

Chapter - V

LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES

A large proportion of households in Bihar is still dependent on agriculture for sustenance. The availability of work and wages given to the workers determine the level of welfare of the households. As agriculture is largely subsistence in nature a very large proportion of the populace is engaged in wage labour for a number of months in a year to meet additional needs. In order to capture labour market dynamism in rural Bihar, in this chapter we will discuss workers' participation rates, their migration pattern, and changes in the patron-client relationship and different types of prevailing wage rate vis-à-vis the prevailing wage in different villages.

Work Participation Rate

The work participation rate (WPR) was calculated as the ratio of workers to the total population in the age group 15-59 years (i.e. $WPR = \text{workers/population 15-59 years}$). The workers were identified on the basis of the primary as well as secondary status. In other words, to be counted into the workforce the primary as well as secondary occupation was taken into consideration. The main workers were identified on the basis of their primary occupation while a person was called as worker under main and subsidiary status if he/she is involved in some economic activities either on the basis of his/her primary and/or secondary occupations. The non-workers include students, household workers, beggars, retired, old, disabled etc. However 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 main and subsidiary workers for calculating the WPR. The consideration of secondary occupation for calculating the WPR¹ was important particularly in case of female workers. Most of the women were reported as household workers on the basis of their primary occupation although they were found involved in different economic activities as per their secondary occupations².

The percentage of female main workers turned out to be very low (14.46). However, it can be seen from the Table 5.1 that this percentage increases to 57.75 when the secondary occupation is also taken into consideration. For the male workers the percentage marginally goes up to 90.72 from 86.44. Accordingly, the overall percentage

becomes 75.21 for main and subsidiary workers from 52.57 for main workers. The first figure, which includes secondary occupations, as compared to the second, which only indicates the main occupation, reveals that if this is done, higher percentage of people, both men and women alike, are willing to categorise themselves as workers. As can be seen, the figure almost trebbles for women, whereas it only marginally increases for men. The lower percentage of women reporting themselves as main workers reflects women's perception of their work as inferior. This is, in spite of the fact that in all the villages, women belonging to most OBC communities and SC work in agriculture as either hired labour or contribute to household agriculture by their active participation.

Table 5.1: Worker's Participation Rate (15- 59) by District, Caste and Class

	Main			Main+Subsidiary		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<i>District</i>						
Gaya	87.93	12.50	51.81	92.15	59.35	76.44
Gopalganj	84.31	14.10	52.59	87.08	54.52	72.37
Madhubani	86.41	9.50	49.69	89.44	60.22	75.49
Nalanda	85.23	13.69	51.59	91.54	62.69	77.97
Purnea	90.69	25.93	60.39	95.36	65.62	81.44
Rohtas	82.18	8.80	47.14	87.60	37.62	63.73
SD	2.96	6.20	4.47	3.12	10.04	6.09
<i>Castes</i>						
FC	76.82	1.47	41.96	83.32	11.54	50.12
Muslims	89.29	14.70	54.17	92.44	62.83	78.50
OBC (I)	91.72	25.66	60.64	95.65	77.95	87.32
Kurmi	82.82	9.20	47.43	89.39	38.46	64.90
Yadav	89.07	16.55	54.37	93.77	69.02	81.93
Koeri	81.93	9.65	49.00	86.09	65.27	76.61
OBC (II)	88.04	12.02	52.64	90.79	54.93	74.09
SC/ST	90.68	21.53	57.53	93.70	84.52	89.30
SD	5.20	7.58	5.93	4.20	23.45	12.76
<i>Class</i>						
AL	93.84	22.70	59.94	96.31	81.20	89.11
POORMIDP	82.82	14.74	50.69	88.95	59.25	74.94
MIDP	83.82	13.87	50.98	90.24	71.68	81.53
BIGP	79.08	2.43	44.21	85.84	19.66	55.73
LANDLD	70.47	3.05	38.82	76.57	18.74	49.42
NONAG	84.16	6.14	46.31	84.88	29.08	57.81
SD	7.61	7.97	7.19	6.57	27.55	15.97
All	86.44	14.46	52.57	90.72	57.75	75.21

Note : Main and Main plus subsidiary workers have been calculated on the basis of the primary and primary and secondary both occupations of the workers respectively.

The increase in the overall figure of worker on the inclusion of main and subsidiary status also indicates the extent and intensity of underemployment in Bihar³. However, from the Table 5.1 it is evident, that this is largely due to women's perception

of their work as secondary or subsidiary. This is reflected in the PRA report which reveals that women perform a number of farm operations such as weeding, transplanting and harvesting and in many cases threshing. They are also involved in a number of unskilled non-farm operations such as working in the brick kiln as artisan helpers. Even amongst the intermediary castes, where they are slowly being withdrawn from wage labour, they still work in own farms and very often are solely responsible for vegetable cultivation and animal husbandry.

The district-wise analysis of the WPR shows that there is a consistent pattern of high male participation as main workers ranging from 82.18 per cent in Rohtas to 90.69 per cent in Purnea. The standard deviation of male participation over the district is only 2.96. However, for the female main workers the participation rate varies from as low as 8.80 per cent in Rohtas to 25.30 per cent in Purnea. This gives a standard deviation of 6.20. This shows that the female work participation rate in Purnea is approximately 3 times higher than that of Rohtas on the basis of main workers. As far as the work participation on the basis of main and subsidiary status is concerned the WPR for male workers ranges from 87.08 percent in Gopalganj to 95.36 per cent in Rohtas. In the case of female workers the participation rate varies from 37.62 per cent in Rohtas to 65.62 per cent in Purnea with a standard deviation of 10.04.

The variation in female WPR across the districts irrespective of their categorisation as main or as main and subsidiary can be accounted for on two counts. On the one hand, poorer Purnea district with lower wages and more women have joined the workforce out of sheer poverty. On the other hand, and much more definitely, the much higher out-migration figure for male workers in Purnea as compared to Rohtas (dealt with in a later section in this chapter) automatically implies that women are left behind to manage on their own and, therefore, they offer themselves in the labour market.

“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 in FGD, Kasaila, Purnea district)

Further, the work participation rate is the lowest in case of forward castes both on the basis of main as well as main and subsidiary status. Though, this has been proven repeatedly, it is important to remember that in this study, amongst all the districts and

study villages, Purnea district has the largest sample size and the highest OBC-I and Muslim population. And as we have seen above these caste groups form the highest proportion of people labelled as worker. However, and not surprisingly the male participation rate was found to be the highest in the case of OBC-I and SC/ST followed by Muslims. In fact, it is only in cases of OBC-I and SC/ST that the main work participation rate is more than 90 percent (91.72 for OBC-I and 90.68 for SC/ST).

The female participation on the basis of main workers is as low as 1.47 for the Forward Castes followed by Kurmi (9.20) and Koeri (9.65). When we consider main and subsidiary status of the women workers, the participation rates for Kurmi and Koeri improves substantially to 38.46 per cent and 65.27 per cent respectively. The female participation rate in the main worker category was the highest for OBC-I (25.66) and when main & subsidiary occupations are combined it is the highest for the SC/ST (84.52). The male participation rate was the highest for OBC-I in case of main & subsidiary workers. It is interesting to note that for main & subsidiary workers the female participation rate was not only highest in case of SC/ST but also the difference between male and female participation rate was the lowest in this category. The standard deviation of female work participation on the basis of main & subsidiary workers was 23.45, which shows a high disparity in terms of work participation rate among the women of different castes.

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. Both FC males and females do not work in the fields. 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 allow their women to perform outside agricultural work and permit their women to regularly assist in own agricultural operations. Though, the same was true for the OBC-II caste groups, this is slowly undergoing changes. Many of them now impose restrictions which prevent women from performing outside agricultural operations and in some cases as in the case of the Koiris

of Semhli village, Madhubani district they have for the past ten years stopped working for wages. However, they still work in their own farms.

The work participation rates revealed in the survey are in correspondence with the hierarchy of the classes i.e. lower the class, higher is the participation rate and vice-versa. The participation rate was the highest for the class of agricultural labour and the lowest for the landlord, both in the case of main as well as main and subsidiary workers and male as well as female workers. The only exception was in the case of middle peasant and poor middle peasant classes. It can be seen from Table 5.1 that the male participation rate was higher in middle peasant (83.82 per cent and 90.24 per cent for main and main & subsidiary workers respectively) than that of the poor middle peasant (82.82 per cent and 88.95 percent respectively). In the case of female main workers, however, the participation rate is slightly lower (13.87 per cent) among middle peasant in comparison to that of the poor middle peasant (14.74 per cent). But in the case of female main & subsidiary workers the participation rate was again lower among poor middle peasant (59.25 per cent) than that of the middle peasant (71.68 per cent).

This anomaly in WPRs between MP and PMP can be explained by juxtaposing the caste composition of the various classes against the WPRs. The reason for the higher WPR in MP category than the PMP category then becomes obvious – this category comprises of the upcoming OBC-II caste groups and as Table 5.1 shows the WPR for this caste group is higher than that of the PMP class as the FCs dominate the latter category. Similarly, in the case of female participation rate too, the higher WPR among middle peasant can be attributed to the fact that the middle peasant class mainly comprises of the middle castes like Kurmi, Yadav, Koeri etc. while the poor middle peasant category was represented substantially by the higher castes. Since the women of the middle castes are economically more active in comparison to those of the higher castes this was reflected in higher participation rate of the women in the middle peasant category. The standard deviation of female participation rate for main & subsidiary workers is as high as 27.55 which shows a very high disparity in the participation rate over the classes.

“The Koeris and Kurmis have an advantage. Their women also work in the field and help in household agriculture. They have been able to save more and buy land. This is the disadvantage that the Bumihars face. With the exception of one, neither the Bhumihar men nor women work in the field. This is the main reason for the economic

betterment of the Kurmis, Kahars and Koeris”. (Mushars in FGD, Darbepura, Nalanda district)

WPR in Different Age Groups

The WPR of the main & subsidiary workers in different age groups (table 5.2) also shows

Table 5.2: Workers Participation Rate in different Districts by Age Groups

		Age groups (in years)					
		5 to 14	15 to 24	25 to 39	40 to 59	60 & above	Total
<i>District</i>							
Gaya	Male	23.94	82.23	96.38	97.09	73.42	60.92
	Female	13.45	42.95	62.74	72.34	36.30	38.94
	Total	19.34	63.51	80.29	85.16	59.60	50.75
Gopalganj	Male	10.94	69.39	96.13	98.32	67.09	56.37
	Female	14.68	38.43	57.44	67.95	27.22	36.71
	Total	12.53	56.31	80.21	83.98	50.06	47.61
Madhubani	Male	16.91	75.53	95.31	96.74	69.21	57.65
	Female	14.13	46.28	66.25	66.03	28.28	38.38
	Total	15.65	62.00	81.18	81.95	49.03	48.50
Nalanda	Male	20.66	82.49	95.31	96.97	71.84	61.35
	Female	19.32	43.10	71.13	70.63	36.57	41.48
	Total	20.02	65.13	83.10	84.96	56.75	51.94
Purnea	Male	45.30	90.28	98.37	97.28	72.57	65.83
	Female	30.30	55.52	72.39	65.04	29.55	43.85
	Total	38.57	75.89	85.19	82.11	55.63	55.67
Rohtas	Male	10.48	70.99	93.17	98.80	65.48	54.87
	Female	7.58	25.28	42.41	44.99	18.81	23.85
	Total	9.12	49.30	68.59	73.38	46.09	40.27
All	Male	22.97	78.80	95.95	97.46	69.95	59.85
	Female	17.50	42.65	63.56	65.17	29.30	37.96
	Total	20.50	62.65	80.15	82.19	52.57	49.67

Table 5.2: contd.

