Chapter VII

POVERTY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Poverty has been studied, defined and redefined by social scientists in a variety of ways. In a broad sense, poverty is used to describe the whole spectrum of deprivation and ill being. In a narrow sense, for purposes of measurement and comparison, it has been defined as low income or more specifically consumption. Increasingly, there has been a growing recognition that in addition to low income, poverty also refers to the lack of real opportunity and economic poverty (Dreze and Sen, 1995). Chambers (1983) goes one step further and says that poverty is more than merely the poor being income poor. It refers to lack of what is needed for well being and for leading a full and good life. Its dimensions are physical, socio-economic, political and psychological and that well being and ill being refer to experience. In this chapter we will be presenting different dimensions and facets of poverty as identified by villagers themselves instead of assessing poverty from the conventional head count ratio concept. This chapter will also take an account of different important dimensions of human development in rural Bihar. Although, exact measurement of level of human development is not presently possible with the existing set of data, various important determinants of human development like education, health, food security/insecurity etc. will be discussed in details in this chapter. This will give a broad trend of the level of human development in rural areas of the state.

Perception of Poverty and Changes in Living Conditions

The above understanding of poverty has been reinforced in a number of participatory studies of poverty. Participatory studies of poverty reveal that the poor use different criteria to assess their own situation and its change over time. An analysis of the criteria used by local people in the plains of Bihar shows that they use a wide range of criteria in which, apart from assets and land, health and physical disability feature prominently while grouping and ranking their own well-being is done. Further, the poor attach considerable importance to personal freedom and dignity, in spite of the fact that this has resulted in greater vulnerability as patron-client relationship and secure employment decline.

The investigators received a standard response while conducting the wealth ranking exercise – "most of us live in distressful conditions and are therefore poor". However, further probing and clarification reveal that in all the villages, the villagers feel that identification with the poor will result in some monetary benefit from the state. However, in most cases, people perceive and relate to poverty along caste lines in the state. Almost everywhere in the plains of Bihar most of scheduled caste-groups, especially the Mushar and Chamar, are perceived as poor and their position in the continuum delineated by the people themselves is consistently low. Most of them live in segregated colonies in *mitti-phus* (mud-hay) houses, are landless, both men and women work as agricultural labor, have many children and are likely to have the highest number of out of school children, go to the government hospitals when ill and borrow to meet food requirements of the family etc.

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

In order to have an overview of the people's perceptions of poverty in the villages of Bihar, here we are presenting a detailed chart of the factors which were identified by the villagers as associated with poverty in two of the sample districts viz. Rohtas and Purnea (Chart 1 and Chart 2). Our foregoing discussions in the earlier chapters have shown that, these two districts lie at two extremes on the ladder of development. Presenting peoples' perceptions in these two districts have benefit of showing two extremes.

Chart1: Rohtas

Village	Very poor	Poor	Middle	Rich	Very rich
Chakchattar	Landless, house in bad shape on govt. land, they work as agricultural labour in the village and in neighbouring villages, work for very rich and rich category, children mostly do not go to school, do not afford treatment.	Less than one bigha land, lease in land, khaprail kutcha house, works as ag. lab. for very rich and rich families. Children mostly go to school, eat relatively well in full year, sometimes faces shortage, afford medical treatment to private doctor, borrow money from very rich and rich.	1 acre to 2.5 acre land, some land on mani (fixed rent lease in system), they are not labourers, some have a job, children go to school, eat well throughout the year, pucca and semi pucca house, sometime borrow from very rich and rich category.	2.5 acre and above land, Govt. job and other business, tractor, pumpset, thresher and other vehicles, children go to school, can afford good medical facilities, pucca house, bank balance, hired labour, no shortage of money.	6 acre land and above, good Govt. job, business, pucca big house, Gun, Rifle, Tractor, pumpset, thresher etc. They have other vehicles, children go to private school, some have property in town, afford good medical treatment.
Anhar	Landless, only kutcha house, ag. lab., borrow and work for very rich and rich , children mostly engaged in goat grazing, stay hungry for some part of the year.	Little own land + mani land, kutcha house, ag. lab., children mostly go to school, eat relatively in full year, wear simple cloth, some time borrow from very rich and rich.	2-3 acre land, able to survive comfortably except in crisis time when they have to borrow, some in Govt. job, pucca and semi pucca house, children go to school, can afford treatment from private doctor.	3-6 acre land, many have jobs, they have ag. assets, saving in cash, never borrow, hire in labour, lend out money to poor class, children go to school, pucca house many have gun, afford private doctor.	Above 6 acre land, pucca house, gun, rifle, tractor, pumpset, thresher, children go to private school in town, lend out money, bank balance, afford labour like halwaha, charwaha.
Samhuti Buzurg	Landless, agricultural and non-agricultural labour, few in caste base occupation, own kutcha house, few earning member, stay hungry for some part of the year, most of the households do not send children to school, they do not afford good treatment, they do not afford to go to hos treatment to private doctor. treatment to private doctor. treatment to private doctor.	6 to 12 acre land, pucca house, any member in service or business, own pumpset, thresher gun and other vehicles, hire in labour for agriculture work, lend out money, lease out land, some land given on Mani to poor households, children go to private school, sell grain, bank balance.	Above 12 acre land, big pucca house, some have tractor, all have thresher, pumpset and seed drill etc., have gun, rifle, lend out money, some members in good service/ business, most of the households lease out land to poor sections. Children go to private school, go to private doctor, command prestige in village, have bank A/C, LIC, bank balance, hire labour for domestic work.		

Chart1: Rohtas (contd..)

Village	Very poor	Poor	Middle	Rich	Very rich
Bhuawal	Landless or owns 2-4 katha land, engage in agricultural or non agricultural labour, women work in the field, own kutcha house, few earning members, stay hungry some part of the year, many of them send children to school, they do not afford govt. or private hospital.	Owns above 3 acre land, do not work as agricultural labour, lease in land, some members are working in govt. or private jobs. Kutcha Khaprail house, children study in school, some times borrow from rich family, can afford private doctor, eat well in a year. Mostly Brahmin family in this category, they do not work in the field as ag. lab.	Owns 6-9 acre land, Pucca house, pumpset, thresher, some trade /govt. job, able to survive comfortably, employ labour, children study in school, eat well in a year, sometime lend out money to poorest and poor family.	9 acre and above land, Pucca house and own agricultural assets like tractor, pumping set, thresher etc. Family member in a job/ business, children go to private school, lend out money, afford private doctor, employ labour, have vehicles.	20 acres land, big Pucca house, gun, rifle, tractor, pumpset, thresher, bank balance, lend out money, afford halwaha charwaha, mostly lease out land, property in town, govt. job/business, children study in town, afford better medical treatment.
Amarhi	Landless, some are attached labour, some are agricultural and non-agricultural labour, kutcha house, borrow money from very rich and rich category, some children go to school, cannot afford good treatment, stay hungry for some part of the year, eat one time in a day in hunger period.	Upto 2 acre land, some are landless but in good service, they also work as ag. or non-ag. labour, sometimes they hire in labour in peak ag. season, semi-pucca and Kutcha house, children go to school, afford medical treatment, eat well.	2-6 acre land, govt. or non-govt. service, hire in labour, eat well over the year, have some savings, pucca and semi pucca house, children go to school, afford private doctor, some lease in land on mani basis, mostly middle caste in this category, they have some agricultural assets.	6 to 17 acre land, service, big pucca house, agricultural assets like thresher, pumpset etc, some have tractors and other vehicles, gun and rifle, children go to private school, afford good treatment, hire in labour, lend out money, bank saving, some family lease out land on mani basis.	Above 17 acre land, some have 10-15 acre land but they have good Govt. service or big business, have tractor, thresher, pumping set and other assets and vehicles, mostly lease out land, big pucca house, children go to private school in town, hire in labour, lend out money. Possess bank A/C and savings.

Chart1: Rohtas (contd..)

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

Chart 2: Purnea

	Very poor	Poor	Middle	Rich	Very rich
Pathan Toli	Mainly landless, handicapped and widows in this category, no house, no cloth and no food, eat one time for six to eight months, children working with landlord to solve take care of food, they are illiterate, they believe on ojha/jharphuk (quacks), they do not afford medical treatment.	Landless, *jhopri* house, mainly agriculture and non agriculture labour, do not get sufficient food for whole year, no good clothes, children do not go to school and cannot afford good doctors, children working as labour in the house of rich family, take loan from landlord in lieu of labour.	Own one acre and above land, lease in land, some members working in the cities or towns, self-cultivation and sometimes hire in labour during peak agricultural season, semi pucca house, children going to Govt. school, have some agricultural assets and cattle, afford treatment, go to govt. doctors.	5-10 acre land, good service, pucca house, lend out money, children go to school, afford private doctor, own assets like pumpset, thresher etc., hire in labour, handpump in courtyard, some have bank A/C, LIC etc.	10 acre land and above, permanent govt. service or business, pucca and big house, tractor, pump set, thresher etc., hire in labour, give loan to poor and very poor class, children going to private school, go to private doctor, do not work in the field, some savings.
Bhokri	Handicapped, old, single person, no shelter, no worthiness, begging, nobody to look after.	Landless or 2-5 katha own land, small hut, mostly agriculture and non agriculture labourers, children do not go to school, no clothes for children, mostly illiterate, do not afford doctor, rely on ojha/jharphuk etc., heavily in debt, stay hungry for some months.	Own one acre land, lease in land, kutcha shelter, also work in others fields, borrow but return, children going to madrasa or Govt. school, afford untrained doctor, members go outside for job.	Own 10 acre land and above, pucca or semi pucca house, Govt. service, sufficient capital, small family member, children go to private school, children do not work in field, afford good medical facilities, lend out money to poor class, some have vehicles like scooter and motorcycles.	15 acre land and above, good Govt. service, pucca house, have some assets like pumpset, thresher, children go to private school, tutor teach children, afford good medical facilities, lend out money, they are always happy, hire, do not work in the field.
Jitwarpur	Landless, very old men and widow in this category, no shelter, begging, no credibility of loan, live on mercy of others.	Landless, only work as agriculture and non agriculture labourers, scarcity of food for few months, kutcha house, heavily in debt, children do work, they have no clothes, cannot avail medical facilities, depend on *jharphuck.*	Some own land and mostly lease in land, have some cattle, work in the field as a labour, children work in the field, also some members migrate to Delhi or other states for job, children go to school, give and take loans.	Own 10 acre of land and above, some members in good jobs also, afford *halwaha/charwaha*, pucca or tin shade house, lend out money, some have pumpsets, thresher, ponds and gardens, children go to private school, afford private doctor.	Above 12 acre land, family members are in good jobs, tractor, thresher, pumpset, ponds, garden, pucca house or tin shade, children study in town, afford good medical treatment, lend out money, some savings, hire in labour. They have some cattle like cow buffalo, ox etc.

