SOCIAL ASSESSMENT INCLUDING SOCIAL INCLUSION

CHAPTER I

1.0 The context

Commitments, Concerns and capacities

" *The State shall promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of the weaker section of the people and, in particular, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation"***(Directive Principle of State Policy, Article 46)-1950.**

"Widening global disparities have increased the sense of deprivation and injustice for many. And social mobility and equal opportunity remain alien concepts for far too many people" **(World Development Report, 2000/2001p.VI)**.

*"... But action must also take place with local leadership and ownership, reflecting local realities. There is no simple, universal blue print"***, (World Development Report, 2000/2001p.VII).**

*"A more consistent attention must be given to assessing development progress not simply as a measure of an aggregate of economic activity but as an assessment of the inclusiveness of economic growth, with emphasis not only on the distribution of gains but also on the security, vulnerability, empowerment and a sense of full participation the people may enjoy in social civic life",***(Amartya Sen(2006) as quoted in the World Bank Development Policy Review-'India: Inclusive Growth and Service Delivery: Building on India's Success', p.10).**

"...The poor are like bonsai trees. Though the seeds are the same, they do not grow past a certain height because they do not have enough soil .Poor people just lack the opportunity which is a result of an artificial imposition by the society. Micro-credit aims to rectify this..." **(Prof. Muhammad Yunus, the Economic Times, February, 04, 2006, pp.7.)**

The caveat

Deprivation, injustice and exploitation are still pervasive, local leadership and actions are elite concoctions where as inclusion and empowerments are matter of iterated academic discourse and intellectual luxury. We are moving by inches-miles still uncovered!

In order to extend the context further let us try and explore the various interfaces of poverty.

1.1 The poverty web/trap-the nature of poverty

Let us consider a dialogue between a dominant village leader and a poor Mushar in a Bihar village which explains poverty:

The poor : We are land less, homeless, illiterate and have no definite and regular avenue to get work and earn proper wages. We cannot demand wages according to the law as there is no work always available in the village and if we are fussy about the wage we do not get work next time! So why bother about the wage rate-at least we are getting the work in the village. We are not sure what we can have as the meal next time. We are destitute and damned!

The facilitator : Why are you like that?

The poor : Because we are poor!

The facilitator: But why are you poor?

The poor : We are denied our ration card and kerosene because the same is usurped in by the dominant in the village who has the right connection with the block and who has all the resources to please *the government officials and get friendly with them and enjoy their favor. He is the ration dealer, his wife is the SHG secretary, because she is educated and articulate, and his younger brother is a 'persona non-grata still powerful' enough to manipulate which way the village should go. When the officials come to prepare/revise BPL list or work on the government schemes we have no place to offer them a seat-they prefer to visit the affluent who does not have only the convenient place to make him sit and work he also offers nice snack and tea. We have nothing to offer-we can not offer anything according to their social position!*

The village leader*: They have all the facilities and reservations given by the government. They do not send their children to school, they do not join SHGs. They are good for nothing fellows –they can not escape deprivation! Those who migrate come with money and spend lavishly so long as the money is with them. They would dress up elegantly and wander around fully drunk. They can not improve their lot-not even God can help them!*

The Poor*: You pay us less wages which we accept, you take away government privileges in our name and you call us good for nothing fellows. You tell us how government facilities/bank loans can be harmful in the long range which we fear and do not venture to accept-you discouraging rogues! You always point to and highlight our limitations and never guide us properly. We are sunk in our misery which you rejoice! Then if, after a hard day work, we drink small quarter of peg-this hurts you! You feel bad about us-oh! No, never!   This hurts you not because you feel for us but you are hurt because we ignore your affluence and authority when we are drunk. What better way we can have to enjoy our helplessness!*

The above describes the whirl in which the poor is sunk and trapped. This offers opportunity to appreciate the nature and dynamics of poverty as it currently operates. Conventionally, poverty has been ascribed to inadequate ownership and control over natural resources, lack of skills, technology and capital for further development of resources, lack of motivation, and deprivation of fruits of labor, exploitation and the like. But the experiences suggest that poverty could still persist even if the apparent cause was removed. A careful study of such incongruous situation reveals circular chain of cause and effect relationships and a complex web (Sharma, 1996).

The threads of this web are illusive, and strong. They may remain unaffected even under tremendous pressure. For example, the state may try to cut one of the vicious circles of low investments and low productivity. It provides a package of goods and services to the poor as kind and cash as loan or grants. But even the application involves some expenses. The petty government official does not appreciate and share the spirit of the policy maker. They may demand a cut in the **'undeserved windfall'** to the poor villagers. The current liabilities are the first charge and the creditors keenly wait the day of disbursement. And whether he should incur his current needs by incurring a fresh debt or, for once, pay in cash is a difficult decision for the resource poor to make. That he can wait for the marriage of his grown up daughter does not

convince his wife. He may also discover that he is too late to catch the agriculture season and should wait for the next. And even when everything may go well a nut from his irrigation pump may fall and bring his agricultural operations to a halt when he badly needs water. ***Every agency, in the above context, seems to have done the best in this game of zero-sum for which he is obliged to each one of them. It is his luck or bad luck, which ever way one may like to define but the tricky circuit in the web remains uncut and intact and has become still more vicious (Sharma, 1996).***

The world of the poor is simple one and an organic whole. It does not admit very subtle distinctions of the formal system. Therefore, adoption of one of the conventional frames and associated value laden concepts and terms for understanding the web in which the poor is trapped has serious limitations. It will be preferable to move on with the last man and trace the visible events to their roots in the system and try to identify the motive power behind them. The genesis of some of the forces is in the differential operation, malfunctioning and even manipulation of the macro-system. It is an irony that deprivation is the product of development and a large section of the population suffers from the backlash. The micro-world of the common man is equally complex with iniquitous economic relationships, deep rooted social prejudices, mystical operations of a partisan administration and vicissitudes of even some democratic institutions and processes. Understanding poverty, therefore, would entail looking at the various components at the micro and macro levels which we try to do in the following section.

1.2   The entitlements

The production process is a factor of four basic elements –nature, labor, technology and institutions. The economic system is concerned with the production of goods and services and their distribution. Distribution is reflection of built in entitlements-***what rightfully belongs to whom and who gets what***- of different partners in production and other constituents of the larger system. Individual claims over the four elements can be related only to the labor which adds value to ones individual enterprise while benefiting from the other elements. Exclusive right over natural resources and technologies are, unscrupulously claimed by the people because of their special social positions defined by usurping tendencies.

The distortion in distribution/allocation of resources takes place at three levels. First, the valuation of the additives due to the labor factor is highly biased, subjective and undervalued. Exclusive claims are staked by the individuals and groups on nature's additives due to non-labor inputs by virtue of their privileged and vantage position in the system depriving others of their legitimate share. Thirdly, people may be deprived of even a part of their due returns for their labor inputs not to speak of their usurpation of the benefits due to other elements accruing in their hands. Both these processes operate at various levels-beginning with individuals, through groups and institutions-small and large, to the system as whole. They may be direct or subtle and accepted and legitimized using a variety of rationalizations and subterfuges.

1.3 The divide and category

The process of access and control over entitlements operates, rather subtly, at the macro-system level. The organized urban sector is behaving like western elite based on and benefiting from their intellectual and technological endowments. Then a small group of neo-capitalist farmers have joined the ranks of the organized urban. This group is competing for parity with the members of the organized sector and are unmindful of the interest of the rest of the rural sector. At the other end, the destitute in the urban substratum is really and extension of the deprived in the village who have migrated to the urban centers in search of optional livelihoods. The category, that has emerged in the national economy can be summed up as comprising of urban *organized* and *capitalist farmers* and *rural-unorganized* and *urban destitute* as two major groups. This is the unorganized rural substrata of the society which is the concern and focus under the present planed interventions.

1.4 Institutional anchorage

Human efforts could be exercised through direct personal agency or through collective agency operating through shared beliefs and efficacy, pooled understandings, group aspirations, incentive systems and collective action. In this context institution, which is part of a larger social system and community, is forward looking, adaptive and proactive part of the community. Institutions as extension of the community vision and aspirations play important role in shaping human competencies.

In the current spate of development institutions have been externally crafted or imposed for achieving certain tentative goals. Most of the government regulated or government crafted institutions suffer from being externally determined and not based on the felt needs and priority of the community in which it is supposed to be embedded. Cooperatives and self-help groups, under the government have norms and procedures, prescribed and regulated by the government or other intermediaries working on behalf of the government (Mishra,2005).

Efficacy of institutions would depend on the process of evolution and the facilitators who facilitate them. *The institutions, however, are still elite and hierarchical in nature and do not include the interest of the poor and the marginalized (Arjan, 2005).* Such institutions are not inclusive of the needs, priorities, aspirations, wisdom and capacity of the poor whose interest they are supposed to serve. *Public policy on inclusive development must necessarily provide for substantive space of the poor to be able to express and assert their aspirations and right and at the same time use their potentials and skills to help achieve their expressed aspirations (Arjan2005).*

An inclusive institution has to be self-evolving as against blue- print implanted externally. In the self-evolving frame work there is enough opportunity for reflection, becoming proactive and efficacious. This, further, prepares the stakeholders to articulate structure and process suitable for them and which also helps them keep the institutions sustainable and innovative.

Now, relating inclusive institutions to the pro-poor initiatives let us consider how the institutional interventions have faired over the time. What has been the dynamics of institutional development and process of inclusion and to what extent the hierarchical (class) considerations have derailed the efforts at inclusion. Our observations and analysis are considered in the context of self-help groups graduated into micro-finance and livelihoods.

1.5 Interventions

The experiences of the earlier years are apparently fraught with inconsistencies. The poor have been treated like objects of piety and underdogs and doled out certain **incoherent, sporadic** and **uncoordinated doles** considering that they should keep their belly comfortably satiated at least for some time. The deepening dependency was consciously created and sustained. This undermines the creative instinct of the human beings **(more so of the poor and dispossessed)** and their right to live with dignity

and élan. All this happened under well-orchestrated design to keep the poor invisible and attribute the poverty to their lack of capacity and skill. Consolations such as -"they lack education and articulation", and therefore …"they have to be taught, at least for the time being, before they are fully prepared" sound hallow and smack of conspiracy to keep them indefinitely unprepared and dependent.

1.6. The village level plan : Plan for and by the poor!

The village level planning is a dynamic process of articulating local needs, especially the needs of the rural unorganized category of the poor and fine tuning them with the local endowments including the natural and human. The planning is often construed to be highly specialized and skill based exercise. This traditional *'elite centric'* approach negates the scientific foundation of considering all human beings as having the needs and capacity to excel given the right kind of supportive environment (Bandura, 1997, 1999).

The village plan has to consider micro endowments and realities and at the same time depend on the capacity and skill within the local communities' poor to take charge of their affairs.Dependency on the highly skilled people to effect their realistic planning and would ultimately give birth to intermediaries and middle men which has been usurping the entitlements and camouflaging and hedging their participation. Such an exercise would not be emancipative and would keep the poor away from using their innovations and creativity to weave a realistic planning for their development and emancipation.

1.7 Participative planning and action (PPA)

As a tool to attain inclusive action plan representing the needs, aspirations and skills of the poor participative approaches and tools have been quite effective. Their application, however, is becoming notional and routine. The approaches are process oriented and therefore are intensive and reflective. The bureaucratic interventions marked by targets and expediency do not always feel comfortable with the approach and therefore go by the bureaucratic norms and world view. Professionals/consultants working under them have the compulsion to complete the assignments 'on time'. Also the bureaucratic framework is centralized, authoritative and formal and therefore not compatible with the spirit of PPA. Empowering the poor and the dispossessed following this

would prove tricky. However, they are inevitable to stimulate involvement of the poor and thereby ensure their full ownership and accountability.

1.8   The emerging scenario

Seen in the above context, the poverty scenario seems to be characterized by uneven entitlements over sources of production and assets of the poor. The privileged and the elite unjustifiably usurp in the entitlements over common property over which the poor and marginalized should have equal legitimate right. The institutions meant to play emancipator's role for the poor have strategically been co -opted by the elite and the privileged with concocted participation of the poor. State interventions planned and designed for their empowerment have proved less than instrumental to stimulate collective action. The planning process being top down and bureaucratic is not fully compatible with and based on the specific needs of the poor. They are ritualistic, insensitive and mechanical. The growing impetus of the participative approaches in planning have been glossed over as the time bound targeted orientations of the interventions do not allow adequate time and flexibility. This being the emerging scenario where the poor is trapped into the vicious web, there is a need to look at the web and try to unravel and demystify the web using appropriate approach and strategy. The need is to involve the poor in articulating strategies and facilitate enabling environment where the poor prepares for a decisive onslaught with adequate capacity, élan and sense of partnership.