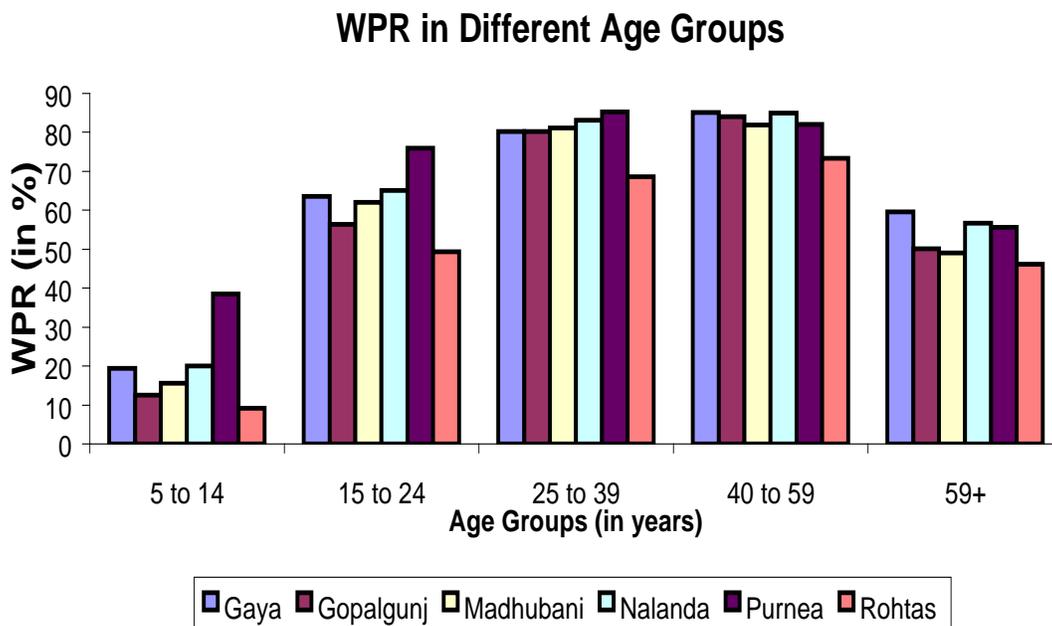
Age Groups (in years)

Caste & Class		5 to 14	15 to 24	25 to 39	40 to 59	59+	Total
FC	Male	10.59	62.00	92.37	97.80	61.81	55.54
	Female	3.02	5.73	13.74	14.95	8.91	8.02
	Total	7.15	37.22	55.07	58.65	37.40	33.44
OBC (I)	Male	35.45	90.89	98.06	98.20	72.07	65.29
	Female	26.15	61.05	85.63	85.04	36.46	50.99
	Total	31.08	77.69	91.66	92.34	58.04	58.60
Kurmi	Male	16.72	71.11	95.92	99.59	73.02	61.27
	Female	9.93	19.76	47.27	41.63	23.81	26.08
	Total	13.42	49.23	70.19	72.16	53.33	44.51
Yadav	Male	18.52	84.23	98.05	98.61	75.00	61.32
	Female	17.06	44.95	75.45	87.75	44.65	46.78
	Total	17.92	65.21	87.28	93.45	63.57	54.67

Koeri	Male	15.25	68.41	92.69	95.47	66.45	57.45
	Female	12.74	44.19	66.51	81.82	35.64	41.85
	Total	14.05	58.16	80.66	88.89	54.15	50.28
OBC (II)	Male	13.90	79.17	95.66	97.98	71.64	56.44
	Female	13.84	36.67	58.96	68.23	28.51	34.72
	Total	13.87	60.60	77.67	84.19	52.09	46.41
SC/ST	Male	23.42	85.44	98.05	96.44	80.20	61.01
	Female	22.00	70.19	90.91	90.02	48.04	55.39
	Total	22.80	78.28	94.60	93.33	65.83	58.39
Muslims	Male	35.32	84.70	96.40	96.43	64.03	60.11
	Female	24.51	49.40	71.51	63.79	28.00	39.95
	Total	30.32	69.78	84.04	80.50	49.18	50.67
AL	Male	30.44	92.38	98.62	97.47	80.79	63.13
	Female	25.48	67.17	86.82	87.11	43.36	52.64
	Total	28.26	80.85	92.76	92.61	64.57	58.24
POOMIDP	Male	11.83	71.17	99.54	98.55	65.82	57.19
	Female	7.13	27.95	72.56	81.73	35.38	35.87
	Total	9.54	50.96	86.76	90.56	53.68	47.04
MIDP	Male	15.95	77.79	95.58	97.70	67.09	60.17
	Female	15.00	48.14	76.92	87.08	44.38	47.05
	Total	15.51	64.93	86.53	92.53	58.86	54.05
BIGP	Male	16.43	68.71	93.04	98.62	69.61	58.97
	Female	8.18	12.25	22.06	23.98	14.84	14.38
	Total	12.66	45.33	59.28	63.13	47.34	38.77
LANDLD	Male	9.24	47.64	89.18	93.93	50.39	49.41
	Female	6.11	8.61	22.50	24.94	11.33	12.78
	Total	7.80	29.69	58.20	60.37	30.78	32.01
NONAG	Male	14.93	65.67	91.01	95.64	42.08	49.54
	Female	9.93	14.20	33.84	38.63	12.30	18.38
	Total	12.64	40.36	62.02	70.21	27.76	34.65
All	Male	22.97	78.80	95.95	97.46	69.95	59.85
	Female	17.50	42.65	63.56	65.17	29.30	37.96
	Total	20.50	62.65	80.15	82.19	52.57	49.67

Note: Figure show percentage of workers to total population the particular age group very high work participation of children in rural Bihar. It can be seen from the table that 20.50 per cent of the children (22.97 per cent of male children and 17.50 per cent of female children) are involved in economic activities and report their occupation as either primary or secondary. The work participation of the children was found to be highest in Purnea where 38.57 per cent of the children (45.30 per cent male children and 30.30 per cent female children) are workers. Nalanda and Gaya follow Purnea, with 20.02 per cent and 19.34 per cent of the children being workers. In Gaya 25 percentage of male children are workers. The intensity of child participation was found to be lowest in Rohtas where only 9.12 per cent of the children (10.48 per cent of the male children and 7.58 per cent of the female children) are workers. In the age group 15 to 24 (mainly college going age) 62.65

per cent (78.80 per cent male and 42.65 per cent female) are workers. In the age group 15 to 24 years the participation rate was again found to be highest for Purnea followed by Nalanda and Gaya. In terms of the castes, OBC-I is followed by SC/ST and Muslims; and in the case of class Agricultural labour is followed by middle peasant. As can be seen from the Table 5.2 in many cases the participation rate in this age group was more than 80 per cent (with the exception of Purnea where the male WPR is as high as 90 per cent. To some extent the explanations offered for the previous age group of 5-14 years is valid here too, though quite obviously the degree of influence of schooling decreases in this case. In this age group also the highest participation rate was in Purnea (for male it was more than 90 per cent). In the next two age groups i.e. 25 to 39 and 40 to 59 years the participation rate was found more consistent over the districts. The participation rate in this age group was mainly between 80 to 85 percent in all the districts except in Rohtas where the female participation rate in



these two age groups were substantially lower in comparison to that of the other districts. The male participation rate in these two age groups was more than 95 per cent in all districts (in Rohtas it was 93.17 %). The female participation rate was the highest in Gaya in the age group 40-59 and in Purnea in the age group 25-39 years and it was lower in those two age groups for the castes FC and OBC II and the classes of landlord and big peasants.

The caste and class break up of the participation rate shows that the workers participation was higher in the lower castes and classes in almost all the age groups but the participation rate was substantially higher in the children and older age groups. Among the middle castes the participation rate was found higher in Yadav for these two age groups. In the prime working age groups (25 to 39 and 40 to 59 years) the participation rate was more than 90 per cent for OBC I and SC/ST while it was 55 to 60 percent approximately for the forward castes. Again among the middle castes Yadav had the highest participation rate (approximately 90 %) in these two age groups. It is interesting to note that the participation rate among the non-agricultural class was comparatively lower for almost all the age groups. In the older age group too, 60 years and above the difference in the participation rates between different districts, castes and classes is again prominently visible. It can be seen that the participation rates in this age group is lower in the districts, castes and classes where the participation rates in the first two age groups (5 to 14 and 15 to 24) were also lower. Hence, it can be deduced that the high workers' participation rate in the districts of Purnea, Gaya and Nalanda; OBC (I), SC/ST and Muslims; agricultural labourer and poor middle peasant can be mainly attributed to the higher participation rates of children and older age groups. However, the lower participation rate among the non-agricultural class was more attributed to the lower participation rate among female. Hence, in terms of WPR the non-agricultural class more or less followed the character of big peasants and the landlord class.

Child Labour

The spread and intensity of child labour in different districts have been calculated by taking primary occupation of the children in the age group 5-14 years. The percentage of children involved in some wage or non-wage work on the basis of their primary occupation has been considered as child labour. This means that these are also non-

school going children. The intensity of child labour in different districts for each caste and class has been presented in Table 5.3.

The PRA data reveals that the spread as well as awareness about the benefits of education directly influences the extent of prevalence of child labour. For instance, the higher levels of awareness and school enrolment in Rohtas district has definitely caused a reduction in the number of working children. Even in a village like Darbeshpura, Nalanda district where the ushars are still severely oppressed by the Bhumihars, there is a perception of social mobility due to education amongst them.

Table 5.3: Incidence of Child Labour in Different Districts by Caste and Class

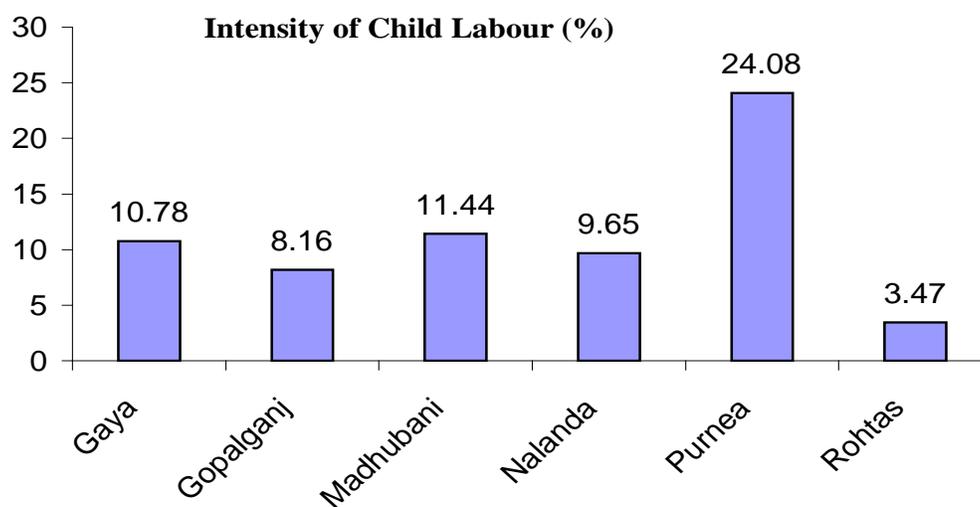
CATEGORY	Gaya	Gopalganj	Madhubani	Nalanda	Purnea	Rohtas	Total
<i>Caste</i>							
FC	3.28	0.00	0.42	0.00	3.23	0.55	1.05
OBC (I)	10.75	30.42	17.02	11.83	32.02	4.35	20.81
Kurmi	—	4.95	—	3.22	50.98	0.00	7.04
Yadav	12.59	10.37	10.71	7.94	38.89	4.55	9.80
Koeri	3.91	2.05	0.00	5.49	—	4.69	3.42
OBC (II)	8.36	4.36	8.63	0.48	19.72	4.88	6.35
SC/ST	16.40	15.59	21.69	17.40	18.55	6.49	16.66
Muslims	20.75	6.55	12.76	—	24.35	3.17	19.54
<i>Class</i>							
AL	20.95	14.53	18.47	16.93	27.93	5.63	19.41
POOMIDP	7.55	3.24	12.20	4.46	9.62	0.00	4.97
MIDP	4.75	4.44	6.41	3.86	30.25	6.85	7.02
BIGP	3.39	0.14	1.26	0.79	16.14	1.56	4.06
LANDLD	2.22	0.00	0.23	0.00	12.69	0.00	1.54
NONAG	6.53	25.25	8.13	0.00	3.04	1.80	6.27
Total	10.78	8.16	11.44	9.65	24.08	3.47	12.26

Note 1: The incidence of child labour has been calculated as percentage of child workers as per their primary occupation to total children in the age group 5-14 for each caste and class within the districts.

2: ‘—’ refers that particular group does not exist.