Chart 2: Purnea (contd..)

	Very poor	Poor	Middle	Rich	Very rich
Kasaila	Landless, old man, widow and handicapped, no work, no food available for two times of a day, stay hungry most of the time, without shelters, children work as a labour for food, no clothes, fully depend on destiny.	Landless, kutcha house, depend on wages, quite in debt, do not have sufficient clothes, children work in fields or in landlords' house, most children are illiterate, main work is labour, some time stay hungry.	Some own land, self cultivation and work as a agricultural labour in others' field, children work in the field also, children go to school, family member migrating outside for job.	Sufficient land, pucca or tin shade house, own agricultural assets and cattle, children go to school, time to time give loan to poor classes, hire in labour, afford good medical treatment, some member engage in outside job.	Own 15 acres and above land, pucca house, agricultural assets and some cattle, hire in labour, ponds and garden, command prestige in the village, children going to private school, afford good medical treatment, lend out money to poor and very poor households.
Belabadan	Widow, blind, leprosy disease, paralysis in this category, begging, stay hungry most part of the year, they depend on god and luck, child worker in this category, they do not get loan because can not return.	Own less than one acre land or landless, cultivation on leased in land, basically work as agriculture and non-agriculture labour, himself work on owned land, pressure of loan, small hut, children do not go to school, outside migration for job, afford *jhola chhap* doctor, some time stay hungry.	Own 5 acre land and above, pucca and *khaprail* house, hire in labour, land taken on *rehan* (mortgaged land) basis, any family member is in job, children go to school, afford medical treatment, have pumpset, thresher; sometimes lend out money to poor section and at the time of marriage borrow from rich.	Own 10 acre land and above, pucca house, septic tank latrine and handpump, hire in labour , outside job and business, own agricultural assets, children go to private school, afford good medical facilities, prestigious position in the village.	Own 20 acre and above land, good job, own agricultural assets and other vehicles, pucca house, prestigious position in the block level, all facilities available, hire in labour, children go to good school, can afford good medical treatment.
Makhnaha	Handicapped, widow, and single helpless person, small *katcha/fush* shelter on govt. land or other landlords' land, stay hungry most part of the year, children do not go to school, children work for food, do not afford doctor treatment.	Less than one acre land and mostly households are landless, house small and fush, work mainly as agriculture and non agriculture labour, no food available for some part in a year, very high migration in this category, children grazing goat.	Own 1 to 4 acre land, some leased in land, sometime work as a agricultural labour in other's fields, mostly migration in this category, *khaprail* or *fush* house, children go to school and work in own field, eat well over the year.	Own 4 acre land and above, Govt. job, whose family lease in 6 to 10 acre, pucca house, own assets like pumpset, thresher, children go to school, afford good medical treatment, lend out money to poor classes, afford *halwaha* and *charwaha.*	Own 15 acre and above land, big pucca house, small family size, own agricultural assets, afford halwaha/charwaha, children go to private school, afford good medical treatment, good jobs, lend out money, some savings.

forms of poverty at the village level, as explained by the villagers, in the villages of Bihar.

The charts presented for Rohtas and Purnea show an exhaustive list of factors identified by the villagers in each of the six villages of both the districts. It can be seen from these charts that the attributes associated with rich and poor vary not only across the two districts but also across the villages within the districts. For example, it can be seen that in Rohtas very often villagers identified landless as 'very poor' while in Bhuawal the households having land upto 4–5 *katha* were also put in this category. On the other hand, in Purnea invariably in all the villages 'very poor' class had no land. We can also see that for almost all the categories the size of the land holding varied very widely over the villages. Different other attributes associated with different categories also differed in their own way signifying the diversity in the nature and extent of poverty within the district. However, in all the villages almost all the widows, disabled, very old and alone were classified as 'very poor'. Business, service, possession of productive assets, vehicles, better quality of house, better availability of food etc. were some of the important factors which the villagers identified in determining the rich.

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

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

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

The extent and nature of poverty has a direct bearing on the food and nutrition pattern of people. In the sample villages the consumption of essential food items differed very widely depending upon the extent and intensity of poverty in the villages. Besides the differences in the quantity and the quality of food people consumed in different villages, there was also difference in the period of shortage (sometimes period of starvation) over the sample villages. To know the extent of food availability for a poor family in different villages a ‘food calendar’ exercise was carried on with at least one poor family of each of the villages. After some minor aggregation, only at the village level, the information of the food calendar exercise is presented in chart 3.

Chart 3: Food security Situation and Alternative Source of Dependence in Different Villages

Village	Period (months) of food			Alternative food items
	Availability	Shortage	Starvation	
Khesari	Chaitra to Ashwin, Aghan to Magh.	Falgun, Ashwin and Kartik.	Sawan and Bhado.	Small fish, kekra, Ghongha.
Khukhri	Chaitra to Ashwin, Aghan to Magh.	Falgun, Ashwin and Kartik.	Sawan and Bhado	Small fish ghongha, situa, sag
Alalpur-Bishunpur	Chaitra to Sawan, Aghan to Push.	Magh, Falgun and Kartik.	Bhado and Ashwin.	Fish, sag, local vegetables, kekra.
Rupaspur-Salempur	Chaitra to Sawan, Aghan to Push.	Magh, Falgun and Kartik.	Bhado and Ashwin.	Fish, local vegetables.
Kari	Chaitra to Bhado, Aghan to Magh	Falgun, Kartik	Ashwin	Fish, sag
Kanaudi	Chaitra to Asarh, Aghan to Magh	Falgun, Ashwin and Kartik	Sawan and Bhado	Fish, ghongha, sag, local vegetables
Mirzapur	Chaitra to Asarh, Kartik to Magh	Sawan, Bhado and Falgun	Ashwin	Fish, kekra, sag
Khusihal chhappar	Chaitra to Asarh, Kartik to Push	Sawan, Ashwin, Magh, Falgun	Bhado	Fish, kathal, jamun
Paharpurdayal	Chaitra to Jaystha, Kartik to Magh	Asarh, Sawan, Falgun	Bhado, Ashwin	Fish, local vegetables
Baniyachhappar	Chaitra to Jaystha, Kartik to Push	Asarh, Sawan, Magh, Falgun	Bhado, Ashwin	Small fish, kekra, ghongha, madua
Diwanparsa	Chaitra to Jaystha, Kartik to Push	Asarh, Sawan, Magh, Falgun	Bhado, Ashwin	Small fish, local vegetables
Misirbatarhan	Chaitra to Jaystha, Aghan to Magh	Asarh, Sawan, Ashwin, Falgun	Sawan, Bhado	Fish, kekra, local vegetables
Jhitki	Chaitra to Asarh, Aghan, Push	Magh, Falgun, Sawan, Bhado	Ashwin	Fish, kekra, local vegetables, kathal
Semhli	Chaitra to Asarh, Aghan to Magh	Falgun, Sawan, Kartik	Bhado, Ashwin	Kekra, fish, ghongha, vegetables
Mahisam	Chaitra to Asarh, Aghan to Magh	Falgun, Sawan, Kartik	Bhado, Ashwin	Fish, ghongha, rat, makhana
Bahera	Chaitra to Jaystha, Aghan to Falgun	Asarh, Sawan, Kartik	Bhado, Ashwin	Fish, kekra, sag, local vegetables
Khangaon	Chaitra to Jaystha, Kartik to Magh	Asarh, Sawan, Falgun	Bhado, Ashwin	Fish, kekra, jhore of sattu
Haidarpur vijay	Chaitra to Jaystha, Kartik to Magh	Asarh, Sawan, Falgun	Bhado, Ashwin	Fish, kekra, local vegetables
Tarokhar	Chaitra to Asarh, Aghan to Falgun	Sawan, Bhado	Ashwin, Kartik	Jhore of sattu
Dewanparsa	Chaitra, Baisakh, Asarh, Aghan to Falgun	Jaystha, Sawan, Bhado	Ashwin, Kartik	Fish, banana, local vegetables
Chandkura	Chaitra to Asarh, Aghan to Falgun	Sawan, Bhado	Ashwin, Kartik	Fish, local vegetables
Bhokhila	Chaitra to Asarh, Aghan to Magh	Falgun, Sawan, Bhado	Ashwin, Kartik	Fish, local vegetables, kekra
Mohiuddinpur	Chaitra to Jaystha, Kartik to Falgun	Asarh, Sawan, Bhado	Ashwin,	Fish, sattu
Barandi	Chaitra to Jaystha, Aghan to Falgun	Asarh, Sawan, Bhado	Ashwin, Kartik	Local sag and vegetables, madd or jhore, fish

Chart 3 (contd..)