CHAPTER II

2.0 The Bihar Rural Livelihoods Project(BRLP)

2.1 The project

The overall goal of the program would be to support GoB's strategy of reducing rural poverty through support for productive activities and investments. The objective of the proposed project would be to improve livelihoods and empower the poor through:

- To enhance social and economic empowerment of rural poor

- To increase income of the rural poor by developing institutional capacity among rural poor and their organizations to access and negotiate better services, investment and assets from Banks and public and private sector agencies.

- To increase the size of rural livelihood economy in project area by making investments in productive assets, value chains and market support mechanism.

2.2 The project's main components proposed are :

Institution Building :

This component will build the institutional capacity of :

i.   The poor-mobilizing the poor into SHGs and federations and improving their quality and credit worthiness, transparent and profitable organizations, and developing commodity-based producer organizations,

ii.   The support organizations- strengthen existing institutions like Women's Development Corporation and COMFED (Bihar State Cooperative Milk Producers' Federations Limited), and establish pro-poor support organizations, and Micro-Finance and Enterprise Training Institute. This would enable a wider and better choice of service providers for the poor and lay the foundation for development of good quality micro finance providers in Bihar, and

iii.   Capacity building of all stakeholders including Panchayats for effective and inclusive service provision and community infrastructure.

2.3 Approach and strategy

The project emphasizes creation of an enabling environment for the capacity building of the poor and other stakeholders, institutional synergy and convergence. It is designed to build on the existing learning from the state and outside in empowerment and institutional development of the poor and would, at the same time, facilitate innovation to be up scaled and integrated based on their performance and response of the poor and other stakeholders. To achieve the above participation of and partnership with the poor is encouraged and envisaged as part of an enabling process for which conducive pedagogy and strategy would be allowed to evolve.

2.4 Expected outcome

Going by the key objectives and approach as proposed the intervention is expected to generate the following outcome:

- Mobilization of the poor around livelihoods issues and institutional development to anchor, support and sustain their mobilization,

- An incapacitated and empowered group of poor fully enabled to take care of and assert their entitlements over natural, physical, human, social financial assets and manage their affairs through persuasion, negotiation, peer group pressure and advocacy,

- Creation of social and financial endowments in the form of social and livelihoods fund and
- Enhanced income leading to their economic and social development

CHAPTER III

3.0 The Social Assessment study

The Objectives

(i)   Identify those sections of the Bihar society who are socially marginalized and economically worst off and will be the target beneficiaries for the project with special emphasis on the Scheduled Tribes (if applicable);

(ii)   Analyze the current access of these poor to social and economic services and institutions, identify key constraints including inter and intra-caste conflicts in the mobilization of the poor into social and economic organizations;

(iii)   Analysis of inclusion and exclusion of poor and women in existing institutional arrangements including Self Help Groups, Cooperative, other user groups and Panchayats.

(iv)   Provide guidance on the mobilization strategy for collectivization of poor; and the requisite investment to be made by the project–asset creation, capacity building, access to credit, technical assistance, tie– ups with public and private sectors, with respect to specific social and producer groups; A specific focus on Mushahars and other vulnerable groups and constraints to their social mobilization and specific strategies required to mobilize them.

(v)   Prepare a separate Tribal Development plan for supporting the ST population co comply with World Bank's safeguards policy on indigenous people (Only if the districts selected for implementation have a considerable target tribal population); and

(vi)   Understanding of the propensity of conflict and its impacts on the poor. Analyze the existing sources of social and economic conflict in the six project district (including Maoist, caste etc) and strategies to be used in social and economic mobilization to reduce the potential of conflict.

In sum the basic objectives of the study are:

3.1   Identify those sections of the Bihar society who are socially marginalized and Economically worst off

3.2   Major obstacles in preventing the poor from moving out of poverty

3.3   Constraints in mobilizing the poor

3.4   Institutions of the vulnerable groups

3.5   Indicators of exclusion

3.6   Factors responsible for inclusion/exclusion of the poor from the existing institutions

3.7   Conflicts and types

3.8   Impact of conflict on the poor

3.9   Conflict mitigation mechanisms available in the villages

3.10   Method

3.10.1   The approach

The key objective of the study has been to capture the dynamics of exclusion and poverty from the villages of Bihar based on certain parameters (Annexure I-TOR) suggested by the project. We also considered this as opportunity to develop familiarity with the stakeholders and extend the familiarity to develop ownership with the project subsequently. Therefore, all possible segments of stakeholders were taken into account in the spirit of partnership. We have considered a flexible and process oriented approach which means that we prepared and moved with adopting an exploratory framework and used the relevant tools to capture the scenario. We preferred to collect all the demographic and developmental data from the available sources-census, government records and files. At the next level we visited the given developmental blocks and had consultation at various levels and decided on the villages. The consultation helped in identifying the set of three (3) villages characterized as what follows:

3.10.2   Sample

1.   One development block, as suggested by the BRLP, in the identified project district

2.   One village consisting of the upper caste people as the demographically dominant population,

3.   One village consisting of the intermediary and backward castes as the demographically dominant population,

4.   One village consisting of SCs as the demographically dominant population

5.   In case of Purnia where there is substantial tribal population we replaced the SC population criteria with the ST population.

In each of the villages we had group exercises using participative tools at different locations depending upon whether the given village had identifiable and marked cluster of villages with distinct demographic characteristics. Interactions were also held during the transect walks and informal interactions around the village. Anecdotes, informal and casual observations and introjections were identified and picked up to capture the ground level dynamics and realities during the visit.

3.10.3   **Coverage**
At the end of the exercise we had the following coverage

Sl. No.	Districts	Blocks	Villages	Cluster(s) within the village
1	Gaya	Bodh Gaya	Koshila Turikala Shivrajpur	Brahmin,Rajput,Koeri, Pasi Musahar, Pasi Musahar, yadav,,kumhar
2	Nalanda	Harnaut	Lohara Balwapar Pakar	Bhumihar,Kurmi, kahar, Musahar,Dushadh Kurmi,Musahar,panheri, Dusadh, Beldar,Musahar
3	Khagaria	Alauli	Alauli Amba Dahma	Yadav, Koeri,Musahar Koeri,Musahar,Dusadh, kanu Musahar
4	Purnea	Dhamdaha	V1 Pupaspur	Santhal,Rajput,Mushahar,Kaystha

			V2 Amari Das tol	Tatama, Brahmin
			V3 Bishunpur Diyara	Santhal,Yadav,Rajput,Tiyar
5	Muzaffarpur	Bochahan	V1Hussainpur	Gareri, Mushalim, Mallah, Koeri, Mochi, Dhobi Lohar,Teli, Pasi, Dhanuk ,Rajput
			V2 Balthi Rusulpur	Bhumihar, Dusadh, kurmi, Nonia, Yadav
			V3 Gopalpur Gopal	Muslim (pasmanda), Kalwar, Kumhar, Teli, Mochi, pashi, Dusadh Dhobi
6	Madhubani	Jainagar	V1 Jainagar	Muslim (pasmanda), Brahmin, Rajput, Yadav, M allah, Noachi, Dusadh, Halwai, Suri, Tantikoeri Sonar, Dhanuk, Dhobi, Cristen,Barai, Nai, Kasera, Mali,Lohar, Amat Pasi, Khatik
			V2 Bhadaur	Muslim (Pasmanda), Kewat, yadav, Suri, Lohar,Dusadh, Mochi, Sonar,Tatama, Bhumihar, Kaystha Rajput, Laheri, Teli
		Rajnagar	V1 Paliwar	Yadav, Mushahar, Badhai,Dusadh,Mochi, Kewat,Dhanuk, Brahmin, Bania, Kaystha Rajput,
			V2 PatraTol Satghara	Mahapatra, Sonar, Nai, Teli, Dhanuk, Kaystha, Brahmin, Mali

The demographic details of the sampled villages covered under the study

Districts	Blocks	Villages	No.of H.H	Households			
				Upper caste	Middle caste	Lower caste	Minority
Gaya	Bodh Gaya	V1 (Koshila)	111	41	20	50	-
		V2 (Turi Kala)	201	01	108	92	-
		V3 (Shiv Rajpur)	217	02	87	128	-
Nalanda	Harnaut	V1 (Lohara)	639	97	340	202	-
		V2 (Balvapar)	143	02	78	63	-
		V3 (Pakar)	179	01	75	94	-
Khagaria	Alauli	V1 (Amba)	1007	-	421	586	-
		V2 (Alauli)	1626	30	1357	239	-
		V3 (Dahma)	130	-	-	130	-
Purnea	Dhamdaha	V1(Pupaspur)	150	52	03	95	-
		V2(Amari Das tol)	605	02	03	600	-
		V3 (Bishunpur Diyara)	375	25	40	310	-
Muzaffarpur	Bochahan	V1Hussainpur	446	10	34	69	50
		V2Balthi	206	65	14	127	-
		V3(Gopalpur Gopal)	245	-	69	74	102
Madhubani	Jainagar	V1(Jainagar)	1212	315	539	101	257
		V2 (Bhadaur)	300	09	121	40	130
	Rajnagar	V1 (Paliwar)	260	12	146	102	-
		V2 (Patratol Satghara)	153	111	42	-	-

3.10.4 **Tools**

We used the followings as tools for the study:

1. Secondary sources data from the government documents and record including census report (2001)

2. Literature review

3. PRA tools, basically transects, social and resource mapping and ven-diagram

4.   Triangulation using peer groups and stakeholders consultation at the village and block levels. The consultations were attended by the villagers and members of various institutions who participated in the study, the PRI representatives, block level government officials including the BDOs, members of the society. The consultations first, considered the tentative findings, elicited their feed back and additional inputs to complete the information/data gap. We also tried to have unstructured open discussion touching upon various aspects of inclusion and exclusion. We observed that this offered a conducive forum for the people representing various section of the society to express themselves. Even most marginalized members of the society could be seen opening up and even refuting some of the concocted facts.

3.10.5   Steps

The study had the following steps:

- Discussion on the subject with the BRLP staff members and visiting members of the World Bank,

- Discussion with the project and fine tuning design, sampling, tools and co-ordination,

- Field visit including interaction with the district and block officials and group work in the villages,

- Triangulation at the block level through stakeholders consultations

- Sharing with the project representative

- In-house consultation and sharing

- Draft sharing with the project including the World Bank team and

- Final report

CHAPTER IV

4.0 Result

4.1 The plan of the report

We plan to present the findings in the sequence of the questions raised in the above section. We examine the questions in the light of our observations as well as analysis verifiable indicators available. We make conclusions based on the aggregate observations and at the same time use specific examples and cases to support the conclusions. We shall substantiate and or refute the findings using extreme comparisons as well as by central tendencies. We have not used any statistical analysis. The findings are basically qualitative.

4.2 Who are the socially and economically marginalized and what are the indicators?

The official indicator of poverty is based on certain consumption indices explained in terms of full intake of food containing certain calorific values. The government mechanism has categorized the population, based on these indicators, between those having the comfortable level of consumption and those who have not. In the popular poverty and economic parlance they are called Below Poverty Line (BPL) category meaning they do not enjoy certain level of consumption and Above Poverty Line (APL) meaning those enjoying the designated level of consumption specificities.

This did not, however, auger well in the villages we studied. There were people, cutting across caste and class categories, who averred that something has gone amiss while preparing this category. There are manipulations and partisans adopted at different levels resulting into fallacious list of below poverty line categories. Instances were reported from ,for example, Harnaut in Nalanda where an entire SC community has been left out of the BPL category where as those having enough land and other endowments have been conveniently put under the BPL category. To put an anecdote from the stake holder's consultation in Harnaut:

"This (the APL-BPL) business is an eye wash and a conspiracy by the rich and the privileged. It

has helped the people with right connection usurp in the privileges meant for the poor. One would not be surprised, in some selected cases, to find the name of the land lord in the BPL list where as his ploughman and the daily laborer under APL category". The rich and the privilege know how to hedge ones worldly possessions using the existing loopholes in the government procedures. Even if a revision has been ordered this is not going to change much. The baboos(the officials visiting the village, will not visit our place as we can not even offer a proper place for them to sit. The community building is under lock and key with the former Mukhia. The only option is the sitting place of the village elite who will also offer tea and snack besides explaining things in the understandable language of the Baboo . The baboo will definitely influence them.

In the light of the above we considered BPL as inadequate and there fore we preferred not to go by the BPL definitions, which would have meant referring and examining the BPL list to identify the poor. In all the 18 villages that we studied the poor and the marginalized present a distinct pattern. Look at their physical location -they are located within the village boundary which clearly segregates them from the relatively better off people within the village. In terms of demography the poor are represented by the distinct caste groups which can be clubbed under a general category of Scheduled Castes (SCs). Among them one can segregate them based on their ownership of different endowments including access to natural assets and resources- land and dwellings. Bihar's rural economy is dependent upon land and agriculture. Therefore, complete landlessness or not having adequate land is one of the key reasons of poverty in rural Bihar. The SC and ST community members are reported to have deficient landed endowments. Among them have the worst resource endowments. Except the dwelling houses they have no land. Mushahrs are followed by other members of the SC communities like Dushadhs, Chamars, Pasis and the like who have better endowments but still have physical segregation with the caste Hindu communities. They are the poor and marginalized communities. The Santhals(ST) in Purnia are yet another category which are poor not only because they have limited landed endowment but also because they the institutions and agencies do not support their existing entitlements.

