Chapter V

Gender Dimension of Poverty

Rural Bihar is characterised by abject poverty with more than 43 per cent of the rural households below poverty line. The state ranks the highest in terms of poverty ratio calculated by the 55th round of National Sample Survey. Given the structural link between gender and poverty disfavoring women, it is imperative to understand how gender discriminations worsens the conditions of poverty for the women in Bihar villages. This chapter is an attempt towards this by analysing the levels of poverty among the sample households with various forms and periods of food insecurity. Before attempting this, perception of poverty among the poor is considered to fathom the nuanced relationship between gender and poverty.

Perception of Poverty and Changes in Living Conditions

Many studies on poverty that used participatory research methods have revealed that the poor use different criteria to assess their quality of life and its variants change over time. An analysis of the criteria used by people in the plains of Bihar show that apart from land and other assets, health and physical disability feature prominently in ranking their own well-being. Further, the poor attach considerable importance to personal freedom and dignity. This preference need to be understood in the context of changing labour relations in the villages leading to greater vulnerability to them as the traditional forms of patron-client relationship and secured employment have declined over time.

During the wealth ranking exercise, the standard response was that “most of us live in distressful conditions and are therefore poor”. However, further probing and clarification reveal that the motivation behind such statement. By identifying themselves as poor will yield them some monetary benefit from the state authorities. People perceive and relate to poverty along caste lines in the villages of Bihar. Almost everywhere in the plains of Bihar most of scheduled caste-groups, especially the Mushar and Chamar, are perceived as poor. Most of them live in segregated colonies in *mitti-phus* (mud-hay) houses and are landless. Both men and women work as agricultural labor and have many children. They are also likely to have the highest number of dropout of school children. They access government hospitals and incur debt to meet the food requirements of the family.

In a similar vein, a more careful exercise was carried out to find out: who are considered to be the poorest in the villages; what criteria do people use to determine the standard of living and do people's aspiration regarding well being differ across districts? An attempt was thus made to estimate the incidence and nature of poverty and perceive poverty through the lens that people employ to measure ill being and well being. People identified a number of indicators based on the relative standard of living in their respective villages. The following indicators of poverty are identified: widowhood, disability and old age, quantity and quality of land, presence or absence of person working in government, ownership of mechanised agricultural and household articles, saving and ability to lend, self-sufficiency with respect to food, and the ability to access quality educational and health services**.**

An overview of the people's perceptions of poverty in the villages of Bihar is presented in a detailed chart. The factors that are identified by the villagers as poverty indicators in two of the sample districts viz. Rohtas and Purnea are provided as these two districts represent tow extremes in terms of development (Chart 5.1 and Chart 5.2).

Chart 5.1: Rohtas

Village	Very poor	Poor	Middle	Rich	Very rich
Amarhi	Landless, some are attached labour, some are agricultural and non-agricultural labour, kutcha house, borrow money from very rich and rich category, some children go to school, cannot afford good treatment, stay hungry for some part of the year, eat one time in a day in hunger period.	Upto 2 acre land, some are landless but in good service, they also work as ag. or non-ag. Labour, sometimes they hire in labour in peak ag. season, semi-pucca and Kutcha house, children go to school, afford medical treatment, eat well.	2-6 acre land, govt. or non-govt. service, hire in labour, eat well over the year, have some savings, pucca and semi pucca house, children go to school, afford private doctor, some lease in land on mani basis, mostly middle caste in this category, they have some agricultural assets.	6 to 17 acre land, service, big pucca house, agricultural assets like thresher, pumpset etc, some have tractors and other vehicles, gun and rifle, children go to private school, afford good treatment, hire in labour, lend out money, bank saving, some family lease out land on mani basis.	Above 17 acre land, some have 10-15 acre land but they have good Govt. service or big business, have tractor, thresher, pumping set and other assets and vehicles, mostly lease out land, big pucca house, children go to private school in town, hire in labour, lend out money. Possess bank A/C and savings.
Samhuti Buzurg	Landless, small kutcha house, agricultural/non-agri. Lab., some are in very bad status, some do not send children to school, 2-3 months like Bhado, Ashwin, Kartik are lean period. No savings, borrow from rich and pay back after working, borrow to get treatment from pvt. doctor, some widows are in bad shape, domestic workers in Rajput houses.	About 1 acre owned land and 4 acre on mani, get food from own land and work in others field for extra money. Work and lease in land from very rich and rich category, some work as banihari (attached labour), but situation is better now, send children to school, some have pumpsets, live in mud houses, borrow from rich, afford pvt. doctor.	Own 4-10 acre land + mani land, Govt. job, they too sell after keeping produce, they too lend, thresher, pumpset. They are the ones who have encroached land on Son river, pucca houses, all go to school, eat well and wear good clothes, and they employ agr. lab. As they are the ones who cultivate on their own, they sometimes need money for marriage which they borrow from very rich and rich, some here too have guns, many have bank A/C, they go to village nursing home for treatment.	10-20 acre land, pucca house, Govt. Job, all go to school in town, lend out money, tractor, thresher, pumpsets, gun, rifle, own some land in town. Sell extra rice, bank balance, LIC, mostly cultivate on their own, go to good doctor in Patna and Banaras. Employ halwaha, charwaha and other domestic servants.	Own 20 acre land and above. 3-4 members in good jobs like Dr., Eng.,Prof.. Big pucca house, big property in town, children going to private school , tractor, thresher, pumpsets, car, jeep, truck, shares, LIC, bank balance. They keep lakhs of Rs.in house, guns, rifles, lend out to poor, most member stay outside, afford good medical treatment, electricity through generator, lease out all their land.