“Nothing has changed for us. We never had much to eat and still do not have much to eat. We never had clothes and still have few clothes to protect us from the heat, rains and cold. However, there has been one change. Earlier none of our children went to school. All of us used to work from the time we were this high (He lowers his hand upto his thigh level). Now, as the school is near our house, many of our boys go to school”. (Jagdev Manjhi, Darbeshpura, Nalanda district).

On the contrary, as the figures in Table 5.3 starkly reveal the lower awareness and spread of education in Purnea district is reflected in the high prevalence of child labour. Purnea district's educational system is almost completely dysfunctional and this too shows up in the Table 5.2 with as many as 40% of the male children working. To make matters worse, there are a number of other issues too such as the presence of only an Urdu medium school in a village like Bhokri, Purnea district. Only about 20 rich Kulhaiya children attend school here. The Lohars of Sharma tola ---the only Hindu Tola in the village----are not comfortable about initiating their children's education in the local Madrasa. Even amongst the Muslim Kulhaiya and Ansari households, there is a feeling



that there is no point in educating the children in the village if one cannot later send them to good private schools outside the village.

“What is the use of sending them to the Madrasa ? The rich Kulhaiyas after initiating their children in the Madrasa, send them to good private schools. We cannot do that. So it is better that our children stay out of school. When they are a little older they can work. Till they grow up they look after the cows and buffaloes.” (Bhokri, Purnea district)

However, what is interesting, but very depressing is that the incidence of child labour is high in districts such as Nalanda and Gaya. Amongst a myriad of factors, the lower degree of monetisation in these districts and the on-going caste-based tensions in these districts seem to be important causal factors for the higher incidence of child labour. The latter factor has increased people's fear about sending children to school and

to put them to work in the fields instead. This is especially true in Gaya district, where the incidence of male child labour is almost double that of female child labour.

“How can we send our children to school when there is so much tension and bad blood. Moreover, the school is located in their (Bhumihar) tola. The government does not care for us”. (Chamars, Rupaspur-Salempur)

The caste and class break up of the child workers (as can be seen from the column of workers in the age group 5-14 in **table 5.2**) shows that in the caste group of OBC-I and SC/ST the percentage of working child is 31.08 (35.45 male children and 26.15 female children) and 22.80 (23.42 male children and 22.00 female children) respectively. The percentage of working children is also high in the case of Muslims (30.32). In the same way, the incidence was the highest in case of agricultural labour in which the percentage of working children was 28.26 (30.44 male children and 25.48 female children). Middle peasant category follows the agricultural labour where working children are up to 15.51 per cent.

The caste and class break-up of child labour is consistent with other studies i.e. that the poorest and lowest castes are more likely to send their children to work. However, it is important to note that across the districts in the plains of Bihar, there is now a growing awareness about the benefits of education supplemented by increased incomes from migration. It has caused many to opt for the delayed returns from education rather than the immediate benefits of child labour. Across the districts, people now perceive an improvement in their social situation and, in their wealth ranking exercises they factor in children’s schooling and number of children working per family.

Further, it is important to explain the lower survey figures for female child labour. Though, under-reporting is definitely one reason, it needs to be explained. As in the case of women’s work, the girl’s work too is undervalued and in many cases not even perceived as work.

“Our girls do not work. It is our boys who work. The girls stay at home and look after the children, cook food and clean the homes” (KusihalChappar, Gopalganj district).

“What is the use of further educating a girl? As of now there is a primary school in the village, some send them to school for a few years. But, after that, no girl studies as the middle school is in the next village. Moreover, if all of them start studying, then who will look after the house work when we are out working in the fields?”(Bhokila, Nalanda district)

It can be seen from the Table 5.2 that the overall participation rate in all age groups is also higher for the same districts, castes and classes. As far as the next two age groups i.e. 25 to 39 and 40 to 59 are concerned the participation rates show a more or less consistent picture at least for the male workers (the WPR for male being approximately 95 per cent) for all districts, castes and classes. In case of female workers, however, the participation rate was lower in these age groups in the districts of Rohtas and Gopalganj, of FC and OBC-II (except Yadavs) and the classes of landlord and big peasant.

Occupational Structure

To examine the occupational structure of the working population the occupations of the workers were classified into seven major categories⁴ viz. agriculture & allied activities, agricultural labourer, non-agricultural labourer, service, caste occupation, business and others⁵ (see table 5.4). The intensity of agricultural labour is the highest in Purnea (41.64 per cent) and was found to be the lowest in Gopalganj (11.70 per cent). However, in Gopalganj district the percentage of non-agricultural labour was much higher in comparison to other districts. The percentage of female agricultural labour was higher in comparison to that of the male in all the districts. But the difference is the highest in Gaya (47.66 for female and 20.52 for male) followed by Madhubani (45.76 for female and 25.49 male), and Purnea (57.29 for female and 37.50 for male). The percentage of workers involved in agriculture & allied activities was the highest in Rohtas (55.50) followed by Gaya (41.23) and lowest in Madhubani (28.71) followed by Purnea (35.81). The percentage of worker involved in service was found to be highest in Madhubani (22.76) followed by Gopalganj (18.52). In both these districts the percentage of female workers involved in the service sector is a little more than 5 per cent. Interestingly, as far as other occupations are concerned female participation is always higher than male participation. In the districts of Gopalganj and Madhubani female participation in other occupation is as high as 27.73 and 24.86 per cent respectively.

The caste-wise analysis of the occupational structure shows that most of the workers in Yadav, Kurmi, Koeri and FC are involved in cultivation and allied activities. The percentage of workers reporting this as their main occupation is 74.14, 59.90, and 57.63, 56.65 respectively. The female participation amongst the Yadav in this occupation is as high as 82.05 per cent followed by Koeri female (61.86). The Kurmi female participation in this occupation is only 30.67 per cent, even lower than the FC female

participation (32.00 per cent). However, Kurmi female participation in agricultural labour is as high as 40 per cent. In SC/ST more than 60 per cent of the female work as agricultural labour. Amongst the FC and OBC-II a high percentage of people seem to be involved in service (26.80) and business (22.20) respectively. And, for the Muslims most of the workers are confined to activities related to agriculture or labour. From the Table 5.4 we can see that more than 75 per cent of the Muslims workers are involved in the first three categories of the occupational structure.

The caste-wise analysis of the occupational structure shows that there has been a concentration of caste groups in different types of 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 was different in case of 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.

Although, the results of the occupational distribution are 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. The PRA reports also reveal that increasingly fewer people are opting to work in caste based occupations.

Table 5.4: Occupational Structure of Main workers by District and Caste

District		Occupational Structure						
		Agr & All	Ag. Lab.	Oth Lab	Service	Caste Occp	Business	Others
Gaya	Male	44.39	20.52	4.60	9.77	4.92	13.30	2.49
	Female	35.33	47.66	0.56	1.87	1.50	3.36	9.72
	Total	43.26	23.92	4.10	8.78	4.49	12.06	3.39
Gopalganj	Male	41.23	10.99	12.59	20.64	2.01	9.52	3.02
	Female	36.81	16.13	2.52	5.38	7.56	3.87	27.73
	Total	40.61	11.70	11.19	18.52	2.79	8.73	6.46
Madhubani	Male	30.30	25.39	11.18	24.82	0.50	4.82	2.98
	Female	15.07	45.76	2.82	5.08	1.13	5.27	24.86
	Total	28.71	27.51	10.31	22.76	0.57	4.87	5.26
Nalanda	Male	41.03	31.58	4.46	11.91	3.03	6.54	1.46
	Female	45.68	37.57	4.23	2.12	1.06	2.82	6.53
	Total	41.70	32.44	4.42	10.50	2.75	6.00	2.19
Purnea	Male	36.88	37.50	9.60	7.57	0.79	3.40	4.25
	Female	31.73	57.29	1.58	1.28	0.15	0.60	7.37
	Total	35.81	41.64	7.92	6.26	0.66	2.81	4.90
Rohtas	Male	54.63	15.91	5.56	13.42	1.87	8.44	0.16
	Female	63.81	21.64		4.48	1.49	6.72	1.87
	Total	55.50	16.46	5.04	12.58	1.83	8.28	0.32
FC	Male	57.09	1.66	5.22	26.75	2.53	6.42	0.33
	Female	32.00	8.00	6.67	29.33		8.00	16.00
	Total	56.65	1.77	5.25	26.80	2.49	6.45	0.60
OBC (I)	Male	31.01	34.96	8.71	11.85	5.15	4.70	3.62
	Female	37.85	45.45	1.21	0.19	1.21	1.58	12.52
	Total	32.47	37.19	7.11	9.37	4.31	4.03	5.51
Kurmi	Male	63.02	7.25	4.27	16.22		7.68	1.56
	Female	30.67	40.00		14.67		6.67	8.00
	Total	59.90	10.41	3.86	16.07		7.58	2.19
Yadav	Male	72.77	9.85	3.27	9.81		1.62	2.68
	Female	82.05	6.59		2.95		0.68	7.73
	Total	74.14	9.37	2.79	8.80		1.48	3.43
Koeri	Male	57.17	9.04	6.30	16.62	0.18	9.68	1.00
	Female	61.86	14.41		4.24		0.85	18.64
	Total	57.63	9.56	5.69	15.42	0.16	8.82	2.72
Oth. OBC (II)	Male	31.60	13.20	11.02	15.73	3.88	23.54	1.02
	Female	32.43	24.32		4.05	1.01	15.20	22.97
	Total	31.71	14.60	9.63	14.26	3.52	22.50	3.78
SC/ST	Male	17.12	50.97	8.23	9.95	1.46	8.36	3.91
	Female	17.43	61.90	1.62	1.98	4.94	1.62	10.51
	Total	17.18	53.10	6.95	8.40	2.13	7.05	5.20
Muslims	Male	31.71	32.68	15.25	11.97	0.24	3.87	4.28
	Female	25.52	46.59	6.66	3.65		2.54	15.06
	Total	30.80	34.71	13.99	10.75	0.21	3.68	5.85
All	Male	40.09	24.79	8.37	14.75	2.05	7.30	2.65
	Female	35.02	42.52	2.04	2.88	1.86	2.90	12.78
	Total	39.37	27.33	7.47	13.05	2.02	6.67	4.09

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

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. This is exemplified in the case of village Darbeshpura, Nalanda district where “the richer Koiris have over the years have withdrawn their women from the fields”.

Attached Labour

There are a number of specific informal labour systems prevalent in the villages of Bihar. The household data, village level data, and PRA reports all clearly reveal that the system of attached labour – Halwaha (adult attached agricultural labour), Charwaha (mainly child labour employed for grazing cattle), Kamiya/Naukaria (domestic help) – is prevalent in several villages across the districts. It is also important to note that only people from lower caste/class work as attached labour. Amongst the various castes – Mushars, Chamars, Dushads, Nuniyas and Kulhaiyas feature primarily as the ones who work as attached labour. In table 5.5 number of different types of attached labour during the two reference period has been presented.