Village	Period (months) of food			Alternative food items
	Availability	Shortage	Starvation	
Pathan toli	Chaitra to mid of Sawan, Aghan to Magh	Falgun, half Sawan, Bhado	Ashwin, Kartik	Fish, kekra
Bhokhri	Chaitra, Baisakh, Asarh, Aghan to Push	Magh, Falgun, Jaystha, Sawan,	Bhado, Ashwin, Kartik	Fish, kekra, sag
Jitwarpur	Chaitra to Sawan, Aghan to Push	Bhado, Magh, Falgun	Ashwin, Kartik	Fish, rat, kekra, local vegetables
Kasaila	Chaitra to Asarh, Aghan to Magh	Sawan, Bhado, Falgun	Ashwin, Kartik	Fish, local vegetables and sag
Belabadan	Chaitra to Jaystha, Aghan to Magh	Asarh, Sawan, Bhado, Falgun	Ashwin, Kartik Ashwin, Kartik	Fish, sag
Makhnaha	Chaitra, Baisakh, Asarh, Aghan to Falgun	Jaystha, Sawan, Bhado	Ashwin, Kartik	Fish, local vegetables
Chakchattar	Chaitra to Sawan, Aghan to Falgun	Bhado, Kartik	Ashwin	Local vegetables, fish from canal
Anhar	Chaitra to Jaystha, Aghan to Falgun	Asarh, Sawan, Bhado	Ashwin, Kartik	Pareh, fish
Samhuti Buzurg	Chaitra to Asarh, Aghan to Falgun	Sawan, Bhado	Ashwin, Kartik	Fish, local vegetables and sag
Bhuawal	Chaitra to Sawan, Aghan to Falgun	Bhado	Ashwin, Kartik	Fish, local vegetables and sag
Amarhi	Chaitra to Sawan, Aghan to Falgun	Bhado	Ashwin, Kartik	Fish, Pareh, local vegetables
Kaithi	Chaitra to Asarh, Aghan to Falgun	Sawan, Kartik	Bhado, Ashwin	Fish, Pareh, local vegetables and sag

On the basis of the chart 3, it emerged that in different villages the food shortage period ranged mainly from the month of Sawan (August-September) to Kartik (October-November). However in some of the villages Jyestha (May-June) and Falgun (February-March) were also reported as months of shortages. During this period villagers also identified a few months of virtual starvation. It can be seen from the chart that in most of the villages the months of Aswin (September-October) and Kartik (October-November) are the most difficult months for the villagers. In some of the villages this period of starvation starts from Bhadon (August-September). Although, in most of the villages the period of shortage and starvation are largely related to the crop cycle of the village, it varies over the villages depending upon the extent of the agricultural prosperity and productivity of the region. Annexure I gives the details of the food calendar prepared by group of women in villages, Andhar (Rohtas) and Pathantoli (Purnea). From annexure I, it is clear that the dietary intake of people is low and many a time the daily meal constitutes no more than a handful of rice and salt. Pulses and milk are virtually absent from the everyday diet of a poor family. The participant women reported that the timings of

meals are also irregular and dependent on availability of grain in the house and/or wages received in kinds. The villagers also reported that during June-August the possibility of earning wages also becomes very low because of low employment opportunities during this period. In fact, in most of the villages, the problem of food security becomes so severe at times that people are forced to depend on a variety of wild products and very low quality of food items like *sattu ka jhor*, *preh*, wild *sag*, pond products like local fish, *kekra, ghongha*, *musa* (mouse) etc. Although, many of these items might be even more nutritious than the common food item, these are generally looked down as inferior quality of food on the one hand and also not generally available in sufficient quantity on the other.

In most of the villages villagers accepted that the hunger situation during the past decade or so has improved by the interventions of some government sponsored programmes like Jawahar Rojgar Yojna (JRY), Public Distribution System (PDS) etc. However, these programmes are also not perceived to have eliminated even the starvation period in the villages.

Villagers' response regarding their perception on changes in economic conditions of the households and village life as a whole was also collected through household level questionnaire. Villagers' responses regarding 'improvement', 'deterioration', and 'no change' in their economic conditions as well as village life has been classified for districts, castes, and class and is presented in table 7.1.

Table 7.1 reveals that more than half of the villagers in Rohtas, Gaya and Gopalganj districts responded that there has been an improvement in their economic conditions during the last ten years. In Gopalganj as high as 86 per cent of the villagers opined that there has been an improvement in the village life. It is interesting to note that out of these three districts Rohtas stands out as high percentage of villagers responded about deterioration in their economic conditions as well as village life. In fact it is only in Rohtas that the villagers' response is found nearly bifurcated into two categories 'improvement' and 'deterioration' in their economic conditions as well as village life. The percentage of villagers responding about no change is approximately 10 to 12 in both the cases.

The percentage of villagers reporting about improvement in village life is also high in Nalanda and Purnea. But in these two districts nearly half of the villagers responded that although there has been improvement in the general village life there has been no change or

deterioration in the economic conditions of their families. Here it is worth mentioning that these two districts are the districts of highest landlessness in our sample (see chapter IV).

Table 7.1: Households' Response to Change in Economic Condition and Village Life in Last 10 Years

	Changes in Economic Condition of Households			Changes in Village Life		
	No Change	Improvement	Deterioration	No Change	Improvement	Deterioration
District						
Gaya	37.52	50.35	12.13	22.43	69.49	8.09
Gopalganj	33.38	55.29	11.34	12.35	86.00	1.65
Madhubani	30.62	41.82	27.56	23.31	61.54	15.15
Nalanda	29.30	49.67	21.03	12.25	77.92	9.82
Purnea	24.34	47.04	28.62	15.06	74.55	10.40
Rohtas	12.80	50.61	36.59	10.84	62.02	27.14
Class						
Non-Culti. Casual Agri. Lab.	36.14	37.05	26.81	20.94	68.05	11.01
Non-Culti. Attached Agri. Lab.	38.75	29.25	32.00	20.50	71.25	8.25
Culti. Casual Agri. Lab.	27.99	53.49	18.52	14.79	75.05	10.16
Culti. Attached Agri. Lab.	49.22	32.68	18.09	11.09	82.88	6.03
Poor-Middle Peasants	28.39	55.10	16.51	16.33	75.32	8.35
Middle Peasants	19.00	67.68	13.32	10.58	79.53	9.89
Big Peasants	20.84	50.87	28.29	18.22	66.35	15.43
Landlord	18.43	56.24	25.33	13.32	70.75	15.93
Non-Agriculturist	25.32	47.72	26.96	16.96	70.76	12.28
Caste						
Brahmin & Kayastha	24.34	42.85	32.82	18.58	67.40	14.01
Bhumihar & Rajput	23.72	44.72	31.55	21.59	63.82	14.59
Backward Caste I	30.12	47.93	21.95	15.28	74.99	9.73
Kurmi	20.22	60.66	19.13	2.73	66.67	30.60
Yadav	25.51	56.73	17.77	16.09	75.73	8.18
Koiri	34.11	55.75	10.14	13.26	81.09	5.65
Other Backward II	24.95	55.98	19.07	13.55	72.71	13.74
Scheduled Caste	39.10	45.92	14.98	20.99	72.08	6.93
Scheduled Tribe	11.11	68.38	20.51	10.26	85.47	4.27
Upper Caste Muslim	17.18	41.80	41.02	19.35	54.49	26.16
Backward Caste Muslim	25.17	43.18	31.65	14.37	74.77	10.86
Land						
No Land	34.53	39.90	25.57	19.43	69.77	10.80
0-1.0 Acre	29.07	48.69	22.25	15.75	73.53	10.72
1.0-2.5 Acre	21.90	56.06	22.05	14.19	72.63	13.18
2.5-5.0 Acre	15.87	61.28	22.85	14.17	72.65	13.17
5.0-10.0 Acre	19.43	63.19	17.38	14.52	74.03	11.45
10.0-20.0 Acre	7.74	77.98	14.29	9.52	71.43	19.05
20+ Acre	10.34	65.52	24.14	17.24	44.83	37.93
All	28.44	48.19	23.37	16.80	71.65	11.55

Among different social classes it is the middle peasants who responded maximum in favour of improvement in their economic conditions (67.68 %). Moreover, approximately 80 per

cent of the people belonging to this class are of the opinion that the conditions of village life as a whole have improved in last ten years. The responses of the middle peasant class are substantiated with the fact that this class is mainly comprised of middle castes Kurmi, Yadav, and Koeri that are the most upwardly mobile castes in rural Bihar. The caste break up of these responses also substantiates this figure as more than half of the persons belonging to middle castes respond that there have been improvement in their economic conditions as well as village life. On the other hand, invariably most of the people from the agricultural labour class respond that either their economic situation has deteriorated or remained unchanged, except in case of cultivating casual agricultural labour class. Regarding the conditions of village life most of the people from all the classes said that there has been improvement over the last ten years. The less than average positive response of the villagers about the village life is mainly from Kurmi and upper caste Muslims followed by upper caste people. This may be on account of the growing caste-class conflict and tensions in the rural areas. This can also be seen from the fact that a substantial proportion of Scheduled Caste felt that their economic conditions as well as village life have either worsened or remained unchanged.

The land size wise break up of the peoples', responses show that most of the people from higher land size households were of the opinion that over the years the situation of their own as well as village as a whole has improved. Again most of the people from landless class responded that their conditions have either deteriorated or remained unchanged.

The perception of people regarding their own economic conditions and village life has far reaching implications, in the sense that on the one hand, it gives the idea of villagers' thinking about their own relative position in the society and on the other, it also throws light on their hopes and aspirations. In the light of the above-mentioned perception of poverty and change in the social status, in the following section we will try to evaluate the change in the level of human development.

Change in the Level of Human Development

Education, health and food security are the basic determinants of human development. Besides the household level data and different techniques of PRA exercise, village level data have been used for the purpose of showing village level access to different social and basic amenities. In this section we

have also used village level data of the old ILO-ANSISS survey to capture the changes more objectively. This is explained in terms of each of the following determinants

Education

Education is one of the important indicators of human development. Table 7.2 presents literacy and educational status of both males and females in the age-group of 15-59 across districts, class and caste. It suggests that only 44.37 per cent of the population are literate. The variation between male and female literacy is astonishingly high. Illiteracy amongst females is 74 per cent as against 39 per cent for the males. The percentage of population educated upto the primary level is about 14 per cent and surprisingly, the male-female gap in this class is quite low - as 16 per cent of the males and 12 per cent of the females have completed their schooling up to the primary level. But the gap between males and females widens at the higher levels of education. For instance, 17 per cent of males as against 7 per cent females are educated up to middle school and the corresponding figures are 15 and 5 per cent in the case of education up to secondary level. Even higher gaps have been reported for graduates and post-graduates. While male graduates and post-graduates form about 12 per cent and 1.20 per cent of the population respectively, the corresponding percentage in the case of females are 2.39 per cent and 0.05 per cent. In terms of total pass percentages at various levels, on taking males and females together, the figures for middle, secondary, graduates and post-graduates are 11.9, 10.5, 7.3 and 0.7 per cent, respectively.

In spite of the low literacy figures in rural Bihar, people perceive an improvement in the education and schooling system. The post-independence attempt by the state government to set up primary schools in all villages is seen as a turning point. Also, many especially in the more developed districts of the central plains of Bihar are aware of the advantages of education. This was clear in the discussions following the social mapping exercise, where the presence of a primary, middle and or high school was often considered a status symbol for the village (or even tola within a village). Very often the presence (or absence) of these public standposts was either trumpeted (or lamented) as the fortune (misfortune) of the village (tola).