Chart 5.2: Purnea

	Very poor	Poor	Middle	Rich	Very rich
Jitwarpur	Landless, very old men and widow in this category, no shelter, begging, no credibility of loan, live on mercy of others.	Landless, only work as agriculture and non agriculture labourers, scarcity of food for few months, kutcha house, heavily in debt, children do work, they have no clothes, cannot avail medical facilities, depend on *jharphuck.*	Some own land and mostly lease in land, have some cattle, work in the field as a labour, children work in the field, also some members migrate to Delhi or other states for job, children go to school, give and take loans.	Own 10 acre of land and above, some members in good jobs also, afford *halwaha/charwaha*, pucca or tin shade house, lend out money, some have pumpsets, thresher, ponds and gardens, children go to private school, afford private doctor.	Above 12 acre land, family members are in good jobs, tractor, thresher, pumpset, ponds, garden, pucca house or tin shade, children study in town, afford good medical treatment, lend out money, some savings, hire in labour. They have some cattle like cow buffalo, ox etc.
Belabadan	Widow, blind, leprosy disease, paralysis in this category, begging, stay hungry most part of the year, they depend on god and luck, child worker in this category, they do not get loan because can not return.	Own less than one acre land or landless, cultivation on leased in land, basically work as agriculture and non-agriculture labour, himself work on owned land, pressure of loan, small hut, children do not go to school, outside migration for job, afford *jhola chhap* doctor, some time stay hungry.	Own 5 acre land and above, pucca and *khaprail* house, hire in labour, land taken on *rehan* (mortgaged land) basis, any family member is in job, children go to school, afford medical treatment, have pumpset, thresher; sometimes lend out money to poor section and at the time of marriage borrow from rich.	Own 10 acre land and above, pucca house, septic tank latrine and handpump, hire in labour , outside job and business, own agricultural assets, children go to private school, afford good medical facilities, prestigious position in the village.	Own 20 acre and above land, good job, own agricultural assets and other vehicles, pucca house, prestigious position in the block level, all facilities available, hire in labour, children go to good school, can afford good medical treatment.

The charts presented for Rohtas and Purnea show an exhaustive list of factors identified by the villagers in each of the two villages of these districts. It can be seen from these charts that the attributes associated with rich and poor vary not only across the two districts but also across the villages within the districts. For example, it can be seen that in Rohtas very often villagers identified ` landless' as very poor. On the other hand, in Purnea invariably in all the villages 'very poor' had no land. We can also see that for almost all the categories the size of the land holding varied very widely over the villages. Different other attributes associated with different categories also differed in their own way signifying the diversity in the nature and extent of poverty within the district. However, in all the villages almost all the widows, disabled, very old and deserted were classified as 'very poor'. Business, service, possession of productive assets, vehicles, better quality of house, better availability of food etc. were some of the important factors which the villagers identified in determining the richer classes of the households.