The table reveals that the system has for sometime now been on the decline in almost all the districts, though, it has been faster in some like Madhubani, compared to others

Change in Incidence of Attached Labour

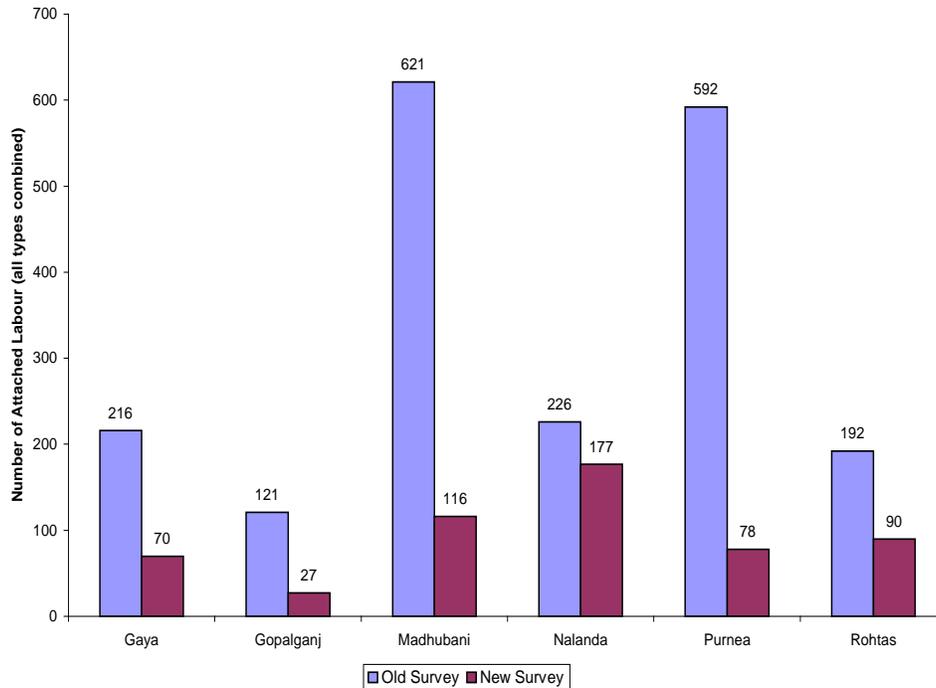


Table 5.5: Changes in the Practice of Attached Labour (in number)

Districts	Old Survey				New Survey			
	Kamiya	Halwaha	Charwaha	Others	Kamiya	Halwaha	Charwaha	Others
Gaya	62	154	0	0	6	50	14	0
Gopalganj	0	121	0	0	0	20	7	0
Madhubani	150	420	50	1	0	116	0	0
Nalanda	32	175	5	14	26	129	12	10
Purnea	155	262	174	1	9	40	20	9
Rohtas	45	121	10	16	1	39	50	0
Total	399	1132	229	16	41	355	53	19

like Nalanda. Though, the decline of attached labour is true for all three categories, it is most acute in the case of Kamiyas. Very few women are now prepared to work as Kamiyas. They now prefer to work as agricultural and non-agricultural labour and when work is not available in the village, they now go to the neighbouring villages in search of work.

“My father was an Halwaha. I used to work as a Charwaha. But now I work independently. I do not have to depend on anybody. I can work when I want and I earn up to Rs. 50 /- during the work season. If I had still worked as a Halwaha I would not have made so much money. Moreover, I did not like the way the landlords talk. They use filthy language and sometimes even beat people like us” (Khangaon, Madhubani district).

It can be seen from the table that between the two reference periods there has been a drastic decline in the intensity of attached labour, particularly in case of Halwaha. On the other hand, there has been an increase in number of Charwaha in the districts of Rohtas, Gaya, Gopalganj, and Nalanda. However, the overall number of Charwaha has also decreased by more than four times. Also, though, there has been a reduction in the number of attached labour in Nalanda district, the percentage of reduction is much lower when compared to a district like Gopalganj or Purnea.

The reasons for the decline in the intensity of attached labour are many – the important ones cited by the attached labour are: low salary, lack of freedom to work for others and verbal and physical abuse by landlords.

Ram Kishun Ram – Diwanparsa – Gopalganj

Ram Kishun Ram aged 70 years, has been working as halwaha with one landlord, Yugal Lal since 1980. He has four sons and two daughters. He has taken a loan of Rs. 15,000 in the year 1995, for his daughter’s marriage. He has been provided with 0.20 acres of land for cultivation under sharecropping from his master and about 2 acres of land from other farmers. He has also put one of his sons (14-15 years) to work as halwaha with his master in lieu of the loan he has taken. He expressed his desire to work as free labour as soon as he becomes free of the indebtedness. Once his hand was badly injured while working on thresher but his master didn’t help him at all in getting the treatment. He had to spend a lot of money himself. For this he was not happy with his master but expressed his gratitude towards him for his help in the marriage of his daughter. He wanted to work of his own as a free labour and as sharecropper by leasing in more land.

Lack of monetisation of the economy in Nalanda may be the primary reason for this. Also, important to note is that many in Nalanda district feel that it is advantageous to be an attached labour. This is exemplified by Bhokila village, where there has been an increase in the number Halwahas amongst the Chamars as they feel this is one way to get land rights.

It is important to analyse two important features. On the one hand, though it is true that there has been an overall decline in the proportion of people working as attached

labour in the plains of Bihar, there is a clear north-south divide as far as the proportion of Charwahas are concerned. It is distressing to see that in all the three districts lying South of the Ganges – Rohtas, Nalanda and Gaya--the number of children working as Charwaha has increased substantially. Madhubani and Purnea reveal a contrasting picture. In both these districts there has been a drastic reduction in the percentage of children working as Charwaha. As has been mentioned above, only young boys are employed as Charwaha. The presence of attached child labour in Nalanda and Gaya districts is not surprising, considering that both these districts also have a rather high percentage of child workers (approximately 20% each). However, Rohtas, stands out for, it has the least proportion of child workers of all the districts but high number of Charwaha.

The monetisation of the village economy, large scale out-migration and deteriorating socio-economic conditions of the villages have contributed to the decline in the intensity of attached labour. Moreover, according to some villagers the landlords can not afford to have attached labour in present times.

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 more than 25 per cent had education level up to middle school (15.22 per cent up to primary and 9.97 per cent up to middle). Only 5 percent 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 5.6 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 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 5.6: 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	
Oth 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	
All	Male	44.44	19.30	14.37	12.19	8.78	0.90
	Female	87.97	7.83	1.97	1.41	0.77	0.04
	Total	59.91	15.22	9.97	8.36	5.94	0.59

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 the case of other labour) than

in the case of female workers (98.46 per cent in the case of agricultural labourer and 73.08 per cent in the 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 5.6 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 the 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.

The caste and class analysis of the workers' educational status (**table 5.7**) shows that as expected the percentage of illiterates is lowest in the caste groups of FC (15.60) and the class of landlord (17.03). On the other hand, the level of illiteracy is the highest in the caste group of SC/ST (79.18) and the class of AL (78.55). The FC and landlords constitute only 3.63 and 1.36 per cent respectively of the total illiterate workers while SC/ST constituted 29.77 per cent followed by OBC (I) 22.58 and Muslims 20.24 per cent. The Agricultural labour class constitute more than two third of the total illiterate workers. As far as the level of education is concerned, it is found more equally distributed up to the level of graduation for the castes FC and Kurmi and the classes of landlord and big peasant. Approximately 25 and 15 per cent of the workers in FC and Kurmi respectively had an education level of high school and above. For the castes OBC-I, SC/ST and Muslims this figure comes to approximately 5 per cent. In the same way, workers having education level of high school and above constituted more than 45 per cent in the landlord category followed by the big peasant (approximately 35 per cent). On the other hand, the level of education seems to be limited up to middle school in the case of the SC/ST castes, Muslims and OBC-I and in class of agricultural labour, poor middle peasant, middle peasant and non agricultural labour. It is only in the FC (2.57 per cent) and landlord (3.55 per cent) categories that a few postgraduates are found.

The PRA findings substantiate the literacy and educational attainment figures revealed by the survey. It is interesting to note that increasingly many of the lower castes

have started realising the benefits of education and relating it to the job market. The overall lower literacy rates and educational attainment of women is obviously reflected in their occupational preferences and positions.

Table 5.7: Percentage Distribution of Workers by Educational Standard and Caste, Class

Caste Group	Major Educational Status						Total
	illiterate	up to primary	up to middle	up to high school	up to graduate	up to post graduate	
FC	15.60	16.59	20.47	23.40	21.37	2.57	100.00
	3.63	15.18	28.62	38.99	50.15	60.34	13.93
OBC (I)	71.69	16.32	6.38	2.80	2.77	0.04	100.00
	22.58	20.23	12.09	6.32	8.80	1.29	18.87
Kurmi	34.57	10.81	19.78	19.04	15.06	0.74	100.00
	1.60	1.97	5.50	6.32	7.03	3.45	2.77
Yadav	58.59	14.93	11.22	10.17	4.89	0.18	100.00
	11.43	11.46	13.17	14.22	9.62	3.45	11.69
Koeri	43.59	20.24	17.24	14.39	4.02	0.51	100.00
	3.67	6.70	8.72	8.68	3.41	4.31	5.04
OBC (II)	48.48	23.90	13.25	10.83	3.07	0.47	100.00
	7.09	13.75	11.65	11.34	4.53	6.90	8.76
SC/ST	79.18	9.75	5.40	2.93	2.59	0.11	100.00
	29.77	14.43	12.21	7.91	9.84	4.31	22.53
Muslims	73.88	15.10	4.89	3.17	2.39	0.58	100.00
	20.24	16.28	8.05	6.22	6.60	15.95	16.41
AL	78.55	12.16	5.16	2.71	1.38	0.02	100.00
	76.50	46.63	30.24	18.91	13.60	2.16	58.35
POOMIDP	45.80	20.36	16.45	12.35	4.99	0.05	100.00
	3.96	6.93	8.56	7.66	4.36	0.43	5.19
MIDP	45.76	18.72	16.04	11.91	7.32	0.22	100.00
	8.10	13.04	17.07	15.11	13.08	3.88	10.61
BIGP	24.67	19.30	18.81	19.32	15.87	2.03	100.00
	7.07	21.78	32.42	39.70	45.92	58.62	17.18
LANDLD	17.03	18.97	13.97	23.48	23.00	3.55	100.00
	1.36	5.94	6.69	13.40	18.47	28.45	4.77
NONAG	46.07	22.08	12.78	11.14	6.95	0.98	100.00
	3.01	5.67	5.01	5.21	4.57	6.47	3.91
Total	59.91	15.22	9.97	8.36	5.94	0.59	100.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Note: First and second rows contain row and column percentages respectively.

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Migration of Workers

Migration for work has been one of the most important coping mechanisms of the workers in rural Bihar. During lean agricultural seasons workers have always migrated in search of employment to distant places.⁶ The FGD during PRA exercise revealed the fact that the workers used migration as a coping mechanism not only for the economic but also for a number of social reasons. Apart from the fact that people earn a higher income if they work outside, many people now also prefer to work outside as it can slowly break the existing caste taboos that exist in the village.

“Most of the young want to work outside. Then they do not have to bow their heads in front of the landlord or listen to their filthy language. Moreover, if they make sufficient money they do not have to work for someone they do not wish to. Nobody can then force us to do as they want to”. (Jhitki, Madhubani district)

“Now that so many people work outside, nobody can cheat us. In the past if a person refused to work in their field, he was beaten and forced to work. Not only did they force us to work for them, they (Brahmins) used to make us fight amongst ourselves. Today, the situation has changed. Because many of us work outside, we cannot be cheated anymore”. (Jitwarpur, Purnea district)

“We have not become richer because of Laloo Prasad Yadav, but we are not so scared of them (Bhumihar, Brahmin and Kayastha) anymore. We can now complain in the police station ... Earlier the Harijans and middle caste were not united. Now, because we are united the landlords cannot ill-treat and cheat us. Earlier we used to do *begari* (unpaid work, only food is provided), but now we only work for wages. Nobody is a *bandhua* (bonded labour) now. All can work freely and for anybody in the village or migrate in search of employment. However, going outside to work is not so easy”.

The intensity of workers' migration is highest in Madhubani (23.29 per cent) followed by Gopalganj and Purnea. The overall figure for male worker migration for Madhubani is as high as 37%. The spatial variation in the migration pattern of the workers appears to be very prominent. On the one hand, districts of north Bihar plain show high intensity of seasonal migration of seasonal workers, the developed districts viz. Gopalganj in the north Bihar plain and Rohtas in south Bihar plain show higher percentage of permanent migration. In Nalanda, which is a district of average migration,

intensity of migrants is equally distributed between seasonal and permanent migration. For female workers, migration is higher in the districts of high permanent migration, Rohtas, Gopalganj and Nalanda. (**Table 5.8**). Hence, besides the fact that the north Bihar plain districts have higher intensity of migration the spatial pattern of migration clearly points out to two important facts. First, there is a clear difference in the nature of migration in developed districts and less developed districts. Second, although female workers migrate, migration rate is very low.

In terms of caste the migration pattern shows that seasonal migration is the highest amongst Muslims (71.53%) followed by the OBC-I (67.73%) category. On the other hand, it is interesting to see that permanent migration is highest amongst other OBC-II (58.49) and FC (56.89%). When the analysis is extended to class categories, the following picture emerges. As Table 5.8 shows, the highest intensity of migration occurs in the landlord and non-agricultural labour classes (taking seasonal as well as permanent migration together). Also, not surprisingly, the intensity of seasonal migration is lowest for the category of MP and BP (42% approximately) and permanent migration is the lowest for agricultural labour. The female workers' migration being associated with permanent nature of migration becomes even sharper in case of migration pattern of big peasant and landlord.