"Ours is a small village. We only have a primary school and it is running in the *dallan* of the Yadav house. Where can our children study? Please tell the BDO to give us a school"(Andhar, Rohtas district)

Schooling seems to have spread very slowly in rural Bihar and therefore, literacy has increased very gradually. However, at this point it is important to mention that though the literacy rates are low in Bihar, people perceive them to be on the rise.

"Times have changed today. Almost all the children irrespective of their caste go to school now. Before only the rich Brahmin and Rajput used to send their children to school. Now many of us (Mushar) too send our children to school. However, they send their children to the private schools in Rampatti where the teaching is regular and good and those of us who send our children to school send them to the government schools in the village"(Khangaon, Madhubani district).

However, the male-female gap in educational attainment at each and every age-group class is almost universally explained by the people as normal. From the FGD it is clear that the people in Bihar attach very little importance to girl's education. (also see chapter IV) Across the districts, people perceive girl's education as unnecessary and wasteful. As most of the younger children, irrespective of their sex, are not roped in to work either at home or outside, many parents send their children, even the girls to primary school. However, as the child matures into a teenager, in most families, it is the girl child's education that seems to become a casualty. Moreover, in many villages, the lack of higher levels of education such as absence of a middle school in the village etc. result in parents stopping their girl child's education after the primary level. In other words, fewer girls continue to study beyond the fifth class, as this generally involves them to travel beyond the village and naturally, even fewer rural parents, and mostly only rich landowners educate their girls beyond eighth class.

"What is the use of educating girls? Will they support us in our old age? No, then why send them to school? ... if we send the girls out they will only become disrespectful and bring shame to the family. It is better to get them married as early as possible. Anyway, education makes no difference to the housework that they have to do". Even after being educated they have to do the same work (household works) (Khangaon, Madhubani district).

"All girls in our community (Chamars) are married by the time they are fourteen years. Moreover, there is no middle school in our village. We may have sent them to middle school if

there was one in the village, but as there is none the question does not arise. The boys go to the next village to study"(Bhokila, Nalanda district)

"We cannot send our girls outside. The environment is not conducive for it. Moreover, we have to protect our girls - it is a question of our honour and respect in the community" (Rajput, Alalpur-Bishunpur, Gaya district)

It can be seen that illiteracy is inversely linked to class status. Lower the class status higher the level of illiteracy and vice-versa. Illiteracy is highest in the population belonging to the agricultural labour class. Nearly four-fifth of them is illiterate. Illiteracy among females belonging to this class is almost universal (93%). The figures show declining trend in the subsequent higher classes. For instance, illiteracy among the males and females belonging to the landlord class is 6.8% and 38.7%, respectively. The gap in the male-female literacy persists in all the classes irrespective of their social class. The percentage of graduates among different classes also shows trends similar to literacy level. Irrespective of the class status, the proportion of female graduates is abysmally low in all the classes. However, here too the pattern of their distribution is directly related to their class hierarchy.

Rohtas has the lowest pool of illiterates (40.26 per cent) in the surveyed population while Purnea shows the highest percentage of illiterate (72.88). The figures for other districts fall in between. Irrespective of the district, there seems to be a strong linkage between adult literacy rates and schooling figures. For instance, Rohtas is a district where both adult literacy rates and the percentage of school-going children are the highest. A similar trend can be seen with respect to male and female literacy rates too. Distressingly, across the districts, female illiteracy is very high. Though, Rohtas district is still the leader, female illiteracy is as high as 62.06 per cent, while in Purnea district, in keeping with the overall illiteracy picture - it is the highest and stands at 85.39 per cent. In other districts, female illiteracy ranges from 72 to 74 per cent. However, distressing is the fact that as far as education is concerned - both male and female – not much has changed in more than 25 years, considering that the same district with a higher percentage of adult illiterates still have the highest proportion of out of school children.

Table 7.2: Educational Status of Persons (15-59) by District, Caste and Class

		Educational status up to					
		Illiterate	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Graduate	Post Graduate
District							
Gaya	Male	34.24	17.36	17.52	19.34	10.52	1.02
	Female	71.91	14.33	6.86	5.04	1.80	0.06
	Total	52.28	15.91	12.42	12.49	6.35	0.56
Gopalganj	Male	28.94	20.30	23.82	17.55	8.83	0.57
	Female	74.47	12.25	6.50	4.24	2.39	0.16
	Total	49.51	16.66	15.99	11.54	5.92	0.38
Madhubani	Male	43.29	14.57	16.09	14.80	9.84	1.41
	Female	73.50	12.04	7.72	4.52	2.10	0.02
	Total	57.72	13.36	12.09	9.89	6.15	0.75
Nalanda	Male	36.13	12.77	15.60	16.16	18.76	0.59
	Female	72.99	9.17	7.24	7.04	3.55	
	Total	53.46	11.08	11.67	11.87	11.61	0.31
Purnea	Male	61.89	15.00	8.16	6.68	6.62	1.65
	Female	85.39	7.50	3.38	2.35	1.34	0.05
	Total	72.88	11.49	5.92	4.65	4.15	0.90
Rohtas	Male	20.33	16.37	20.70	21.35	19.21	2.04
	Female	62.06	16.48	9.04	8.48	3.90	0.04
	Total	40.26	16.42	15.13	15.21	11.90	1.08
Caste							
FC	Male	8.67	10.62	22.12	28.26	26.82	3.51
	Female	38.11	25.75	17.47	12.34	6.06	0.19
	Total	22.29	17.62	19.97	20.90	17.22	1.97
OBC (I)	Male	54.31	21.50	12.38	6.34	5.36	0.11
	Female	87.27	7.01	2.88	1.67	1.17	
	Total	69.81	14.68	7.91	4.15	3.39	0.06
Kurmi	Male	13.83	7.96	25.00	26.96	25.00	1.26
	Female	54.45	11.01	12.37	15.38	6.79	
	Total	33.36	9.43	18.93	21.39	16.24	0.65
Yadav	Male	33.70	18.85	19.18	17.82	10.07	0.37
	Female	84.31	6.74	3.69	3.91	1.35	
	Total	57.92	13.06	11.77	11.17	5.90	0.19
Koeri	Male	22.48	17.32	27.23	24.73	7.74	0.50
	Female	69.75	15.02	6.57	5.97	2.59	0.10
	Total	44.02	16.27	17.82	16.18	5.39	0.32
Oth. OBC (II)	Male	26.72	25.71	20.41	19.92	6.46	0.77
	Female	75.80	13.68	5.98	2.93	1.61	
	Total	49.57	20.11	13.69	12.01	4.20	0.41
SC/ST	Male	62.33	13.31	11.54	6.28	6.30	0.24
	Female	92.59	2.97	2.23	1.41	0.77	0.03
	Total	76.84	8.36	7.08	3.94	3.65	0.14

Table 7.2 (contd..)

		Educational status up to					
		Illiterate	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Graduate	Post Graduate
Muslims	Male	62.09	14.95	9.27	7.14	5.28	1.26
	Female	85.50	9.41	2.12	2.19	0.74	0.03
	Total	73.11	12.34	5.91	4.81	3.14	0.68
Class							
AL	Male	65.14	16.03	10.20	5.93	2.63	0.06
	Female	93.35	3.91	1.58	0.62	0.54	
	Total	78.59	10.25	6.09	3.40	1.64	0.03
POOMIDP	Male	20.38	21.77	27.74	21.03	9.00	0.08
	Female	73.35	15.48	6.41	2.75	2.01	
	Total	45.38	18.80	17.68	12.40	5.70	0.04
MIDP	Male	18.86	18.60	26.84	21.60	13.88	0.22
	Female	74.38	13.57	4.65	5.63	1.76	
	Total	44.93	16.24	16.43	14.10	8.19	0.12
BIGP	Male	12.06	14.42	22.20	25.16	23.08	3.08
	Female	46.02	22.48	14.87	11.31	5.10	0.22
	Total	27.51	18.09	18.87	18.86	14.90	1.78
LANDLD	Male	6.80	10.49	17.81	29.53	30.87	4.51
	Female	38.74	23.77	16.16	13.25	7.75	0.07
	Total	21.79	16.72	17.03	21.88	20.02	2.42
NONAG	Male	30.34	20.73	15.84	19.57	12.19	1.33
	Female	66.86	13.50	9.07	8.50	2.08	
	Total	48.05	17.22	12.55	14.20	7.28	0.69
Total	Male	39.14	16.03	16.58	15.42	11.63	1.20
	Female	74.18	11.70	6.63	5.02	2.39	0.05
	Total	55.63	13.99	11.90	10.52	7.28	0.66

Hence, it seems that the linkage between literacy and schooling is more evident in the case of male literacy than female literacy (see table 7.2). Though this is in contradiction to the general belief but needs further investigation.

Table 7.2: Percentage of Male and Female Illiteracy and School Going Children.

District	Percentage of male literacy	Percentage of school going children	Percentage of female literacy
Gaya	65.76	62.50	28.09
Gopalganj	71.06	65.08	25.53
Madhubani	56.71	44.33	26.50
Nalanda	63.87	54.42	27.01
Purnea	38.11	33.91	14.61
Rohtas	79.67	71.54	37.94

The number of graduates is an important parameter of educational development. Interestingly, this also follows by and large pattern of literacy in the districts. For instance, Rohtas has the highest percentage of male graduate (19.21) whereas Purnea has the lowest of 6.62. The overall figures for these two districts are 11.90 and 4.15 per cent, respectively. In rest of the districts, the overall percentage of graduates is as follows: Nalanda 11.61, Gaya 6.35, Madhubani 6.15 and Gopalganj 5.92.

Finally, we take up literacy and educational status caste-wise. The lowest level of illiteracy is reported among the upper castes. The Kurmi is next to the upper castes in this regard. On the other side, the OBC I have 69.81% illiterates, the Muslims 73.11% and the SC/ST have 76.84% illiterates in their ranks. Highest male and female illiteracy is reported among the SC/ST and the Muslims. Very high percentage of female illiteracy was also found among OBC I, Yadav, other OBC-II.