From such an understanding of the levels and nature of poverty in these villages, a brief summary of a comparison of incidence of poverty across the districts is presented here. A comparison reveals that relatively in Purnea, people are not only living in abject poverty, and there is less difference between the richest and the poorest except in terms of land holdings. On the other hand, the land seems to be more equally distributed in Gopalganj district. Similarly, in comparison to other districts a higher proportion of households is on the brink of starvation in the districts of Madhubani and Purnea during the lean seasons. While there seems to be a sense of dissatisfaction amongst the people in the villages of Gaya and Nalanda districts, in these districts, the people categorically stated that the hunger situation has drastically improved. Though the same indicators appeared in all the villages, a comparison across districts reveals that fewer children are out of school in Rohtas and Gopalganj and that even the poorest and lowest castes in these areas try to educate their children. In Nalanda and Gaya too, most families attempt to educate their children. However, factors outside their control such as caste-tensions, closing down of school, lack of teacher etc. prevent the poorest from availing any benefit. The highest number of children is not only out of school in Purnea and Madhubani districts, but these are also districts where the people are labelled as poorest. However, at this point it is important to note that in Gaya district too, people whose children work are

labelled as poor. Across, the districts, the households with a more permanent structure (pucca houses), with food to eat all year around, and ability to educate children in private schools and treat their ill in private clinics are considered wealthy. Though in all the villages households where women do not work are considered as rich, in many it was also quoted as the reason for the economic downfall of the household in particular and community in general.

The difference between districts also arises in terms of ownership of assets. Only a handful of very rich households that own any mechanised agricultural implements (tractor, boring, thresher etc.) in the districts of Purnea and Madhubani. In contrast, a larger proportion of households in Rohtas, Nalanda, Gaya and Gopalganj districts own both mechanised agricultural and household goods. Further, from the PRA reports it is obvious that material poverty is closely linked to the level of household consumption. For instance, in spite of owning fewer assets, the poor in Purnea district perceive an improvement in their lives and attribute it to migration. Across districts, in all the villages, there is a perceptible air of two contradictory feelings: joy and anger, both among the poor and very poor middle and lower caste people. They attributed their joy to the increased freedom in terms of choosing to work or not and whom to work for and freedom to decide who to vote for. In fact most of them welcome the increasing monetisation of village economy and casualisation of labour and see it as a sign of reduced caste-based subservience. However, especially in the villages of Nalanda and Gaya district, amongst the lowest caste (also the poorest) there is a sense of frustration and anger, which in many cases as can be seen in villages Rupaspur-Salempur and Kanadi of Gaya district is tightly reigned.

Intensity of Poverty in terms of Consumption Expenditure

To substantiate the insights from the perception of poverty by the poor themselves, we have calculated intensity of poverty on the basis of annual consumption expenditure of the households. For this, all types of family expenditure except annual expenditure on social ceremonies, such as marriage, *sradh etc.* have been taken into consideration[1]. The

[1] This calculation of poverty is not comparable with the poverty ratio of NSSO because there consumption basket selected here is not comparable with that of the NSSO. Also we have not used any weighting pattern for different consumption items.

pattern of average annual expenditure on different on different consumption items is presented in Table 5.1. The average annual consumption expenditure is approximately Rs. 19000, with variations over caste, class, land size, and districts. In terms of this calculation from different districts Rohtas ranks the highest with Rs. 22324 and Madhubani the lowest with Rs. 17146.

Table 5.1: Average Annual Expenditure (Rs.) Per Household

	Expenditure (Rs.) on				
	Foodgrains	Quality food	Non-food	Other	Total
Caste group					
Upper caste	10674	2168	8797	3057	24696
OBC I	8614	1628	5196	1260	16699
OBC II	9539	1646	6422	2042	19649
SC & ST	8406	1348	3924	928	14605
Moslem	8231	1545	5217	2037	17029
Class group					
AL	8571	1380	4203	971	15124
POOMIDP	8912	1617	5231	1032	16792
MIDP	9949	1752	7051	1719	20471
BIGP	12345	2291	9707	3235	27579
LANDLD	9661	2186	8923	4019	24790
NONAG	7201	1449	4413	1120	14183
Land size (in acres)					
1	7744	1346	3971	878	13938
2	8789	1586	5382	1413	17171
3	10689	2107	8247	2722	23765
4	12416	2426	10158	4504	29504
5	15400	3227	15518	7057	41201
6	16771	2536	18369	5831	43507
7	19168	4540	23368	12547	59623
District					
Gaya	9252	1584	6127	1443	18406
Gopalganj	10663	1931	7109	2863	22566
Madhubani	8381	1600	5588	1577	17146
Nalanda	9814	1732	5713	1876	19135
Purnea	8571	1727	5879	2139	18316
Rohtas	11306	1882	7906	2230	23324
Total	9301	1713	6188	1943	19146