However, in many villages problems related to seasonal migration have started showing up. The migrant's families are very often denied defecation rights in the fields and increasingly not allowed to lease land. This is exemplified in Diwanparsa, Gopalganj district, where many in SC community work as migrants.

“The landlords slap cases of robbery against those who want to go to Delhi, Punjab, Surat etc., so that they remain in the village. Even our women face difficulties. Even though they get higher wages in the next village, they are unable to work there as the FC landlords block their way and sometimes even keep the goats in their custody. At other times they even threaten to beat up the Chamar, Nuniya and Gaud women if they dare to work in the next village” (Diwanparsa, Gopalganj)

Table 5.8: Migration Status of Workers by District, Caste and Class

		Share of Migrants in Total Workers (in %)	% Distribution of migrants	
			Seasonal	Permanent
Gaya	Male	12.52	62.16	37.84
	Female	0.22	100.00	0.00
	Total	8.15	62.52	37.48
Gopalganj	Male	21.70	45.13	54.87
	Female	2.16	61.36	38.64
	Total	14.98	45.94	54.06
Madhubani	Male	36.77	54.15	45.85
	Female	0.90	42.31	57.69
	Total	23.29	53.98	46.02
Nalanda	Male	13.00	49.49	50.51
	Female	2.13	63.27	36.73
	Total	8.88	50.74	49.26
Purnea	Male	21.74	84.16	15.84
	Female	0.71	100.00	0.00
	Total	14.08	84.44	15.56
Rohtas	Male	12.90	19.02	80.98
	Female	1.18	46.15	53.85
	Total	9.63	19.95	80.05
FC	Male	23.83	43.27	56.73
	Female	4.13	36.00	64.00
	Total	21.63	43.11	56.89
OBC (I)	Male	23.78	67.47	32.53
	Female	0.80	79.17	20.83
	Total	14.44	67.73	32.27
Kurmi	Male	17.44	52.21	47.79
	Female	2.32	57.14	42.86
	Total	13.22	52.45	47.55
Yadav	Male	9.97	49.82	50.18
	Female	0.95	64.71	35.29
	Total	6.44	50.68	49.32
Koeri	Male	14.91	60.77	39.23
	Female	0.93	28.57	71.43
	Total	9.56	59.57	40.43
OBC (II)	Male	23.68	40.19	59.81
	Female	1.02	100.00	0.00
	Total	15.86	41.51	58.49
SC/ST	Male	17.57	62.18	37.82
	Female	1.13	56.82	43.18
	Total	10.31	61.92	38.08
Muslims	Male	26.01	71.17	28.83
	Female	1.01	87.50	12.50
	Total	16.78	71.53	28.47
AL	Male	19.94	70.37	29.63
	Female	0.86	65.85	34.15
	Total	11.90	70.23	29.77

Table 5.8 contd.

POOMIDP	Male	14.97	67.36	32.64
	Female	0.68	100.00	
	Total	9.78	68.18	31.82
MIDP	Male	14.72	41.99	58.01
	Female	0.60	100.00	
	Total	8.99	43.55	56.45
BIGP	Male	17.93	42.30	57.70
	Female	3.11	54.29	45.71
	Total	15.44	42.71	57.29
LANDLD	Male	39.79	44.00	56.00
	Female	4.82	64.71	35.29
	Total	33.15	44.57	55.43
NONAG	Male	38.89	44.24	55.76
	Female	2.84	36.36	63.64
	Total	29.75	44.05	55.95
All	Male	20.78	57.68	42.32
	Female	1.15	64.38	35.63
	Total	13.80	57.88	42.12

The analysis of social status of migrants is thus very revealing. On the one hand, it seems that only the very rich or the poor migrate and as the intensity of migration varied for both permanent and seasonal, some conclusions can be effectively drawn. In most villages across districts there is a strong feeling that only the landed and upper class and upper caste people work outside as they aim to enhance their social and economic status further.

“In many of the Rajput families, many members along with their families have been living outside the village in Patna / Delhi as they are engineers/professors. They are very rich and have educated their children in private schools outside the village. Quite obviously, these children cannot come back and work in the same village. What will they earn here and where will they work. They have to work outside and only then will they get a car, house etc..”(Kaithi, Rohtas district)

On the other hand, in the FGDs the people made it very clear that the lower caste and poor (lower class) only migrate out to earn their day-to-day livelihood and in a few cases due to the prevailing caste tensions in the region.

“About 30% of the households in this village have at least one member working in Delhi, Punjab, Haryana etc. Most go as agricultural labour – they first go in March and return in June, then again go in July and return in October and finally go in November

and return in February. If these people do not go, what will their families eat?’ (Kasaila, Purnea district).

Occupational Structure of the Migrant Workers

The occupational structure of the working population shows a higher concentration of workers in agriculture and allied activities like animal husbandry, poultry, sheep rearing etc. and agricultural labour. The occupational structure of the migrant workers, however, shows a clear shift from agriculture to non-agriculture. To see the occupational shift of the migrant workers only primary occupation has been taken into consideration because it was found that although most of the workers had changed their primary occupations after migration, they were still involved in agriculture on the basis of their secondary occupations.

It can be seen from Table 5.9 that, among the non-migrants approximately two third of the workers are involved in the agricultural sector in either agriculture or allied activities (48.81 per cent) or as agricultural labour (29.52 per cent). The percentage of migrant workers involved in this sector is up to 35 per cent and more so in the category of agricultural labour. The seasonal migrant workers are almost equally involved in occupations like agriculture labour, other labour and service. On the other hand, the permanent migrants are mainly concentrated in service (73.85 per cent) followed by other labour (11.96 per cent). It is interesting to note that within the occupation of other labour, the seasonal migrants alone constitute 46.42 per cent.

The type and quality of jobs within the category of other labour and service varies widely for the migrant workers. The village level data, collected through the village schedule and FGD and wealth ranking exercises with the villagers, reveals that in the other labour category the migrant workers are mainly involved in jobs like brick kiln work, rickshaw pulling, thela pulling, under ground cable work, construction labour, transport loading, casual factory work etc.

Table 5.9 : Occupational Structure of Migrant Workers

Occupation	Distribution of Migration Status			
	Non Migrants	Seasonal Migrants	Permanent Migrants	Total
Agr & All	99.61	0.37	0.02	100.00
	48.81	1.29	0.09	39.37
Ag. Lab.	86.77	11.99	1.24	100.00
	29.52	29.00	4.06	27.33
Oth Lab	40.17	46.42	13.41	100.00
	3.73	30.69	11.96	7.47
Service	24.59	28.03	47.38	100.00
	3.99	32.37	73.85	13.05
Caste Occup.	86.72	8.12	5.17	100.00
	2.19	1.46	1.25	2.02
Business	80.24	8.79	10.97	100.00
	6.66	5.19	8.75	6.67
Others	99.91		0.09	100.00
	5.09		0.04	4.09
Total	80.33	11.30	8.37	100.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

The variation in job description for the workers in the service category is more diverse. On the one hand, there are some who are involved in manual jobs employed either in the government or private sector such as sweepers, peons etc. to better paid permanent employees such as lecturers in colleges, junior engineer in PWD department, teachers in school etc.

Other than the seasonal and permanent migrants the workers are also found commuting to the neighbouring villages and towns/cities on day-to-day basis.

Table 5.10: Details of Commuters

Districts	workers commuting in surveyed villages	Average monthly Income (Rs.)	monthly approx.	Distance within (Kms.)	Type of works performed
Gaya	173	600 to 800		5	Brick kiln, ag. lab., stone crushing, construction lab.
Gopalganj	95	1000 to 1200		5	Agriculture and other lab, construction labour
Madhubani	340	1000 to 1200		5 to 10	Brick kiln, ag. lab., construction labour
Nalanda	106	1000 to 2000		5 to 15	Casual lab., construction lab., employed in shops etc. Ag. lab.
Purnea	183	800 to 1000		4	Brick kiln, construction lab, agriculture labour
Rohtas	68	1000 to 1200		3	Construction lab., employed in shops etc.

The village level data on daily commuters presented in Table 5.10 show that the neighbourhood migration (daily commuters) is also higher in the villages where the intensity of seasonal migration is higher. In other words, neighbourhood migration is high in the districts of Madhubani and Purnea (340 and 183) where seasonal migration is also high and low where permanent migration is high. FGDs with these workers reveal that many among the male daily commuters. Because of the cost involved or because of some family problems, they prefer to commute rather than migrate. Also to migrate a longer distance, the workers take some advance payment from the contractors, which they have to return with interest later. It seems that when the workers are not provided with advance, it becomes very difficult to migrate to far-off places and then as a last resort the workers opt for neighbourhood migration.

An analysis of the PRA report reveals that apart from the obvious economic reasons neighbourhood migration is more from villages with lower productivity, lower quality land and having caste tensions. Interestingly, in the PRA data there are examples of villages such as Kaithi and Mohiuddinpur where the population break-up is such that there are a larger proportion of FC and OBC-I. As the labour class, especially male labour migrates outside, people from neighbouring villages migrate to the village in peak seasons to work in the fields of FC as they do not work in the field.

The PRA reports also reveal that increasingly many lower caste women are working in neighbouring villages. Though, the economic advantage is the primary reason for this, here too other social factors such as lessening of caste differences, greater independence etc. also seem to be responsible. However, many of them are harassed by the landlords. Apart from being abused by the landlords, they are often denied defecation rights and their animals are prevented from grazing on common lands.

“You want to work in the next village, do you? Go and use their fields” (Chamar women, Bhokila, Nalanda)

“Go away! Take the your goats and cows to the next village where you work”
(Chamar and Nuniya women, Diwanparsa, Gopalganj)

Wages and Earnings of Labour

The wage structure in the rural areas is a complex issue to understand, as different types of wage rates prevail even within a small region (say a village) that have causal relationships not only among themselves but also with a number of socio-economic variables. Not only the demand for and supply of labour interact with each other in determining the wage rate in the rural areas but also caste-class composition of the village, patron client relationship, geographical mobility of the labour etc. play their dominant role in deciding the wage structure of the rural economy. 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. Discussions were also held with labourers and landlords separately to know their preferences regarding the modes of payments and changes in the wage structure of the villages over last ten years. A separate FGD was also held with female labourers in order to have a detailed idea of the gender discrimination in terms of wage payments and their preferences about the 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.

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 5.11 (for details of the wage structure in different villages see Annexure - D)

Table 5.11: 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
	Female	----	----	----	----	----	----
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
Other Non-harvest (half day Operation)	Male	31.50	28.40	28.00	24.00	28.00	39.00
	Female	31.50	28.40	28.00	24.00	28.00	39.00

- 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 are not employed

i) Harvest wage (Efficiency wage) – Across the districts, harvest wage is the highest of all the types of wages paid for agricultural operations. Uniformity is also seen in the mode of payment in the sense that irrespective of the district, payment for harvesting a crop is on a share basis i.e. a share of the crop. In order to get a larger ‘share’ of crop, the agricultural labour physically puts in long hours to complete the harvest operations. The harvest time is also the busiest for the workers as their payment is in effect a measure of their efficiency. To facilitate the analysis, as has been said earlier, a value has been imputed for the harvest share. Annexure I shows that not only the harvest wage differs across the district, but also varies from crop to crop. For example, the average wage paid for paddy varies between 1/10th in Purnea to 1/16th in Rohtas and in the case of wheat it varies between 1/8th in Purnea to 1/12th in Rohtas. The harvest share is essentially determined by the agricultural productivity of the region. This is because a single bunch of the harvested crop contains different quantity of grain depending on the productivity of the crop in the village. Moreover, the productivity of the crop also determines the density of the crop grown which in turn determines the amount of labour put in by the labourer in harvesting. For instance, for Rohtas, which is considered to be an agriculturally high

productive district, harvest share varies between 12:1 to 16:1, while for a low productive district like Purnea, the share varies between 8:1 to 10:1.

To show the linkage of harvest share with agricultural productivity, productivity of two main crops paddy and wheat has been presented in table 5.12. For the purpose of simplicity, the productivity has been given in terms of range to show the variations at village level.