Distribution of per capita land among the caste groups (in acre)

Districts	Blocks	Villages	No.of H.H	Land Per Capita				Maximum Land Holding Size			
				Upper caste	Middle caste	Lower caste	Minority	Upper caste	Middle caste	Lower caste	Minority
Gaya	Bodh Gaya	V1 (Koshila)	111	3.40	1.66	0.74		20.1	4.5	1.5	
		V2 (Turi Kala)	201	-	1.40	0.37		-	8.0	3.5	
		V3 (Shiv Rajpur	217	-	1.05	0.61		-	3.0	2.0	
Nalanda	Harnaut	V1 (Lohara)	639	2.84	1.90	0.33		10.5	76.0	9.5	
		V2 (Balvapar)	143	3.16	2.55	0.00		4.5	33.0	0.0	
		V3 (Pakar)	179	2.0	1.6	0.2		2.0	23.3	1.80	
Khagaria	Alauli	V1 (Amba)	1007	-	3.2	0.05		-	60.0	4.00	
		V2 (Alauli)	1626								
		V3 (Dahma)	130	-	-	1.53		-	-	1.53*	
Purnea	Dhamdaha	V1Pupaspur	150			3.9				13.0	
		V2Amari Das tol	605	0.5	0.2	-	-	1.0	25.0	-	-
		V3 Bishunpur Diyara	375	2.0	1.5	1.3	-	8.0	10.0	20.0	-
Muzaffarpur	Bochahan	V1Hussainpur	446	6.0	1.0	0.4	1.2	18.0	16.0	5.0	8.0
		V2Balthi	206	7.7	0.0	0.0	-	157.0	0.0	0.0	-
		V3Gopalpur Gopal	245	-	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	0.1	0.0	1.0
Madhubani	Jainagar	V1 Jainagar	1212	2.1	0.8	0.1	0.1	20.0	12.0	2.0	1.0
		V2 Bhadaur	280	1.9	0.6	0.0	0.5	5.0	5.0	-	5.0
	Rajnagar	V1 Paliwar	260	1.3	1.2	0.0	-	8.0	10.0	-	-
		V2 Patratol Satghara	153	0.6	0.1	-	-	10.0	2.0	-	-

* Land is under control of Musahar but is not registered in their name. All most all the households are allotted equal land of 1.53 acre

The land distribution pattern shows a highly skewed situation with land ownership aggregate as well per capita concentrating among the traditionally rich people from both the upper caste and backward caste communities. This, however, does not rule out the presence of poor among the other backward and extremely backward communities. The poverty, however, in all such cases is related to and based on the ownership of land.

As the above table indicates SC communities have fragile land ownership which is in many cases limited to land for dwelling houses. An interesting aspect of the land distribution among the SC communities is complete landlessness among the Mushar communities. The tribal communities

(Santhals in Purnia) have land under Sikmy which is a kind of share cropping and lacks legal sanction. Let us consider the following table :

Per capita land among the Schedule Caste (in acre)

District	Block	Village	No. of SC H.H.	Total land holding	Dusadh		Pasi		Mochi		*Musahar*		Dom		Dhobi		ST	
					Total land	Per capita land	Total land	Per capita land	Total land	Per capita land	*Total land*	*Per capita land*	Total land	Per capita land	Total land	Per capita land	Total	Per Capia
Gaya	Bodh Gaya	V1 (Koshila)	50	34.5	7.6	1.5	13.3	0.4	-	-	*13.5*	*0.8*	-	-	-	-	-	-
		V2 (Turi Kala)	92	9.5	8.5	0.5	1.0	0.2	-	-	*0.0*	*0.0*	-	-	-	-	-	-
		V3 (Shiv Rajpur)	128	81.5	-	-	1.0	0.2	0.3	0.3	*75.0*	*0.75*	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nalanda	Harnaut	V1 (Lohara)	202	66.5	66.5	1.6	-	-	-	-	*0.0*	*0.0*	-	-	0.0	0.0	-	-
		V2 (Balwapar)	63	0.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	*0.0*	*0.0*	-	-	-	-	-	-
		V3 (Pakar)	94	15.2	6.6	0.2	8.6	2.8	0.0	0.0	*0.0*	*0.0*	-	-	-	-	-	-
Khagaria	Alauli	V1 (Amba)	586	28.0	15.5	0.1	-	-	-	-	*10.0*	*0.0*	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	-
		V2 (Alauli)	239	11.0	-	-	-	-	3.0	0.0	*4.0*	*0.0*	1.0	0.1	-	-	-	-
		V3 (Dahma)	130	200.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	*200.0*	*1.5*	-	-	-	-	-	-
Purnea	Dhamdaha	V1Pupaspur	112	275	-	-	-	-	-	-	*0.0*	*0.0*	-	-			275.0	3.9
		V2Amari Das tol	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	*-*	*-*	-	-	-	-	-	-
		V3 Bishunpur Diyara	300	400	-	-	-	-	-	-		*-*	-	-	-	-	400.0	1.3
Muzaffarpur	Bochahan	V1Hussainpur	59	29	12.0	0.5	3.0	0.3	12.0	.04	*-*	*-*	-	-	2.0	1.0	-	-
		V2Balthi Rusulpur	127	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	-	0.0	0.0	*-*	*-*	-	-	-	-	-	-
		V3Gopalpur Gopal	74	0.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	*-*	*-*	-	-	0.0	0.0	-	-
Madhubani	Rajnagar	V1 Jainagar	109	10.0	10.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	*-*	*-*	-	-	0.0	0.0	-	-
		V2 Bhadaur	20	1.0	1.0	0.0	-	-	0.0	0.0	*-*	*-*	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Jainagar	V1 Paliwar	102	1.0	1.0	0.1	-	-	0.0	0.0	*0.0*	*0.0*	-	-	-	-	-	-
		V2 Patratol Satghara	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	*-*	*-*	-	-	-	-	-	-

The figures in the table show that the land ownership is concentrated only in few hands among selected castes. The land ownership to the Mushahars among the Scheduled Caste and Santhals among the Scheduled Tribes is notional. There is interesting dynamics showing how even the present land rights have been distorted. Either the land entitlement is missing or they have been twisted. Let us consider the following two situations:

Land to the Mushars in Dahma-Khagaria	Land to the Santhals in Purnia
The Dahama village in Khagaria has dominant Mushars community with 200 acres of land surrendered by an erstwhile Zamindar to the government at the fag end of his life. The government could not reallocate the same to the Mushars under whose vicinity the land is located. De-facto they are the owners as they till the land but their entitlement has not been regularized by the government. This keeps the Mushars on the tenterhooks all the time and the officials use the opportunity to harass the Mushars.	Birendra Kumar Singh,nee,Balo Yadava,the up-pramukh (deputy chief of the Panchayat,Purnia) announced that every year there is auction of water bodies for fishing. The tribal communities have hardly ever had the opportunity to win the bid. This is not only because of financial reasons but because the government agencies are easily influenced by the local elite and rich farmers to twist the processes in their favor.
In Bodh Gaya the Bhudan land given to the Mushars is useless and infertile. Several of the plots are in the bed of the rivers which they can neither cultivate nor put to other use. The notional largesse of the government to the SC communities speaks of the government's intentions which does not seem to be serious.	The recent announcement of the government to open sugar mill in the area has further made things hot-up. Taking advantage of the situation the rich farmers, whose land were with the tribal communities under Sikmey (share cropping rights), have announced that they would donate their land for the common cause of industrialization in the reason. All that they (the rich farmers) intend to do is to donate the sikmy land which in fact prove severe blow to the tribal rights of land ownership.

Besides the ownership the SC and ST communities have been found to be missing access to the modern agricultural technology and inputs which could enhance the productivity of the land what so ever it is.

The ST community in Rupaspur(Dhamdaha,Purnia) village have occupied cultivable land which is under limited control but they are unable to get benefits of the land . They don't have latest tools and knowledge of agriculture practices. The impliments and modern scientific inputs available for the villagers is not available to them as they lack awareness as well resources to have them and use. However, the various welfare schemes particularly for the indigenous people have already been introduced. The government schemes are cleverly misappropriated by the elite. Their nexus with the government agencies help them in their effort at misappropriation . For example –a rich farmer persuades a Santhal to apply for pumping set in the block office. He also spends money required to process and oblige the officials. AT the end he (the Santhal) gets pumping set machine under the scheme. After a couple of months the rich farmer offers the Santhal wine and money to enjoy. He repeats the same again and again. As the end the rich farmer takes over the machine which was his ultimate design .

Then their participation in education and skill development –they are not educated and therefore the benefit of emerging science and technology is not reaching them.

Let us examine the educational status of the different category of the villagers in the sampled villages we studied:

Educational status among the caste groups in the sampled villages

Districts	Blocks	Villages	No. of H.H	Upper Caste			Middle Caste			Lower Caste			Minority		
				GA	MBG	LBM	GA	MBG	LBM	GA	MBG	LBM	GA	MBG	LBM
Gaya	Bodh Gaya	V1 (Koshila)	111	12	28	104	01	11	22	-	04	14	-	-	-
		V2 (Turi Kala)	201	-	-	01	3	17	43	-	03	17	-	-	-
		V3 (Shiv Rajpur)	217	02	01	-	-	08	46	-	06	31	-	-	-
Nalanda	Harnaut	V1 (Lohara)	639	31	57	104	27	71	104	5	13	47	-	-	-
		V2 (Balvapar)	143	-	02	06	08	23	97	-	02	09	-	-	-
		V3 (Pakar)	179	-	02	05	01	21	33	-	01	21	-	-	-
Khagaria	Alauli	V1 (Amba)	1007	-	-	-	18	47	73	02	12	35	-	-	-
		V2 (Alauli)	1626	9	21	38	45	129	183	01	10	45	-	-	-
		V3 (Dahma)	130	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	2	15	-	-	-
Purnea	Dhamdaha	V1Pupaspur	150	05	08	17		01	03	-	04	14	-	-	-
		V2Amari Das tol	605	-	-	-	-	01	03	-	02	73	-	-	-
		V3 Bishunpur Diyara	375	05	65	47	03	10	52	02	18	65	-	-	-
Muzaffarpur	Bochahan	V1Hussainpur	446	03	14	33	05	41	63	-	6	18	02	14	21
		V2Balthi Rusulpur	206	11	18	41	-	3	18	-	-	2	-	-	-
		V3Gopalpur Gopal	245	-	-	-	-	08	63	01	09	52	-	09	43
Madhubani	Jainagar	V1 Jainagar	1212	56	295	412	40	136	983	03	19	72	01	19	36
		V2 Bhadaur	280	01	07	15	05	27	76	02	08	52	-	07	42
	Rajnagar	V1 Paliwar	260	01	01	13	07	71	122	-	01	48	-	-	-
		V2 Patratol Satghara	153	27	43	155	03	11	67	-	-	-	-	-	-

GA- Graduate and above, MBG- Matriculate but below Graduate, LBM- Literate but below Matriculation

The figures in the table indicate lower level of educational endowments among the lower caste communities. The middle caste communities have comparable level of education with the high caste communities. Lower level of education is one of the deciding factors in asserting rights and entitlements. This is more important in case of availing government facilities and benefits of state sponsored programs.

Critically Marginalized Communities

In our study we came across two critically marginalized communities-(1)Mushars and (2) Santhal Tribes in Purnia. While the Mushars are the most deprived and isolated with almost zero asset the Santhals in Purnia represent exploited lot uprooted from their natural root. Both the Mushars and the tribals suffer asset deficit access to entitlements especially provided for them. The situation of the tribals in Purnia is very complex as they have a better land availability for them. But they suffer deprivation because of their over all small population and a long history of exploitation and marginalization. The support available under the centrally sponsored schemes is not adequate as the state does not reciprocate with the matching support. A detailed discussion about their present lot is given in the annexure(s)-{2, 3}.

Why are they poor and marginalized?

As part of affirmative action the government has offered several special enabling interventions. The marginalized are not in a position to take full benefit of such affirmative actions. The better aware, articulate and influential persons appropriate and usurp this support using manipulative and extra legal maneuverings. Lack of organization and collective action keeps them at way and marginalized. Almost unanimously people informed about the irregularity in public distribution system where the influential manipulates taking over the PDS and then organizing distribution according to his/her will and convenience. If the Mukhiya is angry he/she can threaten stopping the distribution of mid-day meal. The officials PRI nexus further deteriorates the scenario.