The average annual consumption expenditure shows more sharp variations over land size groups as the expenditure amount increases very consistently and substantially with the increase in land size. Besides the variation in the total average consumption expenditure

over caste and class, there is also substantial variation in terms of expenditure on different items such as foodgrains, quality food, non-food items etc. The most spectacular variation being the expenditure on quality food items.

Table 5.2: Percentage Distribution of Households by Consumption Expenditure Class

	Consumption expenditure class (in Rs.)				
	<9000	9001 to 15000	15001 to 25000	25001 to 35000	>35000
Caste group					
Upper caste	8.27	20.47	34.25	17.72	19.29
OBC II	8.24	27.47	45.05	12.09	7.14
OBC I	14.19	34.84	35.48	11.61	3.87
SC & ST	25.87	38.81	24.88	6.97	3.48
Moslem	15.15	32.32	36.36	12.12	4.04
Class group					
AL	19.14	37.74	33.96	7.01	2.16
POOMIDP	15.38	34.62	34.62	11.54	3.85
MIDP	7.02	26.32	38.60	21.05	7.02
BIGP	1.94	10.32	40.00	26.45	21.29
LANDLD	13.51	18.92	29.73	16.22	21.62
NONAG	17.16	43.28	35.07	3.73	0.75
Land size (in acres)					
1	22.37	41.32	29.74	6.05	0.53
2	13.16	29.70	42.48	12.03	2.63
3	4.20	17.65	40.34	24.37	13.45
4		10.39	44.16	18.18	27.27
5		2.70	5.41	29.73	62.16
6				22.22	77.78
7					100.00
District					
Gaya	10.17	29.66	40.68	16.10	3.39
Gopalganj	10.13	26.58	29.11	18.99	15.19
Madhubani	19.57	34.89	30.21	7.23	8.09
Nalanda	10.38	30.19	35.85	16.04	7.55
Purnea	16.46	30.38	34.18	10.97	8.02
Rohtas	7.76	20.69	42.24	14.66	14.66
Total	14.03	29.85	34.79	12.46	8.87

The distribution of the households by consumption expenditure class shows a consistent pattern of hierarchy with the caste and class hierarchies. We can see in Table 5.2 that the concentration of the households from lower castes and class in the lower consumption classes are substantially higher in comparison to that of the higher caste and class households.

Again this pattern is more convincingly prominent over the land size group of the households. In fact none of the households from the top two land classes comes under the lowest three categories of the consumption expenditure classes. The land endowment of even some middle size also enables the households to escape from the lowest consumption class.

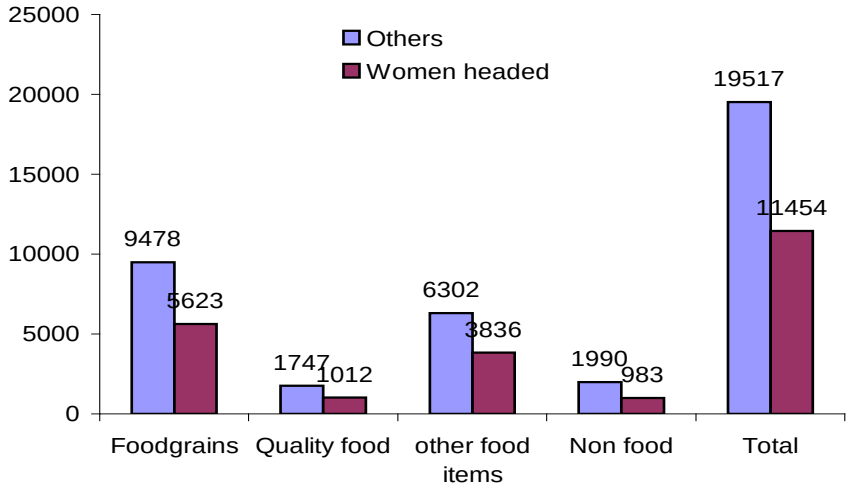
Though we do not have separate date for consumption expenditure of men and women across different households some kind of variations in consumption expenditure can be seen over women headed household vis-à-vis other households. Table 5.3 presents the concentration of households with women head of the households and others in different consumption classes.