Table 5.12: Productivity of Paddy and Wheat (Quintal /acre) in Different District

District	Paddy (quintal per acre)	Wheat (quintal per acre)
Gaya	8.10 – 15.00	5.40 – 13.00
Gopalganj	13.50 – 18.50	12.50 – 16.20
Madhubani	4.00 – 11.00	8.00 – 12.00
Nalanda	10.00 – 16.00	8.00 – 12.00
Purnea	7.00 – 12.80	6.40 – 12.00
Rohtas	17.00 – 19.20	11.20 – 14.00

Note : The figures show range of productivity of the particular crop in different villages of the Districts

It can be seen from the table that Rohtas has the highest productivity followed by Gopalganj, while Madhubani and Purnea have the lowest. In table 5.11 we have seen that in Rohtas and Gopalganj the harvest share is lower in comparison to that in Purnea and Madhubani where the productivity is lower (also see Annexure – I) .

At this point it is important to consider another aspect – during the harvest period, in addition to the harvest share meals are given to the labourer. A careful look at these figures across the districts reveals that there are differences between the wages given to males and females on the basis of this.

ii) Non-harvest full day operation – Ploughing, hoeing, levelling of the land, transplanting etc. are normally operations in which workers work the whole day. These operations by their very nature tend to be gender specific. For instance, males only perform ploughing, while transplanting is performed by both. The mode of payment for these operations tends to be mixed– some in kind and some in cash. Using the kind of calculation enumerated above, it has been found that the average wage varies from Rs. 26.50 in Purnea to Rs. 41.50 in Rohtas. Again for the non-harvest operations the payment of meals differed for males and females . When asked about these differences, some of the villagers informed that this is being done conventionally. However, they

agreed that the women should also get the same meals as men are getting. Some villagers also put the argument that since women can work less efficiently than men, it is obvious that men should get more food.

iii). Half-day Operation – Weeding is the main operations in agriculture, which is performed mainly by women on half-day basis. However, at some point of time male labourers are also employed for this operation. For all half-day operations the wages were found much depressed and comparatively lower for the women. It can be seen in the table that the wages for these operations were as low as Rs. 26 a day in Nalanda and sex discrimination is upto Rs. 5 in Rohtas and Nalanda. Moreover, it was found, as claimed by the female labourers, that their work is often stretched for more than four hours a day and on a number of occasions they have to work even for six hours for the same wage.

iv). Contract Wage – For some agricultural operations wage payment on the basis of contract is also found in practice. In the South plains of Bihar particularly in the districts of Nalanda and Gaya transplanting is being done on contract basis. This is because transplantation of paddy is best done while it is raining or immediately after rains. The employer in these districts offers a fixed wage for transplanting paddy on the basis of per unit of land (*per katha*). A labourer takes one and half day on an average in transplanting one katha of land and charges Rs. 60 to 75 depending on the urgency of work and the availability of labour. In this way, the wage for transplanting is also found among the highest at least in agriculturally developed districts. The practice of contract wage is found very limited in the districts of North Bihar plains.

v). Wages of Attached Labour

The wages and earnings of attached labour, though determined by the prevailing wage structure in the village, the system and mode of payments, are somewhat different in comparison to that of the free labourers. As can be seen from table 5.13, a halwaha essentially gets paid in three components – an annual wage which is generally either a cash component or in kind such as 12 quintal paddy as in Misirbatarhan, Gopalganj

district; daily wages which are either paid in cash as in the villages Madhubani and Purnea or in kind as is the norm in all the remaining districts, and meals; and finally, a

Table 5.13: Wage System of Attached Labour (Halwaha)

Distr./Block/Village	Annual earnings	Daily wages			Land (in Acres)	
		Cash (in Rs.)	Kind	Meals	Share basis	Fully paid
Khesari	-		2 kg	1.5	-	0.16
Khukhri	-	-	2 kg	1.5	-	0.16
Alalpur-	-	-	2.5 kg	1.5	-	0.375 Acre
Rupaspur-	Clothes one time in a year	-	3 kg	1.5	-	0.37 Acre
Kari	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kanaudi	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chakchatar	Clothes		1.5 kg	1.5	-	1.00
Anhar	-	-	1.5 kg	1.5	-	0.63
Samahuti Buzurg	-	-	1.75 kg paddy	0.5	-	1.25
Bhuawal		-	1.75 kg paddy	2.5	-	1.25
Amarhi	-	-	1.75 kg paddy	0.5	0.62	-
Kaithi	12 Quintal Paddy	-	1.5 kg paddy	0.5	-	-
Tarokhar	100/-	-	1.0 kg	1.0	0.12	-
Darwespura	-	10/-	1.0 kg Rice	1.5	-	-
Chandkura	-	-	2.5 kg	1.0	-	0.32
Bhokila	-	-	2.5 kg wheat	1.0	-	0.37
Mohiuddinpur	-	-	1.5 kg Rice	1.0	-	0.47
Brandi	-	-	2 kg Rice	1.0	-	0.50
Mirzapur	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kushialchapar	-	-	-	-	-	-
Paharpur Dayal	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bania Chappar						
Diwan Parsa	-	-	4.0 kg wheat	1.5	1.00	-
Misir Batarhan	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jhitiki	-	-	2.0 kg	-	-	0.22
Semhli	-	-	2.0 kg	-	-	0.22
Mahisam	-	15/-		1.5	0.89	-
Bahera	-	-	2.0 kg	0.5	-	0.22
Khangaon	-	25/-	-	1.5	1.00	-
Hyderpur Vijay	-	20/-	2.50 kg	-	-	-
Pathan toli	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bhokri	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jitwarpur	6. Quintal Paddy	10/-	1.0 kg	1.5	1.00	-
Kasaila	3500/- + Cloths	10/-	0.5 kg	1.5	-	-
Bela Badan	-	-	-	-	-	-
Makhnaha	-	-	-	-	-	-

land component where the attached labour is given a nominal amount of land and is either allowed to keep the whole produce from it or is allowed to keep a share of it. Presently, in some cases (e.g. one case noted in Diwanparsa) loan in lieu of land is also

given. In addition to this, many of them are also given clothes once year and on special occasions such as marriage, birth of a child etc. Though, this is the overall picture, there are variations in the sums paid to the different categories of attached labour.

Across the districts, among attached labourers all Halwahas are paid the most both annually and on a daily wage basis and are also given some land to till. Kamiyas get a little less than the Halwahas in the sense that they get less land to till and earn a lower annual wage. The Charwahas are paid the least. They are paid half as much as the Halwahas and Kamiyas and get no land to till. Women work mainly as Kamiyas within the houses of the employers while Halwahas are only male workers.

Non-agricultural Wages

Non-agricultural wages include payment of wages mainly for two types of works – unskilled and skilled labour. The payment of wages for works under government programmes (mainly under JRY) has been treated separately. The wage rates prevailing in the sample villages (averaged at district level) has been presented in table 5.13.

Table 5.13: Average Non-Agricultural Wage Rates in District by Types of Works

Type of Works		(in Rs.)					
		Gaya	Gopalganj	Madhubani	Nalanda	Purnea	Rohtas
Skilled Workers	Male	63.00	75.00	71.80	66.33	63.83	72.66
	Female	--	--	--	--	--	--
Unskilled workers	Male	33.50	39.20	39.33	35.66	30.50	40.66
	Female	30.75	39.20	35.50	32.33	29.66	34.83
Government Programmes	Male	30.00	39.00	37.50	36.66	30.83	40.00
	Female	26.25	36.00	34.16	35.83	29.16	40.00

Masons, carpenter, blacksmiths and some other workers were categorised as skilled workers whose wages were found to be in the range of Rs.60 to 75. In none of the villages women were found working as skilled labourers. The female non-agricultural labourers were mainly unskilled. The unskilled workers include labourers like construction labourers, brick kiln labourers, mud cutting labourers etc. The range of wage rates was found to be in between Rs. 30 to 40. Again the gender discrimination was higher in Rohtas, Gaya and Madhubani. It is also evident from the table that except in Rohtas in none of the districts the wages were equal to the Minimum Wages prescribed by the state government even for the works under government programmes. Moreover,

there was also wide variations in the wages paid to males and females. The highest difference of male and female wages was found to be Rs. 4 in Gaya. In this way the non-agricultural wage rates also followed the trend and pattern of the agricultural wage rates.

However, what is interesting to note is that all the districts taken together, in the lower wage and high intensity migration districts of Madhubani and Purnea a higher degree of monetisation is seen, with the exception of Rohtas, which in spite of a very low migration figure has highly monetised wage system.

Changes in Wage Structure: Villagers' Perception

The wage structure in rural Bihar has undergone substantive change during the last decade or so. Since the dynamism of the changes is explained by a number of micro level factors, it is always better to see these changes at the lowest level. For this purpose we will be presenting here the wage structure and the forces responsible for changes in some of the surveyed villages of different districts.

Village – Khangaon, Pandaul, District – Madhubani

Talking to various people with regard to minimum wages revealed that many of them were ignorant about it. Farmers did know about but only those workers who had worked under some government programmes. They account for 20% of the total workforce. Surveys show that those who are aware of minimum wages, are the ones who demand for higher wages.

Last year there was a strike in Mushar Toli to raise wages and it was decided that no sowing would be done until the wages are raised. Wages at that time were 3kgs of grain or Rs. 25 which according to the workers was Rs. 15 less than the fixed amount. So, they asked for an increase in wages to 4 kgs of grains. Mr. Das Saday & Ms. Falguni Das had led all the workers. They informed the workers about minimum wages and directed them not to join work till the wages are increased to 4 kgs of grains or Rs. 30. The strike continued for 8 days but due to their deteriorating condition the workers started working at the previous level of wages. But those labourers, who went to Madhubani to work in brick kiln, still do not work in the field of farmers.

Prior to 1986, barring harvesting wages in all agricultural activities wages were 2.5 kgs of foodgrains. In 1996, workers in Chamartoli went on a strike due to which wages were increased to 3 kg or Rs. 25

Landlords claimed that due to immense pressure put on them by the workers, wages were increased in 1971 from 2.5 kg. of grains (rice or wheat) to 3 kgs but workers said that wages were increased only in 1996 and not in 1971. In 1970, a ploughman used to get a mere 1 kg of grains but those involved in sowing were paid more. Main reason for this difference was that water for irrigation was collected from river Kamla and lot of slush used to enter the fields along with water which made sowing very difficult.

Around 1990, workers involved in sowing were supposed to sow 30 bunches in a day, which came down to 25 bunches and now it is only 20 bunch a day. Due to this some farmers started contracting out this job. Usually, those landlords who work somewhere else got the sowing done on contract basis.

First of all we enquired the farmers about their choice of the means of payment. Farmers preferred to make payments in kind (i.e. grains) rather than in cash. But among themselves workers differed in opinion about the means of payment. 50% of the women preferred to get payment in kind. 25% of them wanted to get payments both in cash and kind and 25% preferred cash. Young women preferred cash whereas older women preferred payments in kind. Approximately 90% of male workers wanted payments to be made to them in cash. According to them, cash payment would enable them to buy superior quality of grains than the farmers give them, which is of poor quality. Those women who preferred payment in kind said that if payment is made in cash their husbands would spend that money on liquor. If payment is made in kind, they would manage to store some and exchange it for other items when the need would arise. However, those women whose husbands go outside the village for work prefer payments in kind.

There are two types of wage system for the attached labourers. The first type is getting a fixed (5-10 kathas) land against which he and his family has to work in the landlord's field. The second system provides one acre of land on crop share basis.

Headload work is done usually on contract basis. Workers have to work even if the contractor pays them less than the fixed amount (Rs. 30 per day) because here the number of workers involved is large which is drawn from the agriculture sector. Five years ago a worker involved in this work used to get Rs. 25. Till 1991, payments were Rs. 10 and 1 kg of grains. When neighbouring villages and Madhubani started paying

workers in cash the labourers here started asking for cash and even in 1992 they were paid Rs. 25. Around 10 years ago, workers in house repairing were paid only in kind. But now, they are paid Rs. 40 and breakfast. Mason is paid Rs. 80.

Midwife in this village is paid a fixed amount. In addition, at the time of birth of a boy they are paid Rs. 10 and payments for massage at the rate of 250 gms of grain per day, for 12 days. In case of a girl child – Rs. 5 and 200 gms of grain are paid for 12 days. In addition to this, 2 kgs of grain is given for decorating the home where a child is born.