The poor in sum:

- Are deficient in land and other natural resources endowments

- Have lower level of education

- Have unemployment and

- Are unorganized to protest against denial of entitlements

Poverty and Exclusion: The Vicious Links

As part of identification of poor from among different caste groups we segregated data on caste/class and vulnerabilities as well as attributing factors. Considering their qualitative nature with small sample size they can not be generalized but they definitely indicate a pattern. Let us consider them in the following sections.

To begin with let us locate the poor among the different caste categories:

Table I :   Who are poor in the sampled districts?

District	Caste groups		
	Upper caste	**Middle caste**	**Lower caste**
Gaya	Brahmin	Kumhar, Kahar, Badhai,	Mushahar ,Pasi, Mochi
Nalanda	Brahmin	Yadav,Kahar,Beldar, Kumhar, Badhai, Panheri, Tanti,Nai	Mushahar, Mochi, Dusadh
Khagaria	Brahmin	Tanti, Mali, Laheri, Kumhar, Nonia	Mushahar, Dom, Mochi, Dusadh
Purnea	Kaystha	Tatama, Tiyar	Santhal,Mushahar
Muzaffarpur	-	Gaeri, Lohar, Nonia, Dhanuk, Kumhar, Mallah,	Mushahar ,Pasi, Dhobi, Dusadh
Madhubani	(paliwar) Brahmin, rajputs	Dhanuk, Badhai,Mallah,	Mushahar, Mochi, dusadh
	Patrtol Mahapatra,	Sonar, Dhanuk	-
	Bhadaur(nil)	Mallah, Lohar	Mochi ,dusadh

	Jainagar(Rajputs and Brahmins)	Dhanuk, Barai, Mali, Lohar, Sonar	Mochi

The poor are characterized by a depleted asset base, weak social capital and network and unfavorable institutional and procedural support. The findings of the research suggest that people from the SC/ST community, by and large, are poor. The outcome of the affirmative action has benefited a few caste categories like the Dushadhs and Mochis. The high caste communities have been found to be better off . They enjoy the asset base, institutional support and social capital and network. Among the high castes Bhumihars and Rajputs have the stronger asset base and political clout because of education and a tradition of professional buoyancy. Among the middle caste groups there is surging economic and political clout especially among the three dominant caste groups including –Yadavas, Kurmis and Kushwahas.

This pattern, however, is not seen as uniform and depends upon the geographical locations and vulnerabilities. For example, the flood prone Madhubani renders every body hapless irrespective of the caste and community affiliation. One can see large number of people from Mdhubani migrating to out side places as a result of inundation of their land during flood which used to be their only source of livelihoods. The rehabilitation initiatives of the state is inadequate to neutralize the adverse effect of the flood. Even other wise depending upon the numerical strength different communities exercise their economic and socio-political clout.

Table II   : Major Vulnerability

District	Vulnerability	Caste groups		
		Upper caste	**Middle caste**	**Lower caste**
Gaya	Droughts-Extremism-	-Agriculture effected. Fear of nuxal .	• Shrinking job opportunities - Problem in animal keeping	-Loss of wages. -Problem of drinking water -Disease
Nalanda	Floods & droughts	-A agriculture effected.	-Agriculture effected. Loss of physical connectivity	-Loss of wages -Court cases -Diseases
Khagaria	Floods Fire and diseases	Both the floods and droughts	Floods and droughts Badly	Cut off from the main streams

		badly effect the agriculture economic	effect the farming process and employment in agriculture sector	Loss of wages Credit and indebtedness and levies. Borrowing situation.
Purnea	Floods and Diseases Fire	Mobility and farming effected	- loss of human and animal levies. - Loss of employments - Victim of disease	- Cutoff from the main streams. Loss of wages and levies. Unavailability of Credit - Indebtedness Court cases
Muzaffarpur	Floods	-	- loss of human and animal levies. - Loss of employments Victim of disease	- Cutoff from the main streams. -Loss of wages and levies. -Borrowing situation.
Madhubani	- Floods - Drought - Extremism - Sickness/ Diseases - Death	Both the floods and droughts badly effect the agriculture	- Floods and droughts Badly effect the farming process and - employment in agriculture sector	-Loss of mobility and wage -Opportunities Spread of different diseases like cholera an d diarrhea - During the flood death rate increases. If the head of the household dies the whole family suffers

The people in the different regions have different vulnerabilities which cripple the local population. Depending upon how frequently the vulnerabilities strike and what is the individual and institutional support available to cope with the vulnerabilities poverty casts its dreaded net. In the absence of institutional support the personal resources are used which may get depleted and poverty would deepen and deepen. For the people from

the lower caste categories who have limited personal resources and inadequate institutional support poverty becomes perpetual and stifling.

Table III : Attributing poverty: Why are they poor?

District	Caste groups		
	Upper caste	Middle caste	Lower caste

| Gaya | - Brahmins amongst the upper castes are 'the poor' due to small numerical strength, smaller land holdings lack of institutional support
- Educational position is good but almost all the qualified persons have out migrated. | - The castes identified as poor in Gaya district are almost landless and educationally backward.
Female education is poor. Similarly, the higher education is negligible. Only 6 persons register under the category of matriculate but below graduate, however, the graduate and above are absent.
- Most of the intermediary castes poor like potters have traditional occupations but they can not compete with the market based on emerging technologies. | -They are either landless or have generally un irrigated small land. Of the total land (-acres) in the villages the lower castes own only 125.5 acres of lands. Per capita land registers less than an acre (0.74).
-They are educationally worst off. Out of total 270 SC households in the villages, only 10 persons are registered as matriculates and 62 persons as non-matriculate.
Education for female is a dream
- They are mainly wage labourers and have no extra skill and knowledge to have jobs.
-The institutional support and patronage is almost negligible to them. |

			- Physical health is the main wealth for them, which decides every walk of life. If he is ill ,has no work and wage. It is commonly said in the Magadh region -" Mushahar can not be seen with white hair." This is why because they die before reaching the old age due to non availabiity of nutritional foods.
Nalanda	Almost the similar situation prevails with Brahmins in Nalanda. Their numerical strength as single caste marks them as minority. They have some sort of institutional and political patronage and kinship but the dominance of larger group (Kurmi& Bhumihar)pushed them away	-Kurmi is the dominating caste in the Nalanda district that tunes others to dance. - The castes identified as poor in the district are almost landless, educationally backward, and deprived of Govt. benefits and Insitututional supports.	

| Khagaria | They were managers of landlord earlier but due to land occupied and shifting of landlords, they have no other job to do.
- They are landless
- Demographically marginalized
- Less patronage from the administration and political institutions. | -Landless
-Withdrawal from the traditional Occupations
-Accorded secondary level status within the group
-Educational backward.
-Lack social patronage and kinship. | -No access to the natural resources.
-Normally Victims of fire break out due to thatched houses.
-Illiteracy
-lack of developed job skill.
- No regular wage employment .
-Lower wage payment
-Ill Health and sickness.
- Non-availability of nutritional foods.
-Deprivation of benefits from govt.
-Deprived of kinship and patronage from the institutions.
-Non participation in development process.
-No savings and no life insurance.
-No proper platform to protest.
- Victim of floods for at least six months in a Year. |

| Purnea | - | -Landlessness
-poor educational status.
-Lack of patronage and kinship
-According second level of treatment within the group.
-Almost no saving.
 Weak network with the institutions
-Non-participation in developmental work.
- Withdrawal from the traditional occupations.
- Lack of other skills and capacity building opportunities.
-Deprivation of govt. facilities.
-Victims of natural disasters like floods. | -Barring access to the natural resources.
-Victims of fire breaking out.
-Illiteracy
-lack of latest job skill.
- lack of regular wages .
-Less payment of wages
-Illness and sickness.
- Insecurity of nutritional foods.
-Deprivation of govt. facilities.
-Lack of kinship and patronage from the institutions.
-Non participation in development process.
-No saving and security of life.
-No proper plate form to protest.
- Victimization of floods for at least six months in ayear. |

| Muzaffarpur | - | -Landless
-Withdrawal from the traditional Occupations
-Accorded secondary level status within the group
-Educational backward.
-Lack social patronage and kinship. | -No access to the natural resources.
-Normally Victims of fire break out due to thatched houses.
-Illiteracy
-lack of developed job skill.
- No regular wage employment .
-Lower wage payment
-Ill Health and sickness.
- Non-availability of nutritional foods.
-Deprivation of benefits from govt.
-Deprived of kinship and patronage from the institutions.
-Non participation in development process.
-No savings and no life insurance.
-No proper platform to protest.
- Victim of floods for at least six months in a Year. |

Madhubani	-unequal distribution of land within the caste. -Education spread is also un equal.	-per capita land is very marginal(). -Educationally poor and high illiteracy specially among the women. - secondary level of social status. - Weak network with institutions and political forums. Non awareness regarding govt. schemes and facilities.	- Completely landless and educationally backward. - Non acceptance and ignorance in the society. - Lack of information and awareness. - Poor health and lacking facilities. - No savings and life insurance. Absence of future orientated attitude.

The information in the above table confirms our beliefs that the poor are poor because of weak asset base and fragile institutions, non-supportive and non-compatible state's policy initiatives. The vicious link between lack of resources, institutional support and state policy define the magnitude and direction of poverty which needs to be analyzed and interventions suggested.

4.3 Institutions of the vulnerable groups

In the areas studied we identified the following institutions of the vulnerable groups besides their caste/community-based institutions. The institutions include:

- Self-help groups (SHGs)
- Co-operatives and
- Milk producers associations

Their presence and spread in the respective areas are as what follows:

Districts	Blocks	Number of institutions

		SHGs	SHG Cooperative	Milk cooperative	Fisheries cooperative
Gaya	Bodh Gaya	165	01	01	-
Nalanda	Harnaut	146	01	NA	-
Khagaria	Alauli	150	01	01	-
Purnea	Dhamdaha	102	-	-	-
Muzaffarpur	Bochahan	821	03	NA	01
Madhubani	Jainagar	447	-	12	02
	Rajnagar	720	01	NA	01

Institutions are extension of the community vision and aspirations and are shaped the value systems and endowment of the community. Such institutions play important role in shaping human competencies and development of the people. We tried to assess and analyze the performance of the above institutions in the sampled villages. In the following section we make a presentation of their functioning.

Self-help groups: We can categorize the SHGs in the sampled villages according to membership along gender as well as caste. This means the composition of the group would look like:

Caste/ Category and sex wise participation in SHGs in sampled villages

Gender/Caste configuration	Single caste	Multi caste
Men	15	02
Women	43	32
Mixed	10	06

The single caste with the membership of articulate and informed SHGs have been prompted by the available benefits under the SGSY program of the government. As has been stated earlier the BPL is a highly manipulated category and therefore the members

of such groups are not necessarily from the BPL categories. Inclusion of members from the non-BPL category is also allowed to some extent and this is what brings the relatively affluent members to the group. These groups, in our study, have been found to be functioning well on the indicators of internal management (not governance), saving, inter loaning, bank linkage and enterprise development. They have the management capacity to run their affairs. However, the affairs of the groups are centered around the key leaders who are one or two. The spirit of collective leadership is missing. In certain cases for example:

Lohara under Harnaut block has a SHG, which has members from the same community (Kurami-an intermediary land owning caste). In an 11-member group 10 are men and one woman. The group has mobilized internal saving and a loan from the local bank. The loan has been mobilized from the bank that is used to develop and manage ponds on lease. The ponds are used for fish farming where as the bunds and embankments are used for vegetable cultivation and plantation. Interestingly a lone group consisting of Bhumaihar(an upper caste land owning community) members has collapsed. The success of the single SHG has also not influenced others to come forward and emulate the same. Neither the present group has ever tried to spread and expand beyond the current activities. It is important to note that the village has a substantial number of Mushars(90 families),Chamar(15 families) and Dushadhs(60 families) non of them are mobilized around SHGs.

The official mindset of the SGSY-SHG is reflected in examples where even the dominant members from the weaker section exploit their fellow members by developing nexus with the government/Panchayat functionaries. Let us consider an example:

Darbari devi a Dusadh(SC) women and PDS dealer mobilized the women to form SHG in her village. An NGO facilitated her to form the SHG and also to link with the bank. She herself became the office bearer and started keeping the records and other day-to-day activities relating to the group. The members of the SHG entrusted her to do any things for the welfare of the institution. While being a PDS dealer and SHG secretary she built up and nurtured social network with officials. In the process the SHG was graded and the group was approved subsidy. When the money came to the group Mrs Darwari Devi strategically created conflicts among the SHG members to manipulate the money in her own favor and some other favorite members. The conflict turned into violence and some of the Dalit members withdrew them- selves from the group. However, the money released to the group was distributed only among five members and Mrs Darwari took 50% share of group money.

Villagers brought this matter for discussion with the research team that Darwari devi and her husband have encouragement and protection from both administration and politicians. So they feel relaxed and don't bother to distribute the PDS items to we poor people.
They are economically sound. They have even received Indira Awas, first, only because of nexus with officials and local politicians. They can spend money and oblige the elites to get their protection that we can't afford to –the members informed!