Table 5.3: Percentage Distribution of Women Headed and Other Households by Consumption Class

	Consumption expenditure class (in Rs.)					
Households type	<9000	9001 to 15000	15001 to 25000	25001 to 35000	>35000	Total
Women headed	56.10	29.27	4.88	2.44	7.32	100.00
Others	12.00	29.88	36.24	12.94	8.94	100.00
Total	14.03	29.85	34.79	12.46	8.87	100.00

We have seen in earlier chapters that there are approximately 6 to 7 per cent households, which have women as the head of the households. In these households the intensity of poverty is more acute and widespread as most of these households fall in the lowest consumption class category. Only 15 per cent of these households have annual consumption expenditure of more than Rs.15,000. One of the reasons of high poverty among women headed households is that in rural Bihar, women headed households can be identified mainly in case of death of the male head of the household. In such a situation, widow of the head of the households become virtual head of the family. The first problem women headed households face, hence, is related to daily consumption expenditure. Because of the loss of the main earning male family member of the households and very little access of women in the employment market, the consumption expenditure levels fall drastically in these households.

Fig 5.1: Annual Average Consumption Expenditure (Rs.) Among Women Headed and Other Households



We can see in fig. 5.1 that the average annual consumption expenditure of women headed households fall by almost half in comparison to other households. Most of the drastic fall is seen in respect of expenditure on quality food and non food items. This means these households are just able to manage their minimum food requirements through food grains consumption.

In the absence of male and female consumption expenditure date separately, we can have yet another estimate to show the gender bias in terms of consumption expenditure at the household levels. Based on the consumption expenditure data of households, we can see its correlation between ratio of female to male members and level of consumption expenditure in the family. Table 5.4 suggests that the correlation between ratio of numbers of female to male and consumption expenditure on different food and non food items is negative and significant. This necessarily means that as the ratio of female to male members increases in the family the levels of consumption expenditure goes down. This happens because of various reasons, such as women skip meals during the times of shortages, they are the last to take quality food in the family, they spends very less on the consumption of non-food items, etc.

Table 5.4: Correlation between Ratio of Numbers of Female to Male in the Family and Consumption Expenditure on Different Consumption Items

	Ratio of female to male	Total consumption expenditure	Expenditure on food grains	Expenditure on quality food	Expenditure on other food items	Expenditure on other items
Ratio of female to male in family	1					
Total consumption expenditure	-0.09**	1				
Expenditure on food grains	-0.05*	0.83**	1			
Expenditure on quality food	-0.10**	0.75**	0.57**	1		
Expenditure on other food items	-0.09**	0.90**	0.62**	0.63**	1	
Expenditure on other items	-0.08*	0.71**	0.33**	0.53**	0.56**	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Gender bias in consumption expenditure within households also gets reflected in terms of expenditure on quality food items. In fact, the correlation between ratio of female to male number and expenditure on quality food is negative and significant at 99 per cent. It means that the consumption expenditure on quality food increases in households with increase in male members in the family.

Period of food shortage

The poverty-ridden status of the households worsens during the lean season. In the months of food shortages these households adopt different coping-up mechanism. Some of the most common coping –up mechanisms are: skipping of meals, lowering consumption levels, collection of wild products etc. In a poor households there is acute gender discrimination in terms of consumption of food. It is well-established fact that in rural areas it is the women member of the households who first skip the meals in favour of male members. The female members are also responsible for arranging alternative food items for the households during the time of shortages.

In the sample villages, the consumption of essential food items differs widely depending upon the extent and intensity of poverty in the villages. Moreover, there is also difference in the period of shortage (sometimes period of starvation) over the sample

villages. To know the extent of food availability for a poor family in different villages a 'food calender' exercise was carried out with female family members of at least one family in each villages. The information on food calendar exercise at the village level is presented in chart 5.3. The chart shows seasons of food availability, shortage, and starvation, and types of alternative food items consumed by the households during the period of shortages.