An inter-district comparison shows that the educational system is almost dysfunctional in the districts of Purnea and Madhubani and this is reflected in the literacy figures observed from the survey. Unlike in the districts of Rohtas and Gopalganj where the people seem to be highly aware of the advantages of education and where there is a demand for a good education system across caste and class groups, in Purnea and Madhubani, one sees a lassitude towards education. The on-going caste and labour-landowner tensions in the villages of Nalanda and Gaya district has had an adverse impact on education general and worse impact on female education.

Irrespective of the district and social and economic status of people, people lamented the inadequacy and poor quality of education in Bihar. Further, as Table 7.2 and PRA reports reveal that the situation in the northern districts Purnea and Madhubani is far worse than that in the southern plains of Bihar.

Schooling

The figures given in Table 7.3 show a wide disparity in terms of out of school children. It varies from as high as 66 per cent in Purnea to as low as 28.5 per cent in Rohtas. Madhubani is next to Purnea in this regard with 55.7 per cent of children not attending any school.

The PRA reports tell a sad story of poor school-infrastructure such as decrepit buildings, irregular teaching, poor distribution of benefits, bad connecting roads, no drinking water facility and general unhappiness amongst parents with regard to the educational system in Bihar.

Schemes meant to lure students to school such as the mid-day meal scheme has been reduced to a monthly ration scheme and many people in Purnea and Madhubani are not even aware about its existence. And even in the districts where it is functioning like in Nalanda, it is so infrequent that it makes no difference to children's attendance.

"Only one teacher comes to this school. The government has posted two more teachers, but they never come. Where can our children study? We cannot send them to private schools" (Mohiuddinpur, Nalanda district).

"The primary school is 2 km away in the next village. The road is completely cut-off during the monsoons. Most of the children in our village do not attend school. About 20 boys attend school and even they are irregular" (Kasaila, Purnea district).

"The building is falling apart. We have written to the government. Nobody cares. When it rains water pours in and now for three years we have been running the school in Yadav's dallan" (Kusihal-chhapar, Gopalganj district).

Also, distressing is the gender differential in access to schooling. In this respect, both the inter-district and the intra-district comparison of male and female children presents a gloomy picture of schooling of the female child. In Rohtas, while only 16.4 per cent of boys are out of school, the figure for the girls is as high as 42.1 per cent. In other words, a male-female gap in schooling exists in all the districts without any exception, though it varies from district to district. Interestingly, the gap is lowest in Gaya district -- 40.4% of girls as against 35% of boys are out of school.

Apart from other well known factors associated with poor female schooling such as the need to look after siblings and homes, lower value attached to girls' education are due to their transient status in the family. The PRA also revealed that other factors such as poor infrastructure, lack of connecting roads, distance of school from home, on-going caste based tensions etc. affect girl's schooling more than it does boy's schooling.

"The school is located in the main tola. Very few children from Durgapur tola attend school. In any case our tola is cut-off from the main Kanaudi tola for almost 4 months. Moreover, there is

so much tension in this village. How can we send the girls to study in such a situation?' (Kanaudi, Gaya district)

As expected, social stratification in terms of caste and class has tremendous implications for schooling of children. While only 13.7 per cent of the forward caste children are out of /school, the 68.3 per cent Muslims and 64 per cent SCs/ST children are out of school (Table 7.3). Similarly, among the OBC-I, out of school children constitute a very high percentage (63.7%). The OBC-II cluster exhibits a different picture with the Kurmi and Koeri taking more interest in sending their children to school while the proportion of out of school children for the Yadav and the rest of the OBC-II caste groups is considerably higher, though, as a group it is still lower than that of the OBC-1 group.

"Most of poorer families find it impossible to send their children to school. The rich Sheikh after initiating their children in the Madrasa, send their children to private convent schools in the neighbouring village. Most of us (Kulhaiya and Ansari) do not educate our children. No girl from our village has ever studied".(Pathantoli, Purnea district)

Also, gender differential is the lowest in the case of the upper castes, with only 16.2 per cent of the girls out of school. Amongst the Kurmi too, a higher value is attached to girl education. The highest percentage of out of schoolgirls is found amongst the Muslims and the SC/ST. Coincidentally, the gender gap is also very high among these religion-caste groups.

"We just about manage to educate our boys. Do you want us to send our girls to school too. Then who will manage the home? Who will marry the girl if she studies? We will have to pay a huge dowry to get her married. It is better that she stays at home and learns to do some housework" (Paharpur Dayal, Gopalganj).

The FGD amongst the higher and upwardly mobile castes revealed that the conventional perspective on schooling of girls – mainly held by the older generation, and increasingly on the decline – as a waste for girls is fast changing. Though, there is still a feeling that educating girls is pointless and costly as "they have to perform the same tasks at home after marriage, whether

educated or uneducated", many in the younger generation feel that educating the girl is no more an option. There is an increasingly alternate view amongst these caste groups where schooling is viewed as necessary for girls in order for them to be married. In other words, many view girls education as a pre-requisite for them to be married into 'good' houses.

A similar pattern can be seen in an analysis of educational development across different classes. The agricultural labour class has the highest proportion of non-school going children and the lowest proportion of out of school children is seen amongst the landlord class. In fact, there is a disproportionately high concentration of non-school going children amongst agricultural labourer families. Figures given in Table 7.3 shows that 67.2 per cent of children of the agricultural labour are non-school going - almost double the proportion of the poor middle class (35.4%) and almost 4 times that of the class of landlords (15.4%). The proportion of out of schoolgirls decreases when we move from the lower to the higher social classes.

Table 7.3: Percentage of school Going Children

	Male	Female	Total
District			
Gaya	64.77	59.59	62.5
Gopalganj	74.14	52.93	65.08
Madhubani	49.04	38.62	44.33
Nalanda	61.28	46.93	54.42
Purnea	42.31	23.59	33.91
Rohtas	83.62	57.94	71.54
Caste			
FC	88.35	83.8	86.28
OBC (I)	44.61	26.82	36.26
Kurmi	81.18	72.43	76.92
Yadav	68.02	49.94	60.59
Koeri	82.24	68.37	75.63
OBC (II)	74.74	51.63	64.63
SC/ST	43.41	26.34	35.91
Muslims	40.65	21.4	31.73
Class			
AL	40.48	22.97	32.76
POOMIDP	74.55	54.16	64.59
MIDP	78.54	55.22	67.66
BIGP	85.96	73.75	80.38
LANDLD	87.22	81.52	84.6
NONAG	76.27	56.38	67.18
Total	54.92	39.84	48.02

Interestingly, the gender differential in access to schooling decreases as we move up the economic ladder. In other words, there is a greater gap between male and female education amongst the lower classes than amongst the upper classes. In fact, the gap considerably narrows amongst the upper classes. Further, as the figures in Table 7.2 shows, in a sense the class position predetermines the probability of children in general being in school, more so with respect to girl's schooling. At this point it is important to remember that (as has been mentioned in the chapter on social composition) in the plains of Bihar, a large proportion of the upper class families also belong to the upper castes and they have a long tradition and history of educating their children. However, what is new and interesting is the emerging trend amongst them of educating the girls.

"If the boy is educated, so should the girl. An uneducated girl can't remember things well. She can't keep the house clean and bring up children carefully. I too wanted an educated bride, but my in-laws cheated me. Because I am not in service, I could only get her (pointing to his uneducated wife)" (XII, Brahmin, Kanaudi, Gaya district)

Private Schooling versus Government Schooling

People in the plains of Bihar associate quality education with private schools and across the districts it is only the well-off sections that send their children to these schools. Education in government schools is not only free, but the state has also introduced schemes to incentivise the poor to attend school. However, irrespective of the region parents lamented the poor quality of education imparted in these institutions and the irregular supply of benefits to the schools such as mid-day meals, free books etc.. The cost of private schooling precludes the poorer sections of society - who form the majority in the plains of Bihar. The field data shows that private schooling is still a comparatively rare phenomenon in the areas covered during the survey. Table 7.4 shows that out of the total school going children, only 10.85 per cent are attending private schools. The outreach of the much talked-about non-formal education is limited to insignificant 2.46 per cent children. The rest, 86.69 per cent of the students are in government schools.

Private schooling is reported to be higher in the districts of Nalanda and Gopalganj where 16-17 per cent of children attends private schools. Purnea and Gaya present a contrast where

private schooling is in the range of 3-4 per cent. Rohtas and Madhubani villages fall between the two extremes with about 12-13 per cent of the children attending private schools.

Table 7.4: Percentage Distribution of School going Children

	Percentage of School Going Children			
	NFE	**Govt.**	**Private**	**Total**
District				
Gaya	1.06	95.13	3.81	100.00
Gopalganj	4.74	79.27	15.99	100.00
Madhubani	5.72	81.91	12.37	100.00
Nalanda		83.15	16.85	100.00
Purnea	2.91	94.56	2.53	100.00
Rohtas	0.10	87.05	12.85	100.00
Caste				
FC	1.85	88.91	9.24	100.00
OBC (I)	1.27	86.28	12.45	100.00
Kurmi		80.93	19.07	100.00
Yadav	0.76	85.85	13.39	100.00
Koeri	0.27	87.43	12.30	100.00
OBC (II)	1.83	86.23	11.95	100.00
SC/ST	2.13	90.45	7.42	100.00
Muslims	10.77	79.12	10.10	100.00
Class				
AL	3.80	88.40	7.80	100.00
POOMIDP	4.62	81.26	14.12	100.00
MIDP	1.50	84.94	13.56	100.00
BIGP	1.49	89.34	9.16	100.00
LANDLD	1.62	77.67	20.71	100.00
NONAG	1.45	89.75	8.81	100.00
Total	2.46	86.69	10.85	100.00

The caste-class divide extends to the private-government schooling – a higher proportion of upper caste and class and Kurmi send their children to private schools and most of the lower caste and class are only able to afford to send their children to government schools.