The functioning of the women SHG groups, by and large, face capacity problems. First, these groups have been facilitated by some agencies with a view to avail of the proportionate financial benefits provided for the facilitators. After the grading when the facilitation amount have been released many of the agencies have neglected the groups and they remain uncared and unattended. Even the initial facilitation did not have the components of systematic capacity building including strengthening of internal governance.

Distribution of leadership of SHGs

Distribution of Leader of SHGs in the sampled villages

Districts	Block	Villages	No.of H.H	No. of SHGs	Function aries	Functionaries			
						Upper caste	Middle caste	Lower Caste	Minority
Gaya	Bodh Gaya	V1 (Koshila)	111	04	12	2	08	2	-
		V2 (Turi Kala)	201	-	-	-	-	-	-
		V3 (Shiv Rajpur)	217	07	21	-	15	6	-
Nalanda	Harnaut	V1 (Lohara)	639	02	06	03	03	-	-
		V2 (Balvapar)	143	04	12	-	12	-	-
		V3 (Pakar)	179	-	-	-	-	-	-
Khagaria	Alauli	V1 (Amba)	1007	12	36	-	33	03	-
		V2 (Alauli)	1626	09	27	-	25	02	-
		V3 (Dahma)	130	02	06	-	-	06	-
Purnea	Dhamdaha	V1Pupaspur	150	-	-	-	-	-	-
		V2Amari Das tol	605	12	36	-	36	-	-
		V3 Bishunpur Diyara	375	-	-	-	-	-	-
Muzaffarpur	Bochahan	V1Hussainpur	446	08	24	-	16	06	02
		V2Balthi Rusulpur	206	04	12	-	-	12	-
		V3Gopalpur Gopal	245	03	09	-	02	01-	02
Madhubani	Jainagar	V1 Jainagar	1212	25	75	12	48	15	-
		V2 Bhadaur	280	01	03	-	03	-	-
	Rajnagar	V1 Paliwar	260	12	36	-	06	27	-
		V2 Patratol Satghara	153	03	09	06	03	-	-

The above table indicates that the leadership of the majority of the SHGs is concentrated in the hands of middles castes whose relationship with the SC are not very congenial. Taking advantage of the provisions of APL inclusion in the SGSY ,perhaps, the dominant middle caste in the above villages are taking over the leadership role to the exclusion of the SC/ST in the leadership role.

The grading process is complex and current scenario is quite alarming as the officials, in a hurry to complete the targets, are approving and supporting such schemes and enterprises that are neither compatible with the local situation nor economically feasible. In some cases where the majority members are dominant castes, assets are dumped over the members belonging to the weaker section of the society as per the preference of the dominance caste.

The systematic process of mobilization and organization of the poor by the BRLP team in Purnia offers example of how the SHG could be prepared to act as instrument for change. We did not, however, come across similar process in other BRLP districts.

Our understanding is that the SHGs, in all the districts we studied, have not evolved as the autonomous institutions of the real poor with shared vision, appropriate governance structure and conducive capacity building strategy. Seemingly successful groups do not seem to represent the institutions of the real poor but concocted category of poor who, in our view do not qualify for such support at the cost of the real poor whose interests seem to be getting glossed over and neglected.

Multipurpose cooperatives: We could not come across several examples of cooperatives. We understand that cooperatives, as institutional variants of the farmers and the poor, are not well placed to cater to the emerging needs of the farmers. The few we came across present a rather gloomy picture of cooperation. Take for example the Multipurpose Cooperative of Koshila, Bodh Gaya.

An articulate upper caste dominant villager from Koshila(Bodh Gaya), initiated the cooperative. The cooperative was an opportunity to extend his personal ambitions and earn financial spin-off. and a position of social prominence The design, from the very beginning, has been interesting and well thought. He enrolled members to the cooperative based on their trustworthiness to 'swim and sink' with him. They were also offered a good share from the earnings. Then they enticed the local poor promising them economic benefits subsequent to their membership. They were trapped into membership. To remain president *'unopposed and unquestioned'* the key person encouraged combination, which could neither question nor flout.

Convinced of his invincible position he would manipulate the meetings, loan requirements, loan disbursement, issue of permit for agri-inputs like fertilizer and insecticides and other facilities. It is reported that the affairs of cooperative were secretly conducted during the night hours when the close coterie came to share and distribute various benefits. The government officials were interested to have their share and let the operation continue.

All hell broke, however, when the police came to book the defaulters of loans. Those were the poor people including the Mushars who had never taken the loan and whose

signature was forged by the president. No way! They had to pay by their nose for the loans they never took. This is such a great disincentive to the poor to get into cooperation of any kind!

One can observe similar example of how PACS could be twisted to favor a few influential persons at the exclusion of the genuine farmers who are supposed to be benefited from the PACS.

A PACS in Satghara Panchayat of Madhubani district has been functioning for the last 10 years. The members of the PACS are fade up with the role of the existing institution. Many of the members say- 'PACS do not serve the farmers but serves the office bearers and businessmen. In the last ten years we never got any benefit from the PACS . The PACS gets allotment of fertilizers and other items from the Biscoman. But half of the items are sold in black at district deport. However the rest of the items reached to the PACS go down. Here, the local businessmen are available to purchase in black. Thus, most of the goods indirectly reach the businessmen. It is only because the businessmen have got face membership and offer commission to PACS officials. This has become loot center for the officials. Officials do not bother for small and marginal farmers. At the time of voting they make us promise not to repeat the mistakes again. But after election they forget their promise.

This could be one of the three examples we encountered but all of them follow the same pattern **'concocting cooperation'** of those who have no fear to be caught. Cooperation generates social capital. In case the current pattern of cooperation this is proving very divisive and factional. The scenario in Khagaria,Gaya, Madhbani,Purnia and Nalanada are almost the same except that the actors and perpetrators are different representing a different socio-economic strata and interest groups but the story of cooperation is the story of **manipulation, concoction and fraud** where the vulnerability of the poor is intense and all pervasive. As usual they(the poor) remain at the receiving end.

The fisher farmers cooperatives

We came across fisher formers cooperatives in Muzaffarpur(1) and Madhubani(3). All of them present a uniform pattern of concoction and manipulation in which instead of fishermen they are manipulated to serve the interest of the rich and dominant:

In Madhubani,Jainagar block has a fisher men cooperative registered some 30 years back. The members are from the four castes of Beldar,Mallah,Bind and Kewat and the circle officer is the ex -officio secretary. The government directive suggests preference to the communities belonging to the above castes in allotting fish ponds.

After some time a set of influential people got another Fishery Cooperative Society registered under the Society's Act . Government has also given affiliation to this newly registered cooperative. While the fishermen owing allegiance to the key persons work as the laborers the key persons enjoy all the privileges of the Fishermen Cooperative Society.

The milk producer's federation

Cooperative of Milk Producers Federation is one of the flag bearing institutions in the state. With its scientific management and innovative diversification of portfolio this has emerged as an institutional niche. The village level networks of milk producers make this institution effective instrument for poverty mitigation. We had opportunity to examine the functioning of two milk cooperatives one each in Khagaria and Nalanda. Although the village level milk cooperatives are sure sources of livelihoods adding to the income of the marginal and poor farmers the governance structure reflect the known dynamics of exclusion of the poor. We present two cases from the above districts-Khagaria and Nalanda:

Khagaria	Nalanda
The Milk Producers Cooperative in village of Khagaria was created in the year 1991 with women as exclusive members. The women from the dominant Koeri community have been doing quite well for a year in managing the affairs of the Samity They also created a clear visibility for them as the spearhead of the white	*The story from Nalanada indicates that Milk Producers Samity in the village is an extension of the dominant leadership within the village who uses the Samity for asserting and consolidating his social and subsequently political base.* *He mobilizes members who are amenable to his design and wishes and are ready to be trusted*

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<td>revolution. This was a clear case of gender integration into technology and management of one of the key sectors of livelihoods and economy.

Suddenly, the men realized that they themselves could be members and as enough visibility has been created there was not much to be done except following the routine activities. They showed the women members door and sent them back to the home and hearth.
This is a sad commentary on how gender inclusion is used for initial benefits and visibility. May be women were used in the hope that some extra benefits-more in terms of economic and financial spin off- could be generated. The women for them did add important instrumental value but this was not appreciated which makes the initial involvement of women as opportunistic and selfish!</td>
<td>partners in his activities. The norm of reserved membership from among the SC communities and women are conformed to but with due care where the consideration of 'own' and 'others' is tactfully maintained.

The governance of the Samity is extension of his whims and caprices. The time and place for the meeting is decided according to his convenience.

The general members averred that although the samity is beneficial to the farmers it is not getting the optimum benefit because the president has developed a nexus between the truckers, the supervisors and the officials. Genuine members, more so the weaker sections of the society, suffer where as the president strengthens and consolidates his social and political position.</td>
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Inclusion in the PRIs

PRIs have assumed greater significance as agencies of local decentralized governance. The inclusion of the weaker section has been ensured through constitutional affirmative safe guards. In Bihar reservation of 50% of the seats for women in various category is reflection of the commitment of the state for the inclusion of the poor and women. Our interaction in the field suggested the followings:

- The constitutional provisions have helped the poor occupy important positions in the PRIs. They are partners in the crucial decisions for the areas and have gained the authority and opportunity to have their way within the governance,

- This constitutional authority and privilege has helped them acquire substantial social position as well. People from high caste people are showing considerable regard by inviting them to social functions to which, earlier, they were not allowed even and making respectful gestures are all clear and palpable. During our stake

holders consultations we could notice that there was noticeable shift in the response of the rich and the socially dominant class to these representatives. When the chief of the block level Panchayat Samittee visits the venue in his official car with his family members including the wife and the children there is shower of praise on his profile and manner and how nice his children look and behave. The family members are taken special care during the lunch and his presence is solicited as essential for the consultation- *(Your views are very important Sir! and without you who else can enlighten us)* are some of the usual refrains one could hear. This makes the shift clear and vivid!

- The apparent sense of inclusion is not fully internalized, however, and the despise and distaste for the poor becomes wide and clear where ever and when ever there is slightest opportunity. The common alibis for their exclusion are lack of articulation, education and (manner in the social interactions).

- The dominant communities, in spite of the constitutional safe guards, often use repressive and intimidating measures to silence their overtures. We consider an example from the field:

The former Mukhiya of Charan Panchayat in Harnaut put up a dummy candidate for the election as the seat fell under reserve women category. A women from the SC community was made to stand as Mukhiya. She won and her win is attributed to the support of the former Mukhia. She is a Mukhiya, no doubt, reflecting the constitutional provisions in right esteem but the real power is said to be still with the former Mukhiya who is an influential backward caste leader. The office, the official stamp and the letter pad is also kept at the former Mukhiya home who dictates decisions which are neither her nor reflects the interest of the poor community to which she belongs.

The other side of the story is still more interesting. The member of the Panchayat Samitee from the same area is yet another SC woman. The former Mukhia is not happy with her. According to him she has proved tormenting in not supporting his candidate and not falling in line with him. He is said has blocked mid -day meal program, issue of ration card and old age pension. This has created embarrassing situation for the Panchayat Samity member as she is not able to influence the local Panchayat in delivering the services to the poor who doubt her political clout now.

Take another example from Bodha Gaya which explains how village governance under the Panchayati Raj system has fallen in to the influential person who is exploiting the poor with small dysfunctional doles to the detrimental collapse of the system. During the stake holders consultation a young men –**Ram Pravesh Manjhi**-from the Mushahar Community contested the observations of a Mukhiya who was explaining how a gram Sabha is organized and how it is beneficial to the people's needs:

RampPravesh: Sir! Hamako bhi kuchh Kahana hai(I have to say something also)!

The facilitator requests: Please go head!

Ram Pravesh: Sir! there is no Gram Sbaha meeting. It is the household confabulation between the Mukhia and the ward members who are invitated at the home of the Mukhia on the pretext of seeking opinion or offering them some contract –a personal favor the ward members often succumb to. The Mukhia then takes their signature and also the accompanying villagers who agree to sign in good confidence in the hope of getting some favor. Their signature supports the Mukhia as the proceeding is written as the proceeding of the Gram Sabha meeting which is supposed to reflect the needs and aspiration of the local villagers!

The Mukhiya: (Trying to rationalize) would say. The fund under different programs are limited and can not satisfy all the villagers. If we call all the villagers there will be big mess and pandemonium. It is always better to involve the (Samjhdar-aware and articulate).What is wrong!

The case explains lack of sensitivity and much limited perspective about the inclusive representation of the people in the PRIs.