Chart 5.3: Food security Situation and Alternative Source of Dependence in Different Villages

Village	Period (months) of food			Alternative food items
	Availability	Shortage	Starvation	
Alalpur-Bishunpur	Chaitra to Sawan, Aghan to Push.	Magh, Falgun and Kartik.	Bhado and Ashwin.	Fish, sag, local vegetables, kekra.
Rupaspur-Salempur	Chaitra to Sawan, Aghan to Push.	Magh, Falgun and Kartik.	Bhado and Ashwin.	Fish, local vegetables.
Paharpurdayal	Chaitra to Jaystha, Kartik to Magh	Asarh, Sawan, Falgun	Bhado, Ashwin	Fish, local vegetables
Diwanparsa	Chaitra to Jaystha, Kartik to Push	Asarh, Sawan, Magh, Falgun	Bhado, Ashwin	Small fish, local vegetables
Mahisam	Chaitra to Asarh, Aghan to Magh	Falgun, Sawan, Kartik	Bhado, Ashwin	Fish, ghongha, rat, makhana
Khangaon	Chaitra to Jaystha, Kartik to Magh	Asarh, Sawan, Falgun	Bhado, Ashwin	Fish, kekra, jhore of sattu
Chandkura	Chaitra to Asarh, Aghan to Falgun	Sawan, Bhado	Ashwin, Kartik	Fish, local vegetables
Mohiuddinpur	Chaitra to Jaystha, Kartik to Falgun	Asarh, Sawan, Bhado	Ashwin,	Fish, sattu
Jitwarpur	Chaitra to Sawan, Aghan to Push	Bhado, Magh, Falgun	Ashwin, Kartik	Fish, rat, kekra, local vegetables
Belabadan	Chaitra to Jaystha, Aghan to Magh	Asarh, Sawan, Bhado, Falgun	Ashwin, Kartik Ashwin, Kartik	Fish, sag
Samhuti Buzurg	Chaitra to Asarh, Aghan to Falgun	Sawan, Bhado	Ashwin, Kartik	Fish, local vegetables and sag
Amarhi	Chaitra to Sawan, Aghan to Falgun	Bhado	Ashwin, Kartik	Fish, Pareh, local vegetables

On the basis of chart, it emerges that in different villages, the period of food shortage range form Bhado (August-September) to Kartik (October-November). Starvation period for all villages ranges over two months either from Bhado (August-September) to Ashwar (September-October) or from Ashwar (September-October) to Kartik (October-November). In fact, in all villages, problem of food security becomes so severe at times that people are forced to depend on variety of low quality food items like sattu, ghor, wild sag and animal products like local fish, kekra, ghongha, rat etc. Although, many of these items might be even more nutritious than common food items,

but these are generally looked down as inferior quality of food and are also not available in sufficient quantity in most of the times.

Intra-Household Disparity in Access to Food

Table 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 shows the distribution of persons skipping meal at the time of food scarcity.

Table 5.3.1:Castewise Distribution of Persons Skipping Meal at the Time of Food Scarcity

CAST	Adult Females	Adult Males	All Females	Others	Total
Brahmin	64.52	1.29	10.97	23.23	100.00
Bhumihar	44.83	1.15	19.54	34.48	100.00
Backward I	70.00	7.14	7.14	15.71	100.00
Yadav	67.86		10.71	21.43	100.00
Koiri	56.00		8.00	36.00	100.00
Kurmi	46.15		7.69	46.15	100.00
OBC II	74.60	1.59	9.52	14.29	100.00
SC	59.78	2.23	7.26	30.73	100.00
Muslim	67.44	1.16	11.63	19.77	100.00
Total	62.41	2.33	10.07	25.18	100.00

Adult males hardly skip any meal. In contrast, in nearly three-fourth of all surveyed household adult females skip meals at the time of scarcity. Across castes only in backward caste I, some adult males ship meal at the time of scarcity. Adult males among Yadav, Koiri and Kurmi castes do not skip at all. There are some variations in incidence of adult females skipping meals but when other females are added to them, then castewise disparity get reduced by substantial margin.

Districtwise also similar picture emerges. But in poverty stricken Purnea district, incidence of adult males skipping meal at the time of food scarcity is the highest.