Village – Amarhi, Nasriganj, District – Rohtas

Discussions regarding minimum wages were carried out among three different groups of the village. In one group large farmers from Brahmin community were interviewed.. In the second group the poor cultivators were interviewed. Besides, working in their own fields, they also work for large farmers. Most of the farmers in this category are from Yadav community. The third category were people from Chamartoli comprising of Chamars, Paswans, Nai and Dhobi. Most of them are labourers.

Most of the large as well as poor farmers and the workers from Harijan community were aware of the minimum wages but women were completely ignorant about it. Wages almost remain the same through out the year and there is no difference between the peak or slack season wages. There is no inflow of labourers from other villages and also no demand for hike in wages. Some time workers from the adjoining village (*nachaniya*) do come here to work. They are paid Rs. 5 more than the fixed level – as claimed by other workers but large farmers often deny it. Payments are made in cash except for harvesting. The system of cash payments has started since the last 5 years, prior to which payment used to be in kind. Construction workers are paid in cash.

For ploughing & transplanting workers get Rs. 35 + breakfast and lunch. Last year, the wage was Rs. 30 + breakfast and lunch. In the case of an attached labour, a ploughman gets 2/3rd kg of rice and breakfast and 1 bigha of land, whereas a charwaha gets 1.5 bigha of land, 3 meals and clothes. Till last year a ploughman used to get 1kg of rice. Now, the wages have been increased to Rs. 35/- + lunch and breakfast. Last year it was Rs. 30, breakfast and lunch.

According to farmers, whenever there has been a demand for raising wages, some solutions have been found through mutual agreement. At times farmers have also tried to suppress workers. There has been no instance of friction between the farmers and the workers regarding wages. The demands for higher wages have always been fulfilled to certain extent. Though workers did go on strike a couple of times but they rejoined after 2-3 days. Attached labourers have never called a strike till now. Farmers themselves have been increasing their wages from time to time. There have been instances of such friction in the adjoining villages where the Labour Inspector had to interfere to find out a solution. This has never happened in Amarhi. Labourers get Rs.20 & breakfast for sowing, Rs. 25, breakfast and lunch for other agricultural operations. Headload workers get Rs. 35, breakfast & lunch and those involved in weeding get Rs. 15 & breakfast.

For sowing & *Kabariya*, according to farmers, a labourer has to work for around 5-6 hours, Labourers differ on this. According to them for sowing one has to work at least 7 hours a day and *Kabariya* has to work for 6 hours a day. Otherwise, the farmers and workers do not differ on the payment rate. Earlier, 3 years from now, sowing used to yield Rs. 17, *Kabariya* Rs. 20, headload work used to yield Rs. 25 & weeding Rs. 12. For harvesting of paddy, wheat and other crops, labourers get 1 heap for every 16 heaps. Payments for threshing are made separately. According to farmers, the workers earn around 15-18 kgs of paddy and 10-12 kgs. of wheat. Workers contradict them saying that they earn 12-15 kgs. of paddy and only 7-8 kgs of wheat.

Farmers, when asked about means of payment, showed preference for payments in cash. They wanted to make cash payments even for harvesting. But this was unacceptable to the workers since payment in kind appears to be profitable to them.

Women labourers prefer payments in kind rather than cash for non-agricultural operations. But men want cash arguing that whenever they need grains, they can get from the village market at the prevailing market price. During harvest they store this surplus and use it later.

Village – Diwan Parsa, Uchkagaon, District - Gopalganj

Various discussions were carried out in different places with different groups of people regarding minimum wages and its payment. First of all, discussion was carried out among medium farmers of the main tola of the village. Later on the discussion was carried out in the adjoining Chamar toli among farm and non-farm labourers and the women of the village. Discussion was also carried among large farmers and Muslims and other Hindu labourers of the Gapahi toli.

During the discussion around 40% of the farmers said that minimum wages was Rs. 40. They said that those who were working in Government projects got Rs. 40 as wages. The Government has fixed this level. However, most of the farm and non-farm labourers were ignorant about it. Women knew nothing about the minimum wages. Twenty years ago, for every 20 bunches of rice and other crops harvested, workers used to get one bunch of grain. For

Lallan Ram informed us that although officially wages have been fixed at Rs. 40 they do not get Rs. 40 for their work. Even the landlords were aware of the minimum wages law but were reluctant to implement it. Till the last five years tussles occurred between farmers and labourers. During last two years a couple of time labourers stopped working in the fields but could not continue their protests for a longer time because of their poverty.

He further informed that during the time of strikes farmers also took their stand and they started to charge a fine of Rs. 60 to 75 if the cattle of the labourers entered into their fields. The labourers in return decided to stop attending the farmers' house at the time of birth of a child in their homes. But all these could not continue for long, as the labourers could not sustain for a longer time. According to him some Brahmin and Bhumihaar farmers started to work in their fields themselves at the time of strike. Ultimately workers joined the work gradually and the strike was a failure. Presently labourers are working at the same wage as was fixed by the farmers.

every other kind of agricultural wage work, workers used to get 1 kg of grain, which included wheat, maize or gram. From 1988-89 there has been a change in the pattern of payments. Sowing of *Agahani* paddy (Kharif Paddy) has led to change in payments. From 1989 onwards labourers are paid a bunch of grain for every ten bunches of grains harvested. There has been no change in payments for those involved in ploughing. Labourers plough the fields for 2 days after which they get the bull and the plough for hiring out for a day. It is at the labourer's discretion to either use it in his own fields or rent it out. It is usually rented out which yields them from Rs 50 to Rs 70 for the day. For

2 days labourers are only given breakfast by the landowner. For the past 8-10 years all agricultural labourers are being paid 2 kg grains + breakfast. Usually, the labourers work for 4-5 hours a day. But there is no set time limit.

For the past 8-10 years, weeding is done on contract basis, the reason being excess of weeds in the farms. The labourers started avoiding working in these fields and preferred working in nearby villages. To save their crops, farmers suggested a fixed amount for each heap of weeds. The wages for this job was fixed at Rs. 10–15 per heap. Labourers working in sugarcane fields are paid in cash. For the past 8-10 years, the children are doing sowing of sugarcane and they are paid Rs. 10 per heap.

Traditionally, payment for sowing paddy is made on piece rate basis. But for the past 10 years, the pattern of payment has changed. Earlier they were paid 1 kg of grain but now they are given 2 kgs of paddy, maize or wheat depending on the farmer's choice. Farmers (belonging to Brahmin as well as Bhumihar community) informed that about 8 to 10 years back now, workers involved in sowing of paddy used to get 2 kgs of grain and breakfast. Even now they are paid the same. But earlier, a worker used to sow 2.5 kathas of land in a day whereas now he sows only 1 katha of land. So a labourer is able to work for 3 different farmers in a day.

No payment either in cash or in kind is made to anyone for sugarcane. Farmers as well as labourers work in each other's field at the time of cutting the crop and bring back the upper part of the sugarcane for their animals. This is how it traditionally, has been in this village.

Work on contract basis started some 8-10 years ago but for the past 4-5 years, the system has picked up, reason being migration of the labourers. Agricultural labourers went to Punjab for work and started working there on contract basis. On coming back to their native village they suggested this method of working to their community (Chamar community) and they asked farmers for higher wages. In the past 5 years, there have been many strikes to increase the wages but ultimately the workers had to continue working on the same terms. Last year, workers called a strike but were compelled to return to work after 4-5 days.

Wages for work on contract basis was fixed with the agreement of both the workers as well as the farmers. This system was profitable for the workers because they

could work for 3 different farmers on the same day. It was also profitable for the farmers since they could get their work done in minimum time and with minimum damage to the crop.

Farmers differ in opinion regarding payment of wages. 20% of the Brahmin farmers preferred to make payments in cash but most of the farmers preferred payments in kind. Increase in the hours of work was their main concern. They said they were ready to pay Rs. 40 if workers work for 8 hours a day. Medium farmers preferred payments in kind since they think it is convenient to make such payments. Cash payments are difficult to make since they have to sell the crop first, which might not yield them enough/right amount. They would get only Rs. 7-8 a kg whereas the crop actually is Rs 10 per kg. Workers, both men and women, preferred cash payments. Cutting of wheat yields them 1 heap for every 20 heaps harvested and *dharaw* (carrying grains from field to store of the farmers). If the workers were allowed to keep *dharaw* in the case of paddy, they would prefer payment in kind.

Village – Rupaspur Salempur, Tekari, District – Gaya

Regarding the payment of wages and the preferences for the mode of payment of minimum wages, discussions were carried out among three groups. The first group comprised of large farmers from Bhumihaar community, second group included medium and small farmers from Koeri, Yadav and Sah community and the third included male and female workers from *Chamar toli* as well as *Mushahar toli*.

The educated workers and half of the large farmers as well as those doing some jobs, were aware about the minimum wages, which according to them is Rs. 39.70 for working 8 hours a day. But medium and small farmers were not aware of it. The group of poor farmers said that whenever there is a need for hiring in labour, they do so at the prevailing wage rates in the village. According to Devansh Manjhi, (a labourer from the same village), the minimum wages fixed by the government is Rs 39.50 and all the workers are aware of it.

At present, labourers are given 3 kg of paddy and one meal as wages (breakfast is given to labourers) for ploughing, sowing, and threshing. Besides, activities such as weeding for which workers have to work 4 hours a day, a payment of 1.5 kg of rice and

one meal is given as wages to the workers. The workers get 0.5 kg of paddy per *dhur* for transplanting. In a day (8 hours) they are able to transplant 10 *dhur* (one-fortieth of a *bigha*- a measure of land) which makes it 5 kg of paddy for a day. For harvesting of paddy, wages paid are equal to one bundle for every ten bundles harvested and in case of wheat, the share is one bundle for every 12 bundles harvested.

Labourers' Resistance and Hike in Wage Level,

According to the farmers, about 20 years ago, agricultural labourers used to get 1 kg of rice and for harvesting they used to get 1 bundle for every 21 bundles of grains harvested. There were protests from the side of labourers to increase the wages and ultimately wages were increased to 2-kg of grain and for harvesting it was increased to 1 bundle for every 16 bundles of grain harvested. For transplanting wages paid were 250 gms of grain per *dhur*. Construction workers & those involved in earth cutting also used to get the same payment.

Again in 1993, workers under the leadership of MKSS (*Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Samiti*), called for a strike and wages was increased to 2.5kg rice and one meal. For the first time attached labours also started to get an increased wage of 2 kg of grains but the payments were the same for harvesting as in the case of free labourers. For construction work, labourers were given Rs. 30 and for earth cutting were paid Rs. 40/- for every 100 meters. Before the strike, non-agricultural labourers used to get payments in kind.

Till now the strikes were called mainly during the harvest seasons. In 1998, before the sowing season, labourers went on a strike for 10-12 days demanding of increase their wages. Farmers informed that the strike was called under the guidance of MCC (*Maoist Communist Centre*). Incidence of violence was also noted when a worker, Gursahai Mali, from the adjoining village was beaten up by the workers of this village for ploughing the field of a farmer in defiance of the decisions. After the intervention by the local administration, 10 farmers and 10 workers were called from the Tekari Block and an agreement was made. Now the wages for agricultural labourers are fixed at 3 kilograms of rice or wheat and one meal. For harvesting the wages are fixed at 1 bundle for every 12 bundles of wheat harvested and 1 bundle of paddy for every 10 bundles of paddy harvested.

Although the strike of 1998 was successful in raising the wage level in the village there is still a lot of friction between landlords and labourers. It has cast its impact not only on the wages of labourers but sharecroppers of the village have also started putting pressure on landlords. Sharecroppers want half of the produce and so have stopped working in the fields. Presently they are getting one-third of the total. About 20 years ago, they used to get one-fourth of the total produce. Presently, only those farmers who cannot work in their fields go in for share cropping since their share has been increased to half of the produce. In addition seeds and fertilisers also has to be arranged by them.

In harvesting paddy, a labourer earns around Rs. 50-60 per day in cash and in case of wheat Rs. 45-50 per day. For the attached labourers, the wage payment is such that the labourer gets 2.5kg rice or wheat and breakfast as well as lunch along with 5-10 *kathas* of land. Those who don't take land get Rs. 500-1000 a year as loan with no interest.

