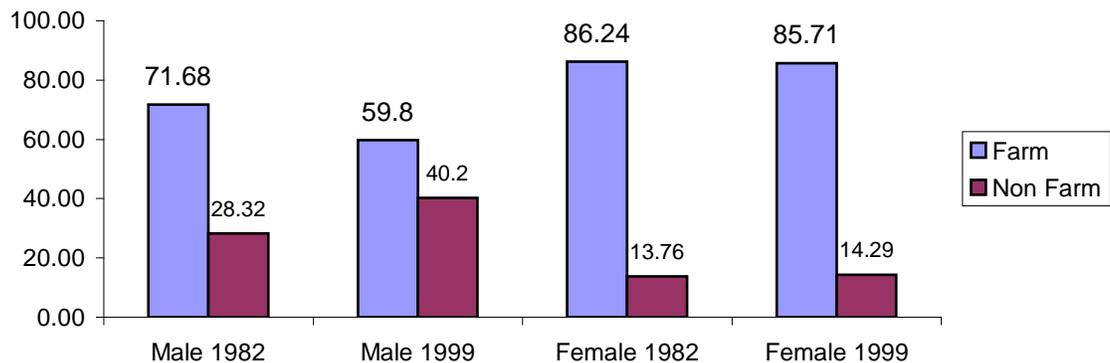


Chart 4.3 clearly shows that there has been negligible increase in the female non-farm workers over the years. Although over the years there has been increase in the female workers participation rates, the increase has been mainly absorbed by the traditional agriculture sector. Hence with more and more male workers diversifying for non-farm sector there has been continuous ‘feminisation of agriculture, in Bihar. This slow process of diversification of female workers has a direct bearing upon occupational mobility and earnings of them.

**Table 4.10: Percentage Distribution of Persondays of Employment in Farm and Non-farm Sectors**

	Male	Female	Children	All
<b>Farm sector</b>				
Self employed in agriculture	15.26	10.05	8.24	13.10
Self employed in animal husbandry	25.05	43.86	73.93	35.25
Wage labour	19.48	32.33	10.30	22.12
<b>Non-farm sector</b>				
Self employed	19.25	9.31	6.42	15.18
Regular salaried	11.01	2.54	0.00	7.54
Wage labour	9.94	1.91	1.11	6.81
<b>Total Farm sector (local)</b>	<b>59.80</b>	<b>86.24</b>	<b>92.47</b>	<b>70.47</b>
<b>Total Non-farm sector (local)</b>	<b>40.20</b>	<b>13.76</b>	<b>7.53</b>	<b>29.53</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Women employment has been more concentrated in animal husbandry (43.46%) and casual wage labour (32.33%). Since nature of employment in both of these two sectors are largely unstable the women workers have very little and transitory source of income.

### **Wages and Earnings**

The wage structure in the rural areas is a complex issue to understand, as different types of wage rates prevailing even within a small region (say a village) having causal relationships not only among themselves but also with a number of socio-economic variables. Not only the demand for and supply of labour which interact on each other to fix the wage rate in the rural areas but also caste-class composition of the village, inter-personal relationship, geographical mobility of the labour etc. play their dominant role in deciding the wage structure and rates. In rural Bihar, high levels of landlessness, high work participation rates, lower employment opportunities, low to moderate agricultural productivity, high intensity of workers' out-migration, less unionisation of rural workers, etc. have led to very suppressed wage rates. In our sample villages the wage data was collected at village level through a village schedule and the techniques of PRA. In each of the villages intense discussion with labourers and employers (separately) was held and an attempt was made to collect all possible types and rates of wages and mode of payments. For the purpose of simplicity we have divided the prevailing wage structure into two major categories: i) agricultural wages and ii) non-agricultural wages.

Before going into detailed structure of wage rates and mode of payments here we present average daily wage rates in agriculture and non-agriculture separately (Table 4.11). Average daily wage rates have been calculated by dividing the total earnings of casual wage labourers, working across different agricultural operations by total number of days worked.

Table 4.11 clearly reveals that the non-agricultural daily wage rates are higher in comparison to the agricultural wage rates. In non-agriculture sector the wage rates for male skilled workers, such as mason, driver, electrician, plumber, etc. are much higher in comparison to other wage rates. There is also difference in the male and female wage rates both in the agriculture and non-agriculture sectors. On an average the wage rates are lower in North Bihar in comparison to those in the south Bihar region. In districts of better agricultural development such as Rohtas and Nalanda the wage rates are higher in comparison to less developed districts both in agriculture and non-agriculture.

The difference in the male and female wage rates is higher in the non-agriculture sector, but even in the agriculture sector despite suppressed wages for both male and female the gender discrimination is perceptible. After seeing the average wage rates in agriculture and non-agriculture sectors the following section presents the detailed structure of wage rates in agriculture sector.