"We have two schools. First one is a government primary school in Ballapur and the other a private academy. Only Bhumihar children go to the latter. Children from all caste groups can be found in the former. In any case very few of our children (Mushar) go to school. We are poor. We can send our children to school, but how can they study when their stomachs are empty" (Darveshpura, Nalanda district)

"The government set up the primary school – but forgot to tell the teachers to come to teach! The rich households – Brahmin, Teli, Suri, and Dhanuk send their children to a private school in Basopatti (6km away). Most of us do not send our children to school. A few send their children to government school in Basopatti – but what is the use? The teaching there is only marginally better than here." (Jhitki, Madhubani district)

"There is one primary and middle school in the village, but most of the rich educate their children in private schools outside the village. They pay between Rs. 30-50 / month. That is why they can get better jobs".(Baraandi, Nalanda district)

"There is one primary school in this village. It does not have a building and is at present running within the compound of a Yadav household. Teachers do not teach properly here. 15-20 of the richer households send their children to a private school in the next village, paying Rs.30 per month for primary classes and Rs. 60 / month for higher classes. (Anhar, Rohtas district)

19 per cent children in the case of Kurmi attend private schools while only 7 per cent of SC students are in private schools. In the case of the rest of the caste groups the range is 10 to 14 per cent. Dependence on government schools is the highest in the case of the SCs (about 90 per cent) while it is the lowest among the Muslims and the Kurmi (79-81 per cent). Here it is important to note that in case of the Muslims, the percentage of children attending non-formal centres is exceptionally high (10.77 per cent).

In terms of class, the landlord class seems to be less dependent on the government schools and a considerable percentage of their children attend private schools. The dependence on government schooling system is in the range of 88-89 per cent in the case of the agricultural labour, big peasants and the non-agriculturists. For poor middle peasants and middle peasants the dependence is marginally less.

Health

It is now a well-known fact that the health status of an individual is influenced by two factors: first, his/her genetic endowment and second, the socio-economic environment in which the individual lives. The PRA report reveals that there is a strong relationship between health and

social conditions in the plains of Bihar. Though, at first glance both the health statuses of the population as well as the socio-economic conditions in which the people live seem dismal, people perceive that there has been a change for the better in the past twenty years.

Digressing a little, health transition is said to have occurred when there is a substantial decline in death rates, especially due to by public health measures like provision of clean drinking water, sanitary facilities, and immunisation that eradicates fatal and crippling infectious diseases, and by improved accessibility to curative medical facilities such as hospitals and trained medical personnel. Further, health transition is said to hinge on the increased availability of nutritious food as this is considered to be of primary importance to the population for it is known to affect the individual's natural endowment and immunity to infectious diseases. And lastly, a slower growth rate of population, caused by declining birth rates is considered as a vital component for the overall health transition of a society. An attempt has been made in this study to capture the above mentioned elements which essentially cause a change in the individual's health status and overall health transition.

Access to Curative Medical Facilities

It is interesting to note that while many in the PRA exercises revealed that their health situation is marginally better than it was in the past, an equal number if not more, revealed that they primarily borrow for health purposes. At first glance, this seems to be a contradiction, but a closer look at the inter-district variation reveals that people's perception of improved health status does not refer only to the available curative medical facility, but it refers also to the reduced death rates. The reduction in the number of death per village may be attributed to two factors. First, as we have seen, the greater accessibility of people to clean drinking water has effectively reduced the spread of certain fatal infectious diseases such as Cholera and Typhoid. Interestingly, none of the villages in Purnea and Madhubani have reported water-borne diseases, while in the villages of Gaya and Rohtas, the occurrence of these diseases were confirmed. However, this does not indicate that the health status of the people in Purnea and Madhubani is close to perfect. In fact, in many of these villages people reported that in the past year there had been diarrhoea, wherein some lives were lost such as the one that afflicted Bahera of Madhubani district. Second, the availability and access to medical facility determines the extent and intensity of morbidity and mortality in the villages.

The provision of health facilities provided in the sample villages in terms of access to clinic, PHC, hospitals, safe drinking water, sanitary facilities have been taken into consideration. In order to see the improvement in the provision of these services, the changes that have taken place over the previous survey has also been presented in the following section.

Table 7.5 gives the details about improvement in access to different institutional medical facilities at village level. The improvement in the access to medical facilities has been calculated crudely in terms of number of villages having easy or difficult access to these facilities. The improvement in this respect can be seen by the change in the number of villages having access to particular institutional medical facilities over the time of old survey.

From table 7.5 it can be seen that in comparison to the old survey now more number of villages have easy access to different types of medical facilities. For example, out of 36 villages surveyed in north and south Bihar plains, 18 villages have access to PHC and/or Health Sub-centre within 2 km. with easy access while it was only 2 villages at the time of old survey. Now very few villages (only 5) do not have access to primary health care within a distance of 2 km. in comparison to 16 villages in the old survey. Fifty per cent of the village (18) now have access to hospital and dispensary within 5 km. while it was only 10 at the time of the old survey. However, we can see a poor improvement in some basic health facilities like provisions of mother/child care centres and family planning clinics.

Moreover, villagers in almost all the villages lamented the dismal state of curative medical system comprising of PHC, block and district hospitals. Across the state, with a few exceptions, PHCs are either dysfunctional or ill-equipped. Further, many of the PHCs are devoid of the personnel comprising the doctor, nurse and compounder or at best are irregularly attended by them. Irregular attendance, bad treatment and corruption of medical personnel is almost universal with the exception of Maknahain in Purnea district and Kari in Gaya district, where the people praised the existing PHC set-up. Most households prefer to go to private doctors as they feel that they will get better treatmen.

“We now have a PHC. But it is never open. We have to travel 10 km to see the private doctor” (Kanaudi, Gaya district)

“Many times we go to the PHC. There is no doctor there, only one nurse and compounder. They examine us but take money. The private clinic is better” (Khangaon, Madhubani district)

Table 7.5: Number of Villages having Access to Different Health Facilities.

Distance and type of approach	PHC/Sub-centre		Hospital/ Dispensary		Private qualified doctor		Maternity/ Child care centre		Family planning centre		Chemist shop	
	Old sur-vey	New sur-vey	Old survey	New sur-vey	Old survey	New sur-vey	Old sur-vey	New survey	Old survey	New survey	Old sur-vey	New survey
Inside village	2	15	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	6
Less than 2 Km. (easy access)*	0	3	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	3
Less than 2 Km. (some access)**	6	8	3	2	4	3	4	2	4	2	7	3
Between 2 and 5 kms. (easy access)	5	3	2	6	3	5	1	4	2	5	4	8
Between 2 and 5 kms. (some access)	7	2	7	8	7	11	8	7	8	8	6	9
Between 5 and 10 kms. (easy access)	5	1	4	2	4	1	5	3	6	3	3	0
Between 5 and 10 kms. (some access)	5	4	5	8	5	5	4	5	5	7	8	5
More than 10 kms. (easy access)	3	0	7	2	5	2	6	6	5	3	1	0
More than 10 kms. (some access)	3	0	8	6	7	6	6	8	5	7	5	2
No such facilities							1		1		1	
All	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36

Note: *stands for the villages well connected with pucca road; **stands for villages not connected with pucca road and hence having difficult access particularly during rainy season.

"The ANM comes to the village sometimes, but charges Rs. 6/- per injection. She is supposed to give it free of cost." (Jitwarpur, Purnea district)

However, there are inter-district variations. From the PRA reports it seems that the access to medical facilities is poorest in Purnea district and best in Rohtas district. People said that they were able to access medical facilities within a radius of 2-5 km in the latter districts while it extended to 10-15 km in the former. People attributed this both to the bad road infrastructure in Purnea district which implies longer duration to transport the sick and the greater number of dysfunctional PHCs in the rural areas in comparison to Rohtas district. However, at this point it is important to remember that many villages or at least many *Tolas* in the districts of Gaya and

Nalanda are also completely cut-off during the monsoons. During these difficult times, with the exception of a few villages across the plains, people resort to local faith healers, *ojhas* and spiritual advisers. In 26 of the 36 villages covered in this study, people openly admitted their dependence on *ojhas*, quacks and faith healers. The paucity of timely medical help is evident from this.

Safe Drinking water

Irrespective of the district, caste and class, people perceive that there has been a virtual revolution as far as accessibility to drinking water facilities is concerned. The increased presence of hand pumps, both public as well as private in all the villages is cited as the main reason for this transformation. However, there are sizeable inter-district and caste-class based variations in the availability and accessibility of potable water.

Table 7.6: Percentage of Households Having Access to Safe Drinking Water

	Old Survey		**New Survey**	
	Wells	**Tube-wells/ Hand pumps**	**Wells**	**Tube-wells/ Hand pumps**
District				
Gaya	69.12	31.36	29.33	93.42
Gopalganj	40.05	70.07	38.70	81.30
Madhubani	17.97	87.73	1.85	100.00
Nalanda	69.60	33.23	25.77	66.83
Purnea	22.28	63.83	14.34	90.08
Rohtas	53.32	64.13	11.08	95.77
Total	39.63	62.04	20.81	87.57

Table 7.6 gives an idea that over the intervening period between the two surveys, there has been a substantial increase in the number of hand pumps and a drastic reduction in the number of wells – with respect to both, the traditional open and tube wells. As a result approximately 90 per cent of the households in our sample villages have now access to safe drinking water as against approximately 60 per cent earlier. In Madhubani and Rohtas almost cent per cent of the households reported that they have access to either hand pumps or tube wells for drinking water. The maximum change in terms of household accessing to hand pumps and tube wells has been witnessed in Gaya, follwed by Rohtas and Purnea. On the other hand, the highest percentage of households still having access to hand pumps/tube wells for drinking water is found in Purnea (90.08), followed by Gopalganj (81.30%) and Nalanda (66.83%). There has also been an

increase in the other sources used as a source for drinking water. Though, it is difficult to provide numbers, from the discussions following the social mapping exercise, it seems that many households in Nalanda, Gaya and Rohtas districts, i.e. the central plains of Bihar, own wells than in the northern plains. This may be attributed to the fact that the former region is a more economically richer region than the latter. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that the poorer northern districts have much a larger number of hand pumps, both private as well as state provided. Though, the survey did not collect information with respect to the ownership of hand pumps and wells, it did collect data with regard to the total number of hand pumps and wells in the village.

Irrespective of the district, there seems to be a strong correlation between the caste-class of a household and the accessibility to drinking water. The social mapping exercise revealed that though the state has attempted to provide wells and hand pumps, they are still insufficient in number. In many of the villages, people complained of difficulties in accessing potable water. In some, the overall well/hand pump to household ratio is grossly inadequate. This is exemplified in the villages Maknaha of Purnea district where 40 households share a single drinking water source. On the other hand, there are other villages such as Kanaudi, Gaya district where only lower caste *Tolas* face a greater crisis. In fact, the situation is so bad in the village that the Mushar drink water from the stream in the forest as the well in their *Tola* is dry and the prevailing caste tension prevents them from taking water from the main Yadav *Tolas.*

The prestige associated with getting a hand pump in one's locality ensures that there is competition between various *Tolas*, and as can be seen in the social maps, in almost all the villages the settlement pattern in the *Tolas* is caste-centric. There is a general opinion amongst lower caste households that as the better-endowed, upper caste have better access to bureaucratic and political decision-makers, they are able to corner the largest number of hand pumps and wells in their locality. On the other hand, in the discussions amongst the upper castes, there was a feeling that the state's supply of drinking water is grossly inadequate and that they are thus forced to make their own private arrangements.