4.4 Factors responsible for the inclusion/ exclusion from the existing institutions

The exclusion of the poor, in Bihar, is not by accident. It has evolved over time and has been shaped by several factors including:

- **Permanent settlement:** The permanent settlement during the British rule offered unrestricted freedom of authority in the hands of the Zamindar to realize revenue from the tenants. This acted as a disincentive for production and productivity for

the producer of the wealth. On the other hand the permanent settlement between the intermediary and the state restricted the revenue generation. Which in turn restricted revenue expenditure in this area. Thus the lack of history of revenue administration and minimal expenditure in the spheres like education, health, home retarded the development in these areas. In terms of social relationship this has been brewing hostility between the tenant and the Zamindars that extended in to an ongoing tussle for authority-the dominant would not allow the weak to position of equality.

- **Impregnable power structure:** With the above dynamics in operation the power structure, based on possession of material resources, authority and asset, that evolved, created a situation, which promoted distance, and hierarchy based on how much endowed one was. This (the power structure) subsequently became impregnable enough to allow inclusion with deficient lineage, resources and deficient authority. This has influenced the dynamics and process of inclusion.

- **Missing culture of dialogue:** There has been systematic erosion of dialogue and communication that also became hierarchical. As result the poor have no opportunity to be heard and explain his/her points of view. A clear situation of maintaining silence between the poor and the rich evolved which ultimately got socialized and integrated as social norm-*'we speak you listen and not the vice versa'* is the evolved rule of the game.

- **The number game goes against the marginalized:** In case of tribal population in Bihar which is not substantial (.90%) the state dos not have clear policy for them. Most the components under TSP are proportionately supported by the Government of India only if the state has a clear plan. Other benefit like special provisions within the decentralized governance is not available to them because they are not scheduled because of their numerical minority. Under the circumstances the tribal communities suffer a minority position without special effort to keep them in properly cared.

- **Dysfunctional response to authority:** The dawn of democracy offered opportunity for the poor in this part of the world as well. They started questioning the authority in different ways. This had fall out in two possible directions –first the state authority using repressive methods mowed down the poor. Response to

repression, at places, has been violent. This created further alienation and withdrawal from the state affairs. Many had subdued response that preferred to migrate to a better location and escape.

- **Deepening dependency through planned interventions**

The planned development initiatives of the government, since the early fifties, talked of **'arousing expectations of the poor'** and help them realize their aspirations. This, erroneously, was attempted to be realized using the hierarchical and centralized bureaucratic governance frame work. Programs were designed from above without considering their needs and compatibility with the local situation. The alien nature of the programs and their complex nuances always placed the poor in dependency stance. Additionally, bureaucracy has been elite and authoritarian in orientation and reflected the existing social structure characterized by caste and class considerations. This helped in not only maintaining the hiatus but also tried to perpetuate and tighten the authority using the formal authority it was bestowed upon by the state.

- **Mobilization for inclusion not part of the development planning**

Because the development planning was top down and because the local institutions have been co opted the development planning has been an elite affair and projected the same as highly specialized subject not to be ventured by the poor who seemingly lacked education and technological wherewithal. As a result including poor into planning process has been an alien notion what to talk of their mobilization for the development planning.

- **Sporadic and limited examples of civil society involvement in mobilization for inclusion**

Civil society initiatives in the mobilization of the poor for inclusion has been limited, region specific and sporadic. Such lack of initiatives have been result of a limited perspective of development. For example, movements to acquire land right over the surplus land of the Bodh Gaya created a convincing ripple but could not mobilize the

poor to move forward to the logical end. Similar is the case in Purnia where the alienation of the tribal communities has not influenced the civil society to take up the issue in its right perspective.This has been a lost opportunity as after the land right s were given there was no consistent follow-up initiative to develop the land for its productivity. The leadership was also not formidable to use and turn this success into major mobilization of the poor across the state. There has also been deterrents created by the state to silence the emerging voice and the mobilization got stunted after a while.

4.5 Constraints in mobilizing the poor

Not withstanding the mobilization efforts being made under various ideological umbrellas the exclusion of the poor continues to be repressive and hard. The elite hold on sources of production and the institutions continue to be major stumbling block. We conclude the followings:

- **Uneven asset and endowments:** The poor have been the greatest victim to the uneven access and control over the natural resources. Our own field data confirm that the land ownership is highly skewed in favor of the rich and the upper and middle caste dominant communities. The question is the question of basic survival and not to venture out in defiance of the inconsistencies.

- **Lack of institutional support:** State, as the largest institution of the people, is not secular and non-partisan. It is favorably disposed to the elite and the rich. The law of the land is easily twisted and the judiciary interventions are lengthy and costly. As a result the poor is often at the receiving end should he/she challenges the uneven endowments and institutional apathy.

- **Elites maneuverability overwhelming:** As has been said earlier poverty is a web which is maintained and perpetrated using a number of manipulative tools and methods -some are subtle, some apparent and crude while others could be complex and discreet. The elite manipulation includes putting a façade of sympathy and dissuading and discouraging them not to go for confronting the authority. 'Let us not get into such complex procedures of seeking institutional support etc.-they are not easy and possible. One must live in peace and enjoy what

ever the Almighty has offered' are some of refrains selectively used by the elite to dissuade the poor from making efforts. Convinced of their seemingly supportive stance the poor prefers to reconcile and compromise.

- **Unfocused tools and strategies:** The mobilization of the poor in the contemporary period is devoid of any focused tools and strategies. This tool does not evoke any interest in the poor who has been bogged down and disillusioned by these antics for long. The elite including the state agencies also realize the innocuous nature of such tools. They consider them as inconsequential as well.

- **Social mobilization initiatives: Stepping stone of the leaders for larger political gains and spin off:** The social mobilization initiatives are constantly losing credibility among the poor. This ,the initiators use a means to a larger gains-ascendancy into the value free mainstream politics. The Msuhars in Gaya informed that all the leaders from their community are not sensitive to their isolation once they have been able to get our mandate through our votes. They all feel the mobilization by the civil society is for mobilizing fund and that by the politician for the electoral goals. We stand to lose any way-they aver!

4.6 **Major obstacles in preventing the poor from moving out of poverty**

We agree with the research findings of several of the psychologists and social activists, for example ((Bandura, 1997, 1999;White,1959), who believe in the intrinsic capacity of the human beings and their eagerness and potential to improve their present situations. During our study we identified basically four obstacles in preventing the poor from moving out of poverty. They included:

- **The state and its policies:** The 29th report of Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe Commissioner, Government of India, held the state and its ante poor policies as insensitive and repressive which obstructs and stifles the people's initiatives. Besides the basic fallacies the state policies have always been promoting dependency and there has been hardly a space for innovation and enabling environment where the poor could, proactively, take initiatives for coming out of the poverty,

- **The elite capture of the policies and institutions:** The state's unequivocal stands to grant justice and equity have not been without stifling conditions. And these conditions are outcome of the elite's dominance in crafting and scripting various provisions to achieve justice and equity.

- **Poor's inherent overwhelming disabilities:** The poor are born with constraints and miseries and through a discreet socialization process learn to internalize *'they are poor because they are born poor'* and that makes them believe that *they will continue to be poor.* The elite caucus, through a vicious strategy, let them confirm that they are different. For example when a mat/carpet is spread in a village meeting the upper caste educated and privileged elite will be seated in at the centre, a middle caste in the outer periphery and the unfortunate lower caste people will occupy the space in the fringe even if there is space still available some where near the middle. The same thing happens during a social or religious function in a Bihar village. And this is not noticed and this does not make us uncomfortable-why? Because this has been accepted as given and well internalized. The propensity to change the pattern would decide the magnitude and direction of change that could take place. The poor considers this as given and may be a minor deviation -we feel this is has great implication from the perspective of changing the pattern. The loss of self-esteem and sense of reconciliation is what is keeping the poor moving out of disparities and poverty.

- **The civil society action is less than adequate:** Civil society action, in supporting the poor coming out of poverty is quite important. In Bihar scenario civil society is truncated and fractured in their orientation, unfocused and tend to work in the narrow project mode. The three districts we studied did not show sense of innovation in the much widely implemented **'SHGs-under SGSY'**. We do not agree that government programs have no scope for flexibility and one must not look for change potential in them. While partially agreeing with the above contention we feel the civil society could bring in innovations and influence the policy through examples and pressure which was not found any where. The SHG-SGSY can be exploited as an opportunity for the civil society to prepare and mobilize the poor for their multi pronged attack on social and economic inconsistencies rather than clamoring for subsidies and doles. We did not come

across a single example of such mobilization by the civil society. This, we consider as one of the factors keeping the poor in a *'make believe'* situation unable to chart out a clear growth path and road map.

4.7 Conflict, types of conflict and its impact on the poor

Interestingly there has been no apparent evidence of conflict in the three districts we studied although there is a volatile situation at all the three blocks. In Khagaria, the poor Mushars of Dahaman have been using the government land for housing and also for agricultural operations. They do not have land rights given to them. The said land, earlier, belonged to one land lord who surrendered the land to the government in preference for doing the same in favor of the Mushahrs. But because the Mushars are the dominant population in the village, they have forcibly occupied the same which they cultivate till now. This could be a potential source of conflict.There is always lingering sense of conflict with the state itself .The village, branded as Naxlite, is often the hunting ground for the police and the magistracy if any thing goes wrong any where around. This conflict is one sided and there is no possibility of the villagers retaliating the excesses.

In Nalanda a former Mukhiya is coercing the present Samity member, also a Dalit member into silence. His grudge is that she has not voted his candidate and has been opposing him. He has stopped issue of red card in the area especially to those who are considered her people, does not allow any development work etc. The women Panchayat member is not laying down but is helpless. In the local situation the former Mukhia can not be persuaded to respond to reason-he would not like the women member from a Dalit community to show her constitutional clout. The conflict is there but it does not get reflected into serious retaliation.

4.8 The conflict resolution mechanisms available in the villages

The institutions and mechanism of local level, community based conflict resolution are on the wane. The three districts showed a uniform pattern of local institutions preferring

indifference and neutrality. Persuasion and reconciliation does not seem to work. The police is known for its corrupt practices which suits the rich and the dominant and the judicial interventions are time taking and costly as well. For the minor innocuous issues there is still some temporary arrangement at the local level but in all such cases the rule of the game is –*"the poor must suffer and surrender"* if they have to keep their 'dignity' intact. Being alienated, maintaining indifference to the machination of excesses are considered safe and surest way to keep the conflict at a way and ones *ijjat* (the prestige) and integrity intact. This does not; however, auger well for a democratic society with much professed vision for justice and inclusion.

CHAPTER V

5.0 Interventions suggested

Bihar Rural Livelihoods Project (BRLP), in our view, is focused to building and institutionalizing human and social capital base interfacing several sectors-all contributing to ensuring adequate freedom for access and control of livelihoods

opportunities for the poor and the marginalized. We have seen how poor and marginalized suffer exclusion which follows complex dynamics touching upon social, cultural, institutional and governance aspects. BRLP, to be able to effectively accomplish its objectives, must consider various aspects and interfaces. All the factors at the macro-meso and micro should be considered. We try to put forward some of our tentative suggestions to be tried keeping the context in to utmost consideration. The suggestions should not be taken as blue prints, which do not work, in a plural an diversified context.

5.1   **Influencing and sensitizing the macro-micro environment:** BRLP is going to function in the same socio-cultural and governance milieu where the memories of implementing development programs are quite fresh. The memory reflects manipulations, twisting, and lack of transparency and exclusion of poor. The programs for the poor have been anchored and supported by different state and civil-society institutions which have not been able to set proven examples of shift in the above pattern.

BRLP should project itself as a program with a difference. Which means there should be clear and straight message about the project and its components and role and responsibilities of different stakeholders. The project has the risk of being perceived as a *'resource abundance'* opportunity. And if one goes by the learning from the programs with resource heavy connotations people would be 'waiting in wings' using similar dynamics of cornering a misappropriating the resources.

Clarity and transparency can be maintained by sharing of the project objectives and also by working out joint strategies to use the available opportunities create maximum spin off for the poor.

- A district and block level consultation involving various stakeholders is suggested. We learnt from our block level stakeholders consultations that information gaps are bridged, differences and expectations moderated and some level of agreement reached during such open interactions.

- This would be used to critically analyze the current program performance and how best they can contribute to ensure inclusive development. This would also offer an opportunity for working out joint action plans at appropriate opportunity.

5.2 **Institutional collaboration:** The project will have to have the institutional interface without glossing over or compromising its core values and objectives. Panchayati Raj institutions are key institutional players in development governance. Gradually they are assuming larger responsibilities and fortified with as constitutional mandate have influence over the people. PRIs also have the examples of not being inclusive and non-partisan at places and in certain sectors. Completely allowing the project to be influenced and taken over by them would be risky. At the same time, Panchayat mandated by the constitution, have formidable and decisive clout. They should not feel left out and alienated. There are examples of some of the Panchayat heads being quite instrumental in carrying out successful development activities. Many of them are left behind not because they prefer and like being left behind. They lack functional understanding about the program components and the processes owing to their lack of adequate education or training subsequent to their election.