### **Agricultural Wages**

Computation of agricultural wages is a complex issue as it varies not only from village to village, but also varies for different agricultural operations at different time-periods within a village. In this study, the wage data has been retained in the form that it was collected from the village. For the purpose of analysis it has been classified into three major categories i.e. 'harvest wage', 'full day agricultural operation wage' and 'half-day operation wage'. The wages paid in kind have been converted into rupees by multiplying the amount mentioned by the villagers in the FGD by the local prices prevailing at that time. The prevailing wages are presented in Table 4.12.

**Table 4.11: Average Daily Wage Rates (Rs.)**

	Sector				
	Agriculture		Non-Agriculture		
	Male	Female	Unskilled		skilled
Male			Female	Male	
Caste					
Upper caste	34.02		41.83		81.54
OBC II	34.92	33.00	47.61		58.88
OBC I	31.79	31.24	39.66	35.16	62.13
SC & ST	34.70	32.10	40.82	37.41	67.30
Moslem	31.32	28.63	46.70	40.00	72.41
Class					
AL	33.67	31.62	41.24	37.02	67.83
POORMIDP			45.80		64.73
MIDP			39.13		62.64
BIGP			42.11		65.28
LANDLORD			57.31		75.00
NAG			51.23		66.79
Size of owned land (in acres)					
Nil	33.40	31.07	41.04	37.48	68.27
up to 1	34.34	33.77	44.39	34.91	61.99
1 to 2.5	39.67		50.00		
2.5 to 5	32.30		30.00		
5 to 10	29.41		35.00		
Districts					
Gaya	36.26	35.18	42.67	29.22	73.99
Gopalganj	29.33	28.37	35.27	22.00	72.35
Madhubani	30.34	29.12	47.94	35.88	61.73
Nalanda	35.25	31.04	40.50	41.37	65.69
Purnea	29.44	27.84	35.73	30.00	69.80
Rohtas	43.46	40.73	40.55	37.60	68.62
Region					
North Bihar	29.70	28.44	39.65	29.29	67.96
South Bihar	36.35	34.76	39.50	26.27	71.65
Total	33.67	31.62	42.07	37.02	66.25

Since within the agriculture sector also there is sharp gender bias in terms of types of work performed by male and female workers, the structure of wage rates has been devised in a such a way that female workers are paid less than the male workers. We can see in the wage table that except the work of harvesting female workers are engaged mainly in low paid works. Female workers perform almost all the half-day operation. Paddy transplanting is supposed to be one of the most tedious farm

operations, which is generally performed by female workers. In recent years there has been trend to join this work by male workers also. We can see in the table that even in the work of paddy transplantation women workers are paid less than the male workers.

**Table 4.12: Average Agricultural Wage Rates in District by Agricultural Operations**

(in Rs.)

Major Agricultural Operations		Gaya	Gopalganj	Madhubani	Nalanda	Purnea	Rohtas
Harvest Paddy	Male	38.00	36.40	33.50	36.50	32.00	49.00
	Female	35.00	36.40	33.50	35.50	32.00	48.00
Harvest Wheat	Male	36.00	32.80	33.50	39.50	30.50	47.00
	Female	35.00	32.80	33.50	39.50	30.50	47.00
Ploughing (full day Operation)	Male	34.00	31.20	30.50	27.50	26.50	41.50
Paddy transplanting	Male	35.00	35.00	30.50	34.00	30.00	45.00
	Female	30.00	35.00	28.50	30.50	28.00	40.50
Weeding (half day Operation)	Male	36.00	35.80	28.50	31.00	27.50	45.00
	Female	30.00	35.80	28.50	26.00	27.50	40.00

- Notes:** i). Wages paid in terms of kind or share of production has been presented in rupees by converting payment in kind with local prices.  
 ii). Village level wages have been averaged to arrive at wages at district level.  
 iii). Weeding, hoeing etc. are half day operations. The wages have been converted for full day taking 8 hours of working into consideration.  
 iv). For ploughing women were not employed

<sup>i</sup> The concept is not strictly comparable with NSS classifications of UPS and UPSS as time element has not been taken into consideration for the present analysis.

<sup>ii</sup> The consideration of secondary occupation is also important for calculation the WPR among children (5-14 years) as a large number of children are students as per their primary status but they may be involved in different economic activities as per their secondary and/or tertiary status.

<sup>iii</sup> Main forms of attached labour found in these districts were *Halwaha, Kamia, Charwaha, etc.*

<sup>iv</sup> Data on occupation was collected for seventeen categories of occupations, which were clubbed together to form seven major categories for the purpose of analysis.

<sup>v</sup> Out of these seven categories, two need to be explained. Caste occupation included the occupation such as blacksmiths, carpenter, barber etc. offering services to higher castes people under *jajmani* system. This also includes the occupation *prohiti* followed by Brahmins. Second, 'others' included the occupations like collection of fodder, food and fuel from jungle or common land etc.