"The government gave us 3 hand pumps some time back. But today, not even a single one works. We get our water from a well near Chatti Tola. We have to walk through the fields to get water. Who will give us drinking water?" (Mushar, Kari, Gaya district)

Due to the high caste-class correlation in the plains of Bihar, considering that the upper caste people have cornered most of the drinking water sources, it is but natural that the upper class households have a much greater access to potable water. However, it is important to note that most of them have private water sources either hand pumps or wells. The wealth ranking exercise revealed that ownership of hand pump is considered as an asset. However, there is clear regional difference in terms of provision of hand pumps. Middle income households in Purnea and Madhubani have more access to hand pumps compared to their counterparts in other districts. However, a large number of these hand pumps are shared community pumps. For example, in Belabadan of Purnea district, 6 private hand pumps are shared between the 20 Dhuniya and 18 Churihara households inhabiting the mixed Bela bishunpur *Tola.* Not only is the water shared amongst the resident households, but the maintenance cost is also divided among the user-households. In other words, the private drinking water facilities are more likely to be individual ones in the districts of Rohtas and Gopalganj. On the other hand, a large proportion of hand pumps in Purnea and Madhubani are likely to be shared amongst resident households.

It hardly needs reiteration that use of potable water limits the spread of infectious water borne diseases such as Cholera, typhoid etc. The greater presence of these amenities in Purnea and Madhubani can be directly linked to the lower reporting of diseases in these districts.

Sanitary facilities

The importance of clean sanitary facilities has also been emphasised in various public health related literatures. However, the sanitation facility is dismal in the plains of Bihar. Most people, have in the past and still today, defecate in the open and are thus prone to infections. Though, there has been an increase in the absolute number of sanitary facilities, it is still insignificant as a proportion of the total number of households in the villages. Here too, like in the case of access to drinking water, there are inter-district variations -- the overall number of safe sanitary amenities are much fewer in number and in proportion to the village population.

In contrast to the access to drinking water sources, the sanitary facilities are available in greater numbers in the economically better-off districts of Rohtas, Nalanda and Gopalganj and is almost non-existent in the relatively poorer districts of Purnea and Madhubani (Table 7.7). In fact, in

Table 7.7: Percentage of Households with any Type of Toilet Facility within House

Districts	Old Survey	New Survey
Gaya	4.68	3.83
Gopalganj	0.89	8.11
Madhubani	2.55	5.65
Nalanda	5.83	13.36
Purnea	1.53	1.24
Rohtas	4.30	9.13
Total	3.82	6.04

10 of the 36 villages, we find double-digit figure for the presence of sanitary facilities. This implies that most of the people defecate in the open and the problem is further compounded during monsoons, when a large number of villages are either flooded or are at the very least very wet. This is exemplified in Alalpur-Bishunpur of Gaya district where the whole Bishunpur Tola is cut-off during the monsoons and people find it difficult to find a dry place for defecation. In many others, like Jitwarpur of Purnea district and Bhokila of Nalanda district due to caste-specific tensions the lower caste mainly Mushar and Chamar women are forced to walk great distances to defecate. The wealth ranking exercise revealed that ownership of a sanitary facility is considered as an asset and that only the very rich landlords in the villages have private sanitary facilities.

Immunisation

Both the central and the state governments repeatedly reiterate their commitment to the eradication of a few fatal diseases. A phased programme of free immunisation has been chalked out for all children mainly during the first year (the programme actually covers children up to the age of 10 years) and for pregnant mothers, in which both immunisation as well as iron supplements are provided. However, the ground level reality is very distant from the goals proclaimed by the state.

The PRA report reveals that across the districts, irrespective of caste and class, the pulse polio campaign has been a major success. In every single village, at least two pulse polio camps have been held in the year preceding the data collection at an accessible distance i.e within a 2 km radius. Parents are aware of the need to give this vaccine and the community has been sufficiently motivated to encourage its citizens to give the polio drops. Very few cases of polio were reported in children below the age of 2 years. Though, it is difficult to give accurate

numbers based on the PRA data, about 4 SC children have succumbed to polio in the 36 villages and about 50 children all over the plains seem to be afflicted with this disease. However, most of them are between the ages of 5-7 years.

A majority of the households do not give the other vaccines to their children. Most of the poor and lower caste households, said that they are either unaware about the other vaccines, or even if they are aware, they had not immunised their children. Irrespective of the district, only a few rich and upper caste households give their children the prescribed immunisation. This may be attributed to the apathy of the state in conducting camps, the poor and in many places dysfunctional PHCs and government hospitals where the vaccines are given.

"We all took our children to give the polio drops. We also want our children to be well. But, we cannot give the other *tikas* (vaccines) and *khuraks* (drops). The doctor takes money for that. Only the *Bhuswamis* (landlords) give it to their children".(Chakchatar, Rohtas district)

However, a relatively larger proportion of the households in Rohtas and Gopalganj has given the prescribed vaccinations to their children. Purnea and Madhubani have the lowest percentage of immunised children. The proportion of women taking tetanus injections and iron supplements is even lower. Here too, only women from very rich and 'enlightened' households go for check-up during pregnancy. Most of the women deliver at home with the help of traditional midwives called either dagreens, chamains or dais depending on the district. These women are not trained and have traditionally been assisting women during pregnancy. As a result, neither is the women advised or given vaccines during pregnancy, nor are the children given the prescribed BCG vaccine at birth. Only the very rich who either have transport facility or have a residence in the block / district headquarter are able to reach the hospital at the time of delivery and it is only these women who take the prescribed injections and supplements. A majority of the women have no access to any medical facility and are dependent on the local midwives.

Chamains / Dagreens

In most villages they are low caste women belonging to either the Chamar or Mushar castes. They are paid both in cash and kind and the payment they receive depends upon the ability of the household to pay. In the FGDs, women said that the Chamains have no specific instruments, but use blades, plant rope or cotton ropes to tie and cut

the chord. They are said to have a natural feel and are said to accurately judge the position of the child.

The wealth ranking exercise brought out a very interesting trend in the plains of Bihar. It seems that not only do people perceive their health to be in good hands when they go to private doctors, but feel that the greater the distance one travels, the better one will be looked after. This observation is distressing on two counts. First, that the people no longer trust or even expect the state health machinery to function. Second, for serious ailments they have no choice but to take the patient to towns and cities. In effect this implies that there is a feeling amongst the local population that only the rich and upper class can treat their ill. In fact, in almost all the villages, people with the ability to take their family to a doctor in either in the district head quarter or to Patna/Varanasi are categorised as the very rich and those who have to depend on government doctors are considered very poor. (See chart 1 & 2 – wealth ranking exercise)

Table 7.8 shows the extent to which medical expenses contribute to the impoverishment of the population. Across the district, health expenses is one of the main contributing factor to people's impoverishment. Except in the case of the very rich, an illness in the family very often devastates the family's economic position. The middle and rich households often sell their land and other assets and the poor borrow at exorbitant rates to meet health expenses.

The high dependence on quacks/ojhas/ faith healers and on private doctors for more serious illnesses is in itself a worrying trend as in both the cases the validity of this trust is more often than not misplaced and more often than not based on people's perception rather than fact. Many of these private doctors have been known to be "without sufficient qualification". In spite of this people perceive "better treatment" from them, with respect to both attention paid to the patient and medicines dispensed. In contrast, the state health machinery and its personnel are seen as callous, corrupt and selfish. In such a situation reducing morbidity rates is in itself a problematic task and this is clear from the low percentage of immunisation (with the exception of polio), the low dependence on the hospital and the absence of institutional delivery.

Table 7.8: Percentage of Households Indebted for Health Reasons in Different Districts by Caste and Class

	Gaya	Gopalganj	Madhubani	Nalanda	Purnea	Rohtas	Total
Caste							
FC	5.42	10.14	25.21	0.00	10.79	2.56	12.46
OBC (I)	5.84	4.17	34.92	10.80	8.52	13.87	15.72
Kurmi	_	0.00	_	5.75	0.00	0.00	4.10

Yadav	2.22	8.74	20.00	9.68	2.56	6.99	7.92
Koeri	15.58	5.32	37.50	5.81	_	16.67	10.92
OBC (II)	7.89	21.05	35.24	11.11	2.30	19.02	18.97
SC/ST	7.42	31.10	39.26	9.97	3.33	13.78	17.38
Muslims	3.70	19.30	40.31	0.00	10.38	6.78	16.59
Class							
ALNF	5.13	27.40	41.72	9.81	9.11	12.56	16.75
ALNA	24.32	60.00	34.15	13.04	21.84	38.71	22.50
ALLF	6.60	17.16	35.58	12.55	9.11	9.44	15.99
ALLA	17.14	31.68	49.72	25.00	10.17	36.00	32.68
POORMIDP	13.48	8.03	31.34	8.45	21.21	46.67	14.84
MIDP	9.30	14.29	19.69	5.13	6.25	2.08	10.19
BIGP	3.09	7.52	22.42	0.31	5.49	3.19	8.06
LANDLD	5.76	5.21	20.77	5.15	1.14	3.65	9.87
NONAG	3.83	17.24	41.99	0.00	13.53	10.45	16.20
Total	6.85	14.82	33.36	8.17	8.94	9.54	14.68

Note: Percentage of indebted households for health reasons has been calculated as percentage of households taking loans for health reasons to total indebted households.

Table 7.8 shows that out of the total indebted households, approximately 15 per cent of the households are indebted for health reasons. The indebtedness for health reasons is the highest in Madhubani (33.36%) and lowest in Gaya (6.85%). Except Madhubani and Gaya, the intensity of indebtedness for health reasons is between 10 and 15 per cent approximately for the rest four districts. The level of indebtedness for health reasons in different districts may be explained in terms of three important determinants i.e. severity of diseases, health consciousness, and easy availability of medical facilities.