BRLP should have a healthy relationship with the Panchayat and should be able to convey to them the project and the rule of the game that makes this different from the other programs. They should be sensitized and oriented to let the program have their supportive interface and also optimize the benefits of the project for the poor which are their genuine constituency. During the stakeholders consultation we could find that the head of one of the block level Panchayats showed lot of eagerness to develop his area and when they were asked whether they had any idea about what has to be done in a concrete way, there appeared some amount of hesitation to express their inability to appreciate what was to be done in actuality. We proposed if there was an opportunity to jointly work out need assessment of the area through collective exercise there was overwhelming willingness to attempt one such in which the Panchayat was able to support the program financially and logistically as well. We propose:

- Organizing series of orientation and sensitivity training for the willing Panchayat functionaries in the light of the objectives of the project without

muddling into and interfering with the core mandate of the project. They should be encouraged to use the learning in implementing similar program under their exclusive mandate and also help the project achieve an inclusive development objectives,

- Yet another concrete program could be carrying out micro-planning and base line preparation with their involvement, which will lead them to appreciate the core of inclusive spirit; how even the poorest of the poor could contribute to planning and development proactively . This way we move with people's own development action plans that have the potential of being inclusive in nature.

- During the process identify potential local leaders (men and women) and further invest in their development of capacities. Such leaders could become local innovators or contribute to the formation and consolidation of an **'innovation forum'** subsequently.

The above are proposed to develop and expand an enabling environment with innovation and creativity being the central focus. This would go a long way in bringing about a change in the mindset toward favorable conditions for objectivity and inclusion.

5.3   Culturally compatible media campaign and effective communication

As entry point activities are launched as suggested above use of effective media and communication strategies could enable the above process. In the vicious development environment which has been created, over the period, the culture of dialogue using local folk cultural forms are dissipating. Participative strategies and tools are useful but not often adequate to help people break their indifference and apathy. Bihar districts have had long tradition of folk cultural forms -each region enjoying its own form. We found women have composed songs and are singing them on selected occasions. They, however, had more ceremonial use when the guests were visiting. They need to be internalized and made part of normal routine of the groups. BRLP should promote use of aggressive media campaign using folk forms strategically fine tuned to specific activities in different regions and its people. We propose:

- Identification of folk cultural forms and creative individuals during the micro-planning and base line. Encourage them to revisit their cultural endowments, fine tune them with the current project components and requirements and synthesize some innovative form compatible with the emerging requirements,

- Identify local literary individuals and encourage them to compose folk songs, poetry, stories covering the theme of the project and spread them through their channel using their cultural clout,

- Organize cultural consultation and workshops to develop and disseminate such materials and disseminate them to the larger audience within the project areas,

This, we feel, would be of tremendous use and may work well in creating enabling environment.

5.4. **Sensitization and orientation to the project staff:** We appreciate that the project must have identified and appointed professionally competent staff for the project. They must, also, be carrying rich professional experience with them. However, every project and the social environment, where the project is planned, have unique contextual specificity which must be considered. This is in this context that systematic orientation to the staff must be encouraged. In the rush of launching the project against a given time the staff immediately jump to the 'steering wheel' without aware of the road conditions. This stunts their potentials and capacities. The orientation and sensitivity training could be facilitated following a self-reflecting process where they should be encouraged to come out with innovations in the management of the project.

5.5   **Entry with the non-financial and neutral intermediations:** The 'World Bank' and 'World Bank supported programs' might evoke different feeling in different people from different social, political and ideological background. One connotation is common –**'it involves big and hefty bag of money'** and there could be big opportunity for the potential stakeholders. This might not carry conducive message .The entry point activities should be financially neutral with careful design

of activities-evolving group norms and governance etc. The activities – (1-4) could be various options.

5.6 **Capacity building-compatible pedagogy and strategy**: The institutional deficiencies and aberrations, we have talked about earlier, might not be conscious and deliberate. We also feel that there are well intentioned individuals within different institutions. We have a hunch that aberration could be an outcome of the system's aberrations but could also have been generated because of lack of opportunity for designed correction. Capacity building inputs, in this context, is very useful.

Bihar has complex social and cultural diversities and also the project will have different levels of facilitators and stake holders. Capacity building inputs need to be evolved to cater to the needs and demands of different segments of stake holders. The inputs and strategy should be self-evolving, need based and contextually compatible.

5.7 **Process documentation as capacity building input:** Process documentation is often confused with reporting in the field and forwarding the same to the higher authority. Process documentation, in this sense, is considered an end in itself. Process documentation is not an end –it is a means to an end. The end being *'capacity building and quality development'*. It is an intense process of looking at and analyzing the impact of various inputs and efforts and minutest interaction of various factors. This helps in identifying gaps and innovations which can be picked up and brought up for integration/deletion using a flexible format. The outcome of the process documentation can be used for sharing and collective reflection. This is a powerful tool to understand and analyze the process oriented interventions.

5.8 **Participative Monitoring and Evaluation (PME):** The traditional practice of end evaluation and monitoring does not go well with the tenets of participation, process orientation and empowerment. PME is a powerful tool where the stakeholders decide on the indicators and assess the outcome of various interventions against the

self development indicators. This helps in auto corrections and quality improvement where the improvement measures are not externally imposed. We propose PME as the tool for monitoring and shared reflection.

5.9 **Regular sharing of PME outcome among the stakeholders:** We recommended adopting transparency in the beginning while informing the stakeholders about the project inputs. Involvements of the stakeholders subsume their right to be constantly informed about the outcome of the planned interventions. This helps in shared accountability and also eliciting corresponding support from the stakeholders. We recommend a regular stakeholders' forum where the outcome of the PME are shared, reflected upon and followed up with a sense of mutual support and appreciation.

5.10 **Special interventions for the Mushahars**

Mushars continue to be the most marginalized community among the SCs. They are landless, have not been able to avail of the benefits of modern education, technology and institutions. The constitutional safe guards are far from being effective in ensuring improvement in their quality of life.

They are victim of stereotype thinking about their life and culture and most of their beliefs, values and practices are taken and interpreted in a foul taste. They are the 'rat-eaters'; 'they are the drunkards'; 'they do not look beyond their current meal' meaning they have no aspiration for the future and so forth are some of the prejudiced refrains which the rich and even better off among the SCs prefer to make and confirm *'they can not change and develop'*. Their reaction to exclusion is subdued withdrawal and reconciliation. The culture of silence still pervades the life of the Mushahars.

In our study we found them to be land less, least educated and marginalized. They are found to be victim of their aberrations and stifling social mechanism targeted against them. Their habits of drinking and short sightedness often land them in to perpetual cycle of poverty and subjugation. Take the example of their indebtedness:

By the end of September the Mushars celebrate festival Jitia when they have to elaborate worship of their deity. By one account the village contractor is always in look out for this festival when he benevolently offers financial support to them. They borrow money, buy pigs and liquor and dance and drink away the money only to be reminded by the money lender –'the euphoria should be over –you have enjoyed at our cost and you have to refund the same'. Not being able to refund which also the design of the money lender they have to sign the piece of paper on which an inflated amount is written to support and confirm their borrowing.

The contractor then pesters them to refund the money which they can not as they have no source of income. The contractor is quite assuring in taking them to the brick kilns in the neighboring states of UP or may be some other states. They have a fixed rate for making bricks and the contractors, under arrangement with the kiln owners, receive a regular cut from the earning of the labor. This continues unabated.

The second level of machination is laying the laborers off for a week or so during which he/she is paid loan from the contractor or some local tough. As soon as he/she resumes work the first right over his/her first earning is that of the contractor or the local tough. This cycle continues and when they prepare to return home during the lean season they have no money or may be paltry amount. The contractor, again, is ready with the unwelcome yet necessary gift for them. The life continues in this whirl!

Life at home is no better. A dilapidated hovel, broken promises they might have made to their dear and near ones when they left and an anxiety to pay for the inflated loan they have incurred are what await their arrival. Non availability of work and the monsoon bred diseases all stare them straight in to their face. May be the next Jitia, next visit to the kilns and …bring some cheers. The local elite would grumble taunt and their despair –They went away to the town, must have earned fortune. How can we trap in? The struggle continues!

Looking for the options!

Seen in this context what possibly can be done to relieve them of the social castration and economic neglect? What is the scope within the BRLP to help the Mushars? We are, frankly, not in a position to offer a clear concrete suggestion. We, in stead, would like to present certain options based on some of the sporadic interventions that have been made

in the Southern and Northern part of Bihar. There is some difference in their habits and beliefs in the two regions but destitution is the common thread which binds them firmly. Let us look at options :

(5.10.1) In Drabhnaga,Madhubani,Saharsa and Supaul district of North Bihar Mushar families in around 1000 hamlets have been practicing saving and credit activities under facilitation from a Jhanjharpur based NGO-SSVK. The saving and credit has helped them develop into a formidable collective force which they have used to assert their right over public resources-say ponds which were usurped in by the land owners and influential upper and middle caste rich. In terms of social capital two defiant leaders America Devi and Teelia Devi have been spear heading organizing the Mushar women. The two women were, incidentally, nominated for the Nobel Peace Award (2005) along with Medha Patkar and other leaders. Teelia Devi has been awarded the Outlook's **'Speak Out Award'**. There are male Mushars as well who have challenged the authority and created a social niche for themselves. The morale of the story from North Bihar is: "There is thrift, saving and credit potentials among the Mushars as well which could be an entry point for their social liberation!

(5.10.2) Samnvya Asharam,in Bodh Gaya is yet another NGO which has been working for the Mushar families especially for their education and other civil rights. The head of the organization who is an octogenarian claims this has changed the educational and social position of the Mushars in the region. There are grown-up Muhahr youths whom he claims to be his product. We did not come across much by way of committed leaders from their families who are determined to take up their cause. Samanavya Ashram is still there and its programs can be further examined to be of some use to us.

(5.10.3) Some distance away from Bodh Gaya there is yet another NGO-GNK which works for the education of the Mushar children. They also have done commendable work with them. One example of inclusion is the presence of a Mushar youth as the secretary of GNK. There are also social leaders and youths

who are concerned about and involved in working for the liberation of the Mushars. The legendry Mushar die hard Sri Dsharath Manjhi is from the same area who is credited to have cut clear a sizeable stretch of mountain and forced the government to make road.

(5.10.4) Yet, another commendable work among Mushars can be credited to the collective leadership of four young engineers during the early seventies who settled in the lonely place –Chauparan ,Hazaribagh ,over nine acres of land stayed with the Mushars. They involved them in developing land entitlements under Bhudan movement and also develop them to use the modern technology – irrigation. The village-Bahera - where they initially stayed is an example of the liberated Mushars who have gained economic independence and social integration. The children from the village are all into schools and have a life with dignity and honor.

The above are selected cases-they may not be saga of success but offer some insight into ways and tools to be used for developing the Mushars. The common threads of the interventions include:

- Empathy and trust in their capacity
- Organizing them around certain issues with meaningful entry point activity
- Showing resilience and perseverance as they occasionally sink into indifference and apathy and
- Constructing some meaningful activities for them which are compatible with their capacity and context.

What the BRLP can do?

The proposed areas to be covered under the BRLP have sizeable population of Mushahars which offer them a challenge and opportunity. How to go about it?
In our view we can try the followings:

- Identify a given region as experimental location with Mushars in both the North and South Bihar,

- Analyze the previous interventions and their impact in the region,

- Identify suitable facilitators preferably from the same region/their own community,

- Adequate orientation to them,

- Evolve program and strategy following participative action plan,

- Put the above into action

- Monitor and follow-up interventions and offer the learning for extended review and reflection.

We propose a self -evolving paradigm rather than a blue print as the former offers a flexible frame work to try and adjust evolving processes. In case of Mushahars doling and subsidies have to be avoided. Process of assetization has to be carefully thought of where the state has to be brought into strategic partnership with the project. The former using its sovereign authority to ensure their right over resources, especially land, where as the project can try supplementing inputs ,including technology, support to help them complete the productive cycle. Subsequent support to facilitate strategic market linkage and institutional development can help integrate them into mainstream and ensure inclusion.

5.11 Special plans for the tribal communities

We have seen the tribal communities in Purnia have suffered isolation since long. The BRLP intervention should be seen as an opportunity to address the issues related to their development. A separate Tribal Development Plan(TDP) has been prepared for them which should be read together with this report for better appreciation of the issues and also for focused recommendations.

The post script (PS): Critical moments and discernable voices from the ground during the project

Some critical moments and discernable voices greatly influenced our learning during the project-the inclusion study. We share them in case they also offer some opportunity for learning and sensitization.