In construction work, labourers get Rs. 40 and the mason gets Rs. 70 per day. Usually they are paid 3 kg of grains and breakfast as well as lunch. Only the employers working somewhere else prefer to make wage payments in cash. However, masons always get wages in cash. Farmers informed that construction labourers get Rs. 40 per day as wages but workers differ in opinion. They claim it to be only Rs. 35 per day.

Farmers mostly prefer to pay in kind. Only large farmers prefer to give cash. Certain farmers have started paying Rs. 30 and one meal per day since 1998. Only those farmers living outside the village, along with their family, make such payments. Medium and small farmers prefer payments in kind even for harvesting. According to such farmers as the grain is always available and markets are quite far away from the village and proper transportation is not available, they prefer to make payments in kind. Furthermore, they do not get proper price for their crop.

The women workers prefer payments in kind. A small proportion of women (i.e. about 20 per cent) prefer payments both in cash and in kind. They argue that money is needed to fulfil their other needs which could always be done by selling grains in the market. Women as well as men do not prefer cash in case of harvesting. They like to receive payments in kind i.e. one out of every 10 bundles of grain harvested.

The women workers were, however, candid enough to state their preference for payment of wages in kind. According to one scheduled caste female agricultural labourer, Parvati Devi, "If we get wages in cash, then the adult male members of the family would squander it on drinking etc. Rather, if we are paid in kind, there is a greater possibility that the need for two square meals a day is at least fulfilled."

In this village no specific wages have been fixed for children working in any activity. Working children get the same wages as other men and women get for a day. In general, men and women get the same wages. Also there is no difference between the peak and slack season wages.

Hence, the villagers' response regarding the mode of payments and the reasons for their preferences for the particular mode of payment across the villages were varied. In every village landlords and labourers were asked separately to give the reasons of their preferences for the particular mode of payments. The participants of the FGD showed their interest in both the types of payments. For harvest wage, all the labourers preferred

the existing wage system i.e. share payment. The response of the participants has been summarised in chart 1.

Chart 1: Preferences about Mode of Payments (Who Preferred What)

Type of Wages	Landlords		Male Labourers		Female Labourers	
	Kind	Cash	Kind	Cash	Kind	Cash
Harvest	***	*****	***** ***		***** ***	
Other Agricultural Operation	***** *	**	***	*****	*****	***
Non-agricultural	*****	*****	**	***** *	***** *	**

Note: Number of stars stand for the stones put by the participants in favour of a particular mode of payment.

It can be seen from the table that as far as the landlords are concerned they would opt for both types of payment for non-agricultural works. However, most of the landlords preferred cash payments for harvest wage but kind payments for non-harvest agricultural operations. Although both male and female agricultural labourers preferred wages in kind in terms of share of the harvested crop, most of the male labourers preferred cash payment for non-harvest works, while most of the female labourers preferred payments in kind. The same was the situation in the case of non-agricultural works. For the non-agricultural works the landlords' preference was not very particular, as they are equally divided over the options. In fact, among the landlords some big farmers and those who are in salaried jobs opted for the cash payment. Among labourers, women mostly wanted the wages to be paid in kinds. They dislike the idea of cash payment because they apprehended misuse of ready cash by their male members of the family.

The reasons for preferring particular mode of payments were found very similar and more or less common across the villages. The responses regarding reasons of preferring particular mode of payment gathered in different villages have been presented in chart 2.

From this chart it can be seen that the most cited reason in favour of payment in kind among the landlords is either non-availability of cash or simply because it is easy to pay in kinds. On the other hand, among the landlords those who wanted the wages to be paid in cash were of the opinion that the price of the grains goes up if it is stored for a

longer period or it is sold in a distant market. Hence, they were at loss when they pay the wages of the labourers in terms of kind. It is worth mentioning here that those who preferred cash payments were mainly big farmers or in salaried jobs.

Chart 2: Reasons for preferring Particular Mode of Payment

	Gaya	Gopalganj	Madhubani	Rohtas	Purnea
Landlords					
Kind	easy to pay, no ready cash	Don't want to sell more grains	No ready cash,	Nil	No ready cash, not beneficial
Cash	cash payment may satisfy labourers more	Store value of kind, because of contract system	rising contract system, labourers want, serviceman	Store value of kind is more, serviceman	grains fetch more price outside
Labourers (Male)					
Kind	More beneficial in harvest, Getting food is more important	More beneficial in harvest, grains are costlier in market	More beneficial in harvest, at least food is secured	More beneficial in harvest,	More beneficial in harvest, at least food is secured
Cash	Freedom to spend, can purchase better quality of grains	can purchase better quality of grains, selling grains fetch lower price	selling grains fetch lower price, can meet the cost of migration by saving	Easy calculate, can purchase better quality of grains	Freedom to spend, easy to return loans
Labourers (Female)					
Kind	More beneficial in harvest, better control over earnings of husband	More beneficial in harvest, If husband is migrant and sends money	More beneficial in harvest, If husband is migrant and sends money	More beneficial in harvest,	at least food is secured,
Cash		If husband is migrant and doesn't send money, beneficial under contract	If husband is migrant and doesn't send money, beneficial under contract	For daily expenses, easy to save	

The most common response from the labourers in favour of cash was that they could purchase better quality of grains from the market at the same price and some other needful items. In this way they would feel more independent if they are paid in terms of cash. However, most of the labourers preferred payments in kind in terms of share of the crops for harvest work because they felt that it is more beneficial for them. Some of the

landlords and the labourers also liked the idea of contract system because it was beneficial for both landlords and labourers.

Hence the preferred mode of payments was not uniform for different types of works and over the region. Most of the landlords wanted cash payments for harvesting while labourers wanted it to be in kind on the present share basis. For the other agricultural operations the opinion was even more diversified as the landlords and female labourers preferred payments in kind. During the non-harvesting time landlords felt that the payment in kind was generally beneficial for them while the female labourers preferred this for the purpose of having better control over the earnings of their male counterpart.

Summing up:

It is evident from the above analysis that the rural labour market in Bihar largely manifests itself as a surplus labour economy. There has been shortage of employment within the boundary of the village economy except during some busy agricultural season. High workers' participation rates, more so in backward districts like Purnea and Madhubani and among lower castes and classes, only substantiate the theory that 'poor can not remain unemployed'. The poverty driven high WPR has led to concentration of workers mainly in low profile works like agricultural and non-agricultural work, caste occupations under *jajmani* system, collection of food, fodder, and fuel etc. and a high incidence of child labour. Because of lower agricultural productivity the wages have been suppressed in most of the surveyed villages depicting a typical Lewisian type of surplus labour economy. The system of patron-client relationship is on decline in almost all the districts but the increase in the incidence of *charwahas* in a few districts shows further pauperisation of attached labour. The labourers are more or less non-unionised putting practically no pressure on the landlords. However, the resistance from the side of the labourers in the form of strikes under the banner of some ultra left organisations like IPF, MKSS, MCC etc. has changed the situation a couple of times in their favour in some areas. The gender discrimination is also manifested in terms of differential wage rates for male and females in a number of villages and concentration of female in comparatively

lower quality of occupations. There has been a large scale out-migration of the rural labourers particularly from north Bihar plains not only to distant places like Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Varanasi but also to some big towns within the state. The migration pattern of the villages shows a clear picture of different nature of migration for lower and upper caste-class people. Large-scale seasonal migration of the labourers from the villages is resulting into not only breaking caste-class hegemony but also gradual monetisation of the village economy. One of the clearest manifestations of the process of monetisation in rural Bihar has been rising demands of contract system of wages from both sides—the landlords and the labourers. This may be because of the gradual opening up of the village economy and extending the boundaries of village labour market. The process of out-migration, adoption of new technology giving rise to the agricultural productivity, rising assertiveness of the labourers, growing absenteeism among the landlords etc. have been proved as catalyst to the emerging phenomena. This has led to increase in wages---in real terms—in most of the villages during last one and half decades or so.

Annexure – I

Prevalent Wage System In Different Villages

District & Village	Harvest operation			Non-harvest full Day operation.			Other half day operation		
	Meal	Cash	Share	Meal	Cash	Kind	Meal	Cash	Kind
<i>Gaya</i>									
Khesari	-	-	1/12	1		3 kg	0.5	-	2.0 kg rice
Khukhri	-	-	1/13	1		3.5kg	0.5	-	1.5 kg rice
Bishunpur Alalpur	-	-	1/11	1.5		2.5 kg	1		2.5 kg rice (FD)
Salempur Rupaspur	-	-	1/11	1.5		2.5	1		2.5 kg rice (FD)
Kari	-	-	1/13	1.5	35	-	1	-	2.0 kg rice
Kanaudi	-	-	1/12	1.5	-	5 kg	1	-	5 kg paddy (FD)
<i>Rohtas</i>									
Chakchatar	-	-	1/16	1.5	30	-	1	30(FD)	-
Anhar	-	-	1/16	1.5	35	-	1	35 (FD)	-
Samhuti Buzurg	-	-	1/12	1.5	40	-	1	-	4 kg rice (FD)
Bhuawal	-	-	1/12	-	50	-	-	50 (FD)	-
Amarhi	-	-	1/13	0.5	40	-	0.5	40 (FD)	
Kaithi	-	-	1/13	0.5	30	-	0.5	30 (FD)	
<i>Nalanda</i>									
Tarokhar	-	-	1/12	-	-	3 kg	-	-	2.5/2.25 FD
Darweshpura	-	-	1/12	-	-	2.75 kg	1	-	1 kg
Chandkura	-	-	1/14	1.5	-	2 kg	1	-	1.5 kg rice
Bhokila	-	-	1/14	1	-	2.5	1	-	2.0 kg rice FD
Mohiuddinpur	-	-	1/14	1	-	2	1	-	1.0 kg rice
Barandi	-	-	1/12	1	35	2.5	-	-	2.5 FD
<i>Gopalganj</i>									
Mirzapur	-	-	1/15	1	25	-			3.5 kg (FD)
Khusihal Chhapar	-	-	1/12	1	30-40	-			3.5 kg (FD)
Paharpur Dayal	-	-	1/10	0.5	-	5 kg wheat	1	-	3 kg FD
Baniya Chhapar	-	-	1/10	0.5	-	5 kg wheat	1	-	3 kg FD
Diwan Parsa	-	-	1/10	1	35	-	1	20 FD	-
Misir Batarhan	-	-	1/15	1	35	-	1	-	3 kg FD
<i>Madhubani</i>									
Jhitki	-	-	1/16	1	20	-	1	10	-
Semhli	-	-	1/16	1	25			10	
Mahisam	-	-	1/12	1	20	-	1	10	-
Bahera	-	-	1/12	1	12-15HD			12	
Khangaon	-	-	1/12	1	-	3 kg	1	15	-
Haidarpur Vijay	-	-	1/10	1	-	3 kg	1	15	-
<i>Purnea</i>									
Pathan Toli	-		1/8	1.5	20	-	1.5	20 (FD)	
Bhokri	-	-	1/8	1.5	20	-	1.5	20 (FD)	-
Jitwarpur	-	-	1/8	1.5	20	-	0.5	15	-
Kasaila	-	-	1/8	1.5	20	-	-	15	1 kg
Belabadan	-	-	1/8	-	15	1/2 kg	-	-	3 kg (FD)
Makhnaha	-	-	1/9	1.5	15	-	1	7	

Note : FD = Full Day, 0.5 meal = breakfast, 1 = lunch, 1.5 = breakfast + lunch

¹The concept is into strictly comparable with NSS classifications of UPS and UPSS as time element has not been taken into consideration for the present analysis.

² The consideration of secondary occupation was also important for calculation the WPR among children (5-14 years)

³ Although, this does not give the intensity of underemployment exactly, the ration of the two WPR's hints about the extent of unemployment of people for the major part of the year.

⁴ Data on occupation was collected for seventeen categories of occupations, which were clubbed together to form seven major categories for the purpose of analysis. A more liberal classification of occupation is being followed in the second round of survey presently being carried on.

⁵ 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.

⁶ Migrating people were classified as 'seasonal' or permanent migrant on the basis of duration. Generally, people migrating for less then 9 months have been categorised on 'seasonal migrant' otherwise 'permanent migrant'