In terms of caste, the indebtedness is the highest for OBC II followed by SC/ST, OBC I, and Muslims. Kurmi and Yadav are the least indebted households. The class break up of the indebted households shows that attached labour (both cultivating and non-cultivating) are most indebted households. It can be recalled that Madhubani is the district of highest intensity of attached labour, which confirms the high intensity of indebtedness in this district. Free agricultural labour takes the next place with 16 to 17 per cent of indebted households.

Access to Nutritious Food

The increased availability of nutritious food is considered to be of primary importance to the population for it is known to affect the individuals natural endowment and immunity to infectious diseases. An attempt has been made to understand the availability of food to different sections of the population, through the food calendar exercise. Several interesting points came

up for discussion during this exercise such as that there are months of shortage and in some cases starvation, the low intake of vegetables amongst certain sections, the struggle to meet day-to-day food requirements of the family and finally, the impact it has upon their bodies.

In each and every village, (during the wealth ranking exercise) people categorised the poor households in the village as those who do not have sufficient to eat throughout the year and those who have to borrow to meet survival needs during the lean period. Further, and quite naturally, households that had sufficient rations for the year and could eat well throughout the year are labelled as well-off. In other words, the villagers perceive a family as prosperous if they are self-sufficient in terms of food availability all year around. Though, the situation is tragic, it is heartening to note that across the districts, and more so in the economically better-off districts of Rohtas, Gopalganj and Gaya people perceive that there are fewer people who starve in comparison to the past.

It is well known that there is a caste-centric pattern, which determines the eating habits of a populace. This is more so in the plains of Bihar where the lower caste people such as Mushars, Chamars and sometimes Dusadhs are forced to eat the meat of animals perceived as dirty such as rats and crabs during the food scarce months. In contrast, the upper caste households are either non-meat eating (Brahmin and Bhumihar) or eat relatively more expensive meat (Rajput). However, there is no uniform pattern to this. Though, a particular community may be vegetarian in one region, the same community could be non-vegetarian in another. The movement from non-vegetarianism to vegetarianism is associated with the specific position of the caste in the village. For instance, in the completely Yadav village of Chakchatar, Rohtas district, eating habits of Yadav are similar to the pattern of the Brahmins, while in a mixed village such as Kaithi, Rohtas district, the Yadav's eating habits is closer to that of the lower castes.

Irrespective of the district, people perceive a positive change with respect to the availability and quality of food. In the discussions following the food calendar exercise and wealth ranking exercise, many emphatically stated that fewer people are starving today as compared to the past and that many more people now are eating better quality pulses such as moong instead of the inferior pulse like khesari. It should be noted that this might be due to the reduction in the overall area cultivated under Khesari. Further probing, however revealed that reference to better quality food for many is more in general terms - of what they see as happening around them and that very often it did not represent the situation in their villages or in

their lives.

Also from the discussions, it seems that a number of families in many of the villages fail to get sufficient quantity of food. Insufficient production, lack of employment opportunities, natural calamities like floods, inadequate marketing and storage of surplus food seem to worsen the situation. It has been clearly mentioned by the participants in the wealth ranking and focus group discussion exercises that it is very difficult for a 'very poor' or even 'poor' family to have two square meals throughout the year. Because of the caste-class nexus in the plains of Bihar, quite obviously it is the people of the lowest caste who face great hardship in meeting the daily food requirement for their families.

Though the poor felt that the targeted public distribution system is good in principle, in most of the villages people reported that the PDS provisions is at best irregular and more often than not completely unreliable. Except in a few select villages, most of the ration shops mainly distribute only kerosene and sugar. In fact, from the people's statement it is clear that people only depend on the PDS for the above two items and not for staple food items such as subsidised rice/wheat.

To make matters worse, many women's groups (the ones' which participated in the food calendar exercise) stated that their lower social status entitled them to less food and completely excluded them from food items such as soaked *channa* (considered very nutritious and given in the morning to boys). Further, as custom demands, due to the fact that women and older girls eat after the men and boys, very often they seem to be left with nothing more than plain rice. By their own admissions, this has resulted in many of them being anaemic. Surprisingly, though the women have done nothing to change this inequality, a few of them have begun to perceive it as inequality.

Conclusion

To recapitulate, we see that our yardsticks to measure poverty differ from those used by the poor themselves. Poor identify food, land and employment as the most pressing needs. Were they given the choice to select a scheme, they would obviously opt for those that meet these three.The poorest section still remains insecure in terms of two meals a day. This is evident from the kinds of food the poor eat in order to survive. Access to land and employment helps strengthen food security. Those who have access to land obviously need farm implements. Agricultural

labourers no longer want to work as attach labour and aspire to become free wage labour. Possession of consumer durable is seen as sign of well-being but people accord highest priority to reduce basic deprivations.

Food calendar exercise has some very important bearings on the PDS and other food subsidies. Food availability is not the same through out the year for a poor person. There are particular months when food availability is grossly inadequate, which may be termed as 'period of starvation'. August to October are frequently cited as such period (months may vary region-wise).

Both House and land are cited as factors of poverty. This finding is very important since people perceive them not only as assets but owning these assets give them social status, another factor cited by people. It follows from this finding that land distribution programme still holds importance in poverty alleviation. Moreover, people feel the requirement of farm assets too. People not only need house but reasonably good house. It has to be negotiated with them what kind of housing will give them satisfaction. Poor people won't ask for moon if they are made aware of the resource constraints (of course, that has to be justified by cutting down other conspicuous wasteful expenditure by the government) and involve them in planning and designing *their* house.

Though, the figures still reflect the low levels of literacy in Bihar, it is obvious that the awareness about the benefits of education has now spread to all parts of the state, more so in the districts of Rohtas, Gaya, Nalanda and Gopalganj. However, it is distressing to note that in many cases this has not resulted in better enrolment or school attendance and even more distressing is the fact that very often the reasons for this are beyond the comprehension of the people. For instance, quite clearly, the on-going tensions in Nalanda and Gaya have resulted in schools being closed for long periods and the prevailing feeling of fear have almost reduced girl's education to a negligible number. The poor schooling infrastructure such as buildings, irregular attendance of teachers, their lack of interest and the high student-teacher ratio, especially in Purnea and Madhubani also contribute to the people's sense of frustration. In fact, the high levels of awareness about its benefits and the inability of the educational delivery system to live up to these expectations as is happening in the central plains of Bihar can be quite dangerous. The differential access to quality education, even in the villages where education is accessible to all also adds to the problem. For instance, in the districts of Nalanda and Gopalganj people perceive

only private education as beneficial and have begun to question this difference. It is also an unhappy statement to make that in spite of the state's awareness as to the importance of educating the lower sections of society and women, the state seems almost non-committal on this issue. This is eloquently clear from the low proportions of girls and lower caste students in schools and any increase in proportion of these sections in school can safely be attributed to individual efforts and awareness of the people due to their interaction with the outside world.

This study confirms the findings of other studies that the health situation of most of the population in Bihar vis-à-vis India as a whole is dismal. However, in delineating individual factors, which contribute to overall health transition, one finds that Bihar, especially the northern plains have made enormous progress in terms of making potable water available and accessible to a large majority. On the other hand, in terms of basic health infrastructure such as curative medical facilities its performance remains lack lustre at least in terms of quality of services. We have also seen that as in the case of education, people's awareness towards their health has increased phenomenally. High indebtedness for the health reasons shows not only status of poor health services available within village but also it hints about increased consciousness of villagers towards their health status.

Annexure I - Seasonal Food Calendar

1: Village - Andhar, District - Rohtas

Month	**Rice, Pulses**	**Wheat**	**Pulses[1]**	**Potato**	**Onion**	**Sagg**	**Vegitables[2]**	**Pareh[3]**	**Others[4]**
Magh	**********	-	-	**********	-	********** * Gram Khesari	Lauki, Pumpkin, seem	Pareh	-
Falgun	********** *	-	Khesari ***	**********	****	******** Gram Khesari	Pumpkin, seem	Pareh	-
Chaitra	**********	**********	Massor ******	**********	**********	-	-	Pareh	-

		***							
Baisakh	******	**********	Massor ******	*******	********	-	-	Pareh	-
Jaystha	*****	**********	Massor *****	******	********	-	-	-	-
Asarh	****	********	-	**	***	-	-	-	Fish, Rat
Sawan	**	********	-	**	*	-	-	-	Fish Rat
Bhado	**	********	-	*	-	-	-	-	Fish
Aswin	**	*****	-	-	-	-	-	-	***Fish***
Kartik	**	**	-	-	-	-	-	***Pareh***	***Fish***
Agahan	**********	*	-	-	-	-	-	Pareh	Rat
Push	**********	-	-	-	-	********* Tori, Khesari	-	Pareh	=

***Note**: a) number of stars stands for number of stones, as proxy of amount of availability/consumed, put by women participants; b) shaded area shows the months of shortage/starvation*

1. khesari is on low quality pulses; 2. the vegetables are mainly locally grown; 3 pareh is spicy rice soup.

4. most of the non-veg. items are pond products which are collected free of cost by poor households.

2: Village- Pathantoli, District Purnia

Season	**Rice**	**Wheat**	**Pulses**	**Vegetables [2]**	**Fruits [3]**	**Non-vage [4]**
Magh	******	-	*Khesari* [1]	*Cabbage. Brinjal, Potato*		*Mutton*
Falgun	****	-	*Phalgun**	*Potato,Kaddu*		
Chaitra	****	*****	*Masoor ********	*Potato,Kaddu*		
Baisakh	**	**********	*Masoor ****	*Bhindi, Jhimli, Cucumber*		*Mutton, Fish*
Jaystha	*	**********	*Masoor **	*Bhindi, Parwal*		*Fish*
Asarh	****	****	*Moong **********	*Patta saag, Bhindi, Aloo sag.*	*Mango, Jacefruit*	
Sawan	*****	***	*" *******	*-*	*Mango, Jacefruit*	*Fish*
Bhado	***	**	" ***	-		**Fish, Kekra**
Aswin	**	**	" **	-		**Fish, Kekra**
Kartik	*	*	" *	-		**Fish**
Agahan	**************		*Khesari******	*Bringal, Raddish, Potato, Kaddu*		*Mutton, Chicken*
Push	**********		*" **	*Potato, Bringal, Saag, Kaddu*		*Mutton, Chicken*

Note: Same as 1.