Table 5.3.2: Districtwise Distribution of Persons Skipped Meal at the Time of Food Scarcity

District	Adult Females	Adult Males	All Females	Others	Total
Gaya	73.27	1.98	11.88	12.87	100.00
Gopalganj	70.67		5.33	24.00	100.00
Madhubani	37.78	1.33	16.00	44.89	100.00
Nalanda	54.55	2.02	9.09	34.34	100.00
Purnia	91.71	5.85	2.44		100.00
Rohtas	49.54		14.68	35.78	100.00
Total	62.41	2.33	10.07	25.18	100.00

Table 5.4.1 and 5.4.2 presents meals taken per day by respondents. Very few respondents report to have taken meal only once. Districtwise incidence of one meal is high in poorer north Bihar districts (consisting of Gopalganj, Madhubani and Purnea).

Table 5.4.1: Meals Taken per Day of Respondents Districtwise

District	Once	Twice	Thrice	Four	Total
Gaya	0.98	60.78	37.25	0.98	100.00
Gopalganj	2.63	47.37	46.05	3.95	100.00
Madhubani	2.65	41.59	49.56	6.19	100.00
Nalanda	1.01	62.63	36.36		100.00
Purnia	3.41	28.78	62.93	4.88	100.00
Rohtas	0.92	74.31	24.77		100.00
Total	2.20	48.23	46.14	3.43	100.00

Table 5.4.2: Meals Taken per Day of Respondents Castewise

Caste	Once	Twice	Thrice	Four	Total
Brahmin	2.56	37.18	55.13	5.13	100.00
Bhumihar	2.30	44.83	47.13	5.75	100.00
Backward I	5.00	37.14	56.43	1.43	100.00
Yadav		71.43	25.00	3.57	100.00
Koiri		52.00	48.00		100.00
Kurmi		30.77	69.23		100.00
OBC II		53.85	33.85	12.31	100.00
SC	1.68	64.25	34.08		100.00
Muslim	2.33	47.67	45.35	4.65	100.00
Total	2.20	48.23	46.14	3.43	100.00

Castewise the incidence of one meal is highest among backward caste I. However, frequency of daily meals as twice and thrice is more common among middle castes women. In fact the frequency of meals taken by women is also related to women's labour market participation. We have seen that among the middle castes women's labour market participation is the highest, hence, it becomes more a necessity for them to take more number of meals per day.

Table 5.5.1 and 5.5.2 present distribution of respondents facing hardship. As a whole, only little over one-tenth of all respondents do not face any hardship. More than half of the respondents report hardship in few months possibly during the food starvation period as revealed by food calendar exercise is enumerated in an earlier section. Districtwise more than two-third respondents from Gaya, Gopalganj and Purnea face

hardship in few months of the year. Castewise two-fifth of S.C. respondents faces hardship when there is no work. In contrast, less than 5 percent of forward caste respondents perceive so.

Table 5.5.1: Districtwise Distribution of Respondents Facing Hardship

District	Never	End of Month	Few month in a year	When no work	Others	Total
Gaya	6.86	7.84	70.59	8.82	5.88	100.00
Gopalganj	17.11		69.74	10.53	2.63	100.00
Madhubani	5.75	15.49	47.35	25.22	6.19	100.00
Nalanda	14.14	3.03	39.39	36.36	7.07	100.00
Purnia	16.06	4.66	62.69	15.54	1.04	100.00
Rohtas	16.51	3.67	52.29	27.52		100.00
Total	11.93	7.33	55.78	21.12	3.85	100.00

Table 5.5.2: Castewise Distribution of Respondents Facing Hardship

Caste	Never	End of Month	Few month in a year	When no work	Others	Total
Brahmin	26.92	7.69	58.97	3.85	2.56	100.00
Bhumihar	21.84	11.49	51.72	4.60	10.34	100.00
Backward I	3.10	6.98	57.36	26.36	6.20	100.00
Yadav	10.71	10.71	67.86	10.71		100.00
Koiri	10.00		68.00	20.00	2.00	100.00
Kurmi	34.62	3.85	46.15	15.38		100.00
OBC II	7.81	7.81	59.38	21.88	3.13	100.00
SC	3.91	5.03	45.25	43.58	2.23	100.00
Muslim	2.33	11.63	62.79	19.77	3.49	100.00
Total	11.93	7.33	55.78	21.12	3.85	100.00