- *Request from the BRLP **to commence and complete the study within a month after almost a nine months wait… (December 12, 2006).**The study was subsequently launched in a spirit of partnership and mutual cooperation and completed within the stipulated time frame.*

- *Visit to Alauli and village Dahawan in Khagaria. People's indifference and silence was an indication expressed silently through –**"You are not welcome to intrude our peace note"** let us remain in peace and in what ever situation we are. You will collect information, report to the government and publish in the news paper. You will earn money and name. What we gain? - **"the police will come round us and harass for what ever we have said or not said yet you have published.***

- *On the conclusion of the detailed interaction and mixing the villagers (same Dahman) come to see off the team. They remarked –**'No body ever talked to us with such attention and no body ever valued our views' this is great!***

- *In the middle of the consultation at   Harnaut (Nalanda)a   village   youth remarked –**'this is all futile(bekar hai).You(we the facilitators) will get money from the government and will never be back to see what has happened afterwards. All this exercises of the government are eye wash!***

- *In the same consultation Ram Balak Mnjhi(a Mushar) who has walked long distance to attend the consultation remarked-**'We have no land, no money and even the mud path, we walk over, belong to some body we don't know'. What will happen after this meeting?** May be another meeting where I may not be invited. He further complains –' In the Indira Awas Yojana 10 bricks are sanctioned but we get only seven bricks. Who sees all these. At the end –**'I feel good I came, was allowed to speak out before the big people (Bara log) and I could speak out what I felt I should speak out. It was a great feeling!***

- *In Bodh Gaya consultation, Ram Pravesh,a Mushahar Youth responding to the Mukhiya's claim of a vibrant PRI, retorts –***'Sir the Gram Sabha is the in- house Sabha within the four walls of the Mukhiya** *Sir, where* **only his coterie are invited and allured to sign the minutes exclusively written for the camouflaged Gram Sabha meeting'.**

- *The Mukhiya pointing to the participants in the consultation -***'It is done to avoid crowding as every body wants his/her wish list to be included. Within the limited resources available how is this possible? We manage well when there is small meeting with Samjhdar log** *(the informed and aware) who can contribute well.*

- **'Good that we could do it-it***(the study) offers much needed food for thought'***, *Pramesh Shah, The World Bank, rounding off the presentation of the report on Social Assessment Study on February,01,2007.*

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BIHAR RURAL LIVELIHOODS PROJECT

Study on social Assessment including Social Inclusion

Terms of Reference

1.0   Background

The Government of Bihar (GoB), through the Bihar Rural Livelihood Promotion Society (BRLPS) is spearheading the preparation of the proposed World Bank aided Bihar Rural Livelihood Project (BRLP). The BRLP aims to improve rural livelihoods and enhance social and economic empowerment of the rural poor. This would be done by developing organizations of rural poor and producers to enable them to access and negotiate better services, credit and assets from public and private sector agencies and financial organizations. The project would also invest in building capacity of public and private service providers.

2.0   Proposed Project

The project is proposed to be implemented by Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society (BRLPS). It is envisaged that the society would work with many service providers including NGOs, public and private sector agencies and would hire professional staff for program management, coordination, monitoring, knowledge management, finance and capacity building. BRLPS will be responsible for the Community Institution Development – especially Self Help Groups (SHGs) and the Social Services and Social Action Program; other partners will be identified during preparation. This society would be accountable for implementation of the project. The Organizational arrangements for implementation of the other components will be decided during project preparation. In addition to the above, it is proposed that commodity based spear head teams, Micro-finance support organization, Capacity building support organizations and a Centre for development of community leadership will be explored.

The preparation of the proposed project would have the following key elements: (a) identifying existing innovations in various areas and help in developing processes, systems and organizations for scaling up these innovations; (b) focusing on the poor – vulnerable and disabled members of the community; (c) building and empowering institutions and organizations – community, public and private; (d) focusing on

stimulating productivity growth in key livelihood sectors and employment generation in the project area and (e) project investments will be catalytic in nature to spur public and private investment in the poor.

3.0   Social Assessment and Social Inclusion Study

The main purpose of the Social Assessment is to identify the key social and institutional issues and stakeholder groups for the project. The SA will advise the project on its target group, the participation strategy to reach them and the critical investments necessary to support the social and economic development of this target group. The study will also understand social inclusion aspects with respect the membership of the poor in formal and informal institutions and the constraints and opportunities for seeking membership. The governance of these institutions will also be studied to influence their functioning to be pro-poor and transparent.

The major objectives of the study are to :

(vii) Identify those sections of the Bihar society who are socially marginalized and economically worst off and will be the target beneficiaries for the project with special emphasis on the Scheduled Tribes (if applicable);

(viii) Analyze the current access if these poor to social and economic services and institutions, identify key constraints including inter and intra-cast conflicts in the mobilization of the poor into social and economic organizations;

(ix)   Analysis of inclusion and exclusion of poor and women in existing institutional arrangements including Self Help Groups, Cooperative, Other user groups and Panchayats.

(x)   Provide guidance on the mobilization strategy for collectivization of poor; and the requisite investment to be made by the project–asset creation, capacity building, access to credit, technical assistance, tie– ups with public and private sectors, with respect to specific social and producer groups; A specific focus on Mushahars and other vulnerable groups and constraints to their social mobilization and specific strategies required to mobilize them.

(xi)   Prepare a separate Tribal Development plan for supporting the ST population co comply with World Bank's safeguards policy on indigenous people (Only if the districts selected for implementation have a considerable target tribal population); and

(xii) Understanding of the propensity of conflict and its impacts on the poor. Analyse the existing sources of social and economic conflict in the six project district (including Maoist, caste etc) and strategies to be used in social and economic mobilization to reduce the potential of conflict.

Some of the key questions to be answered by the study are:

Aspects	Questions	Design Inputs
1.　　Poverty and Vulnerability	- What is the nature of poverty in Bihar? - Classification and characteristics of different well-being? - Who and where are the most deprived groups? - What are the indicators of vulnerability in Bihar?	- To objectively understand and map the location of poverty and vulnerability across Bihar based on certain defined indicators? - Outline the causes of Poverty and Vulnerability. - Recommend interventions to address poverty across difference well-being categories. - To explain the social diversity, reflect on relevant and ethnic factors, recognize indigenous group or other vulnerable population segments and identify the structural relation for their vulnerability.
2. Social exclusion	- What are the major obstacles and social processes and relationships preventing the poor from moving out of poverty? - What are the constraints in mobilizing and organizing the vulnerable section of community like Mushahars etc. - What are the institutions of the excluded social groups? - What are the indicators of exclusion? - What are the factors responsible for inclusion and exclusion of poor and women in existing Institution arrangements like SHG, Cooperatives etc.	- Provide recommendations on what interventions could enable inclusion of the excluded.
3. Conflict	- *What are major types of conflict he poor face? What are the reasons for the conflict?*	- A socio-metric analysis of conflict. - To objectively understand the

	- What is the impact of this conflict on the poor? *- What is the conflict mitigation and resolution mechanisms that are prevalent in the villages and how favorable are these to the poor?* *-*	conflict reasons. - Outline the management of conflict. - What could be the strategies in social and economic mobilization to reduce the potential of conflict.

The above is indicative and the consultant in consultation with the project team will develop a detailed scope for the study as part of the study proposal.

4.0   Suggested Methodology

- Desk Review of secondary data.
- Sampling and field work using participatory methodology

5.0   Deliverables and schedule

Step	Activity	Time Frame
1.	Study proposal including financial proposal	3 days from the date of sending the TOR – December 15, 2006
2.	Detailed plan of study and consultation on methodology	One week after receiving TORs – December 18, 2006
3.	Execution of Contract	December 18, 2006
4.	Commencement of study	December 20, 2006
5.	Draft report	January 20, 2007
6.	Stakeholder workshop to share findings	January 25, 2007
7.	Final report submission	January 30, 2007

6.0   Study Coordination

BRLPS would coordinate the activity and will provide a key staff to liase with. Every two weeks there should be a consultative coordination meeting.

7.0   Review Committee

The review committee would consist of the following members:

1. Project Director, BRLP
2. State Project Manager – Social Development
3. State Project Manager – Livelihood

4. State Project Manager – Capacity Building, Training and Communication.

The Review process will occur in following stages:

1. Outline of the proposed study and its methodology.
2. Draft Report

Annexure II : Profile of Mushars

Mushahrs-the most marginalized among the Bihar poor

We analyzed the land ownership and educational status data for the different caste categories and concluded that SC communities are deficient on both and hence miss on the natural resources endowments and social capital. From among the SC communities we found that the Mushahars were the most impoverished ones who had neither land ownership nor had education which could help them access various endowments and assets required for their development. The land shown against their name have been doled out of barren land under different programs notably under much hyped Bhudan of Vinoba Bhavey or some other program. In Bodh Gaya, land to the Mushars has gone though Bhudan and out of the surplus land claimed from the surplus land of the Bodh Gaya Mahanth(the priest).In Khagaria the land is occupied by the Mushars from one surrendered by an absentee land lord to the government. There is not entitlement formalized to them.Majority of such land are barren or non-existent submerged in the river bed. Even for the cultivable land there is no post distribution support made available to the Mushars and hence they remain useless.We, now, would like to present, a brief over view of the Mushars in the context of their origin, socio-economic status, life and living, cultural contours and the exploitation.

Background – Origin

Our understanding of the lowest of the low among Dalit communities – the Musahars - who are scattered through the plains of the Gangetic Valley is defined by the imposed adjectives and assumptions about them. Among progressive societies, the picture that emerges of the Musahars is that of a poor and oppressed community. In this sense, the identity of the Musahars is imprisoned within the boundaries of bonded labor. Therefore, it becomes all the more imperative to ask, who are Musahars; how is their culture inextricably linked with their livelihood, nature and change; how does their identity consistently keep shifting with the social and productive process; and how does their culture affect these very same process.

But regarding the actual position of Musahars, three things become absolutely clear. Firstly, that the Musahars are apt in the art of digging soil. Secondly, they have acquired this skill from their ancestors as part of their traditional heritage. Thirdly, this tradition is an inalienable part of the Musahars identity and culture. Clearly, this tradition is the foundation of their livelihood and identity. This community is definitely playing a pivotal role in advancing production relations and the production process. Despite this, it has still not developed any acquisitiveness towards property. They enjoy the food gathering process, because during the time of harvesting, they enjoy traveling to far off places in search of the leftover grain etc. Musahars have rat-eating habit too(Joshi and Kumar,2002ppXIII-XV).

Cultural life

Jhoomar is the folk dance of the Musahars. Songs and music accompany this dance. It is a community dance and enjoyed both in sorrow and happiness. However, Jitia festival, completion of sowing and harvesting are the favorite festive occasions when they go for grand celebrations. Vivid culture, rich traditions, creativity and skills of this community have never been recognized and respected, rather they have always been seen as clichés as people who live in fifth with pig and drink day and night. Pigs are part of their life and drinking is a part of their daily chore. Pork is a kind of staple food for them; it is also a propitiating and financial support during bad days. They drink on festive occasions as well as to keep away pain and sorrow. They use liquor also as an offering to God. In fact pigs, a folk animal and liquor, a folk drink, are part and parcel of their folk life and culture. Folk culture is the breathing space, instrument, mainstay of this community belonging to the realm of oral traditions. Look at their folklore: myths, tales, legends, songs etc; claiming a glorious past full of bravery and war, they relate themselves with the legendary Beer heroes.

Social-Economic Status

Musahars seem to defy normative understanding of wage labor in the sense that they do have a clear appraisal of labor quantum required in a particular job-work but they neither try to maximize the wages by demand nor will they try to get more through hard bargaining. A common perception that they are the most efficient soil cutters and the hardest earthwork labor also reflects a different dimension – of not following any disciplined work schedule but this attitude proves a blessing in disguise. Musahars are mainly landless agricultural laborers. Very few are cultivators or work in industries and offices. Musahar as such never owned soil, since land did not belong to them. However, their talent work with the soil.

The Musahars were Musahars because of the location of their caste, occupation and places, which acted as fundamental sign of their identities. To day, however, some of

these signs are getting dislocated and are vanishing. Their previous identity as untouchables and rat seekers is shifting into periphery. More visible today are issues of their survival, their economic and social aspiration, their demands and struggles. At the same time, this new image represents more of an aspiration and less of an achieved entity.

Dynamic of Exploitation

A Musahar has to face social neglect, doubts and torture that begins right from the time of seeking admission in primary school till the collegiate education. In this process they not only struggle against the upper caste but also against other dalit communities. Musahar men and women work from 6 o'clock in the morning to one in the afternoon. They get break fast of two roties at 8-9 a.m. and then daily wages are 2-3 kilograms of maize or wheat, which cost approximately Rs. 12 – 13. A certain discriminatory attitude prevails towards Musahar women. Musahar women and girls being raped or molested. When a case is filed, the accused immediately come forward to make compromise. They ask them why they assume such a dominant posture when the compromise has to be made with Musahars(Shashi Bhushan,2002).

Annexure III : Santhals in Purnia

The Purnea scenario – Dynamics of marginalization

Purnea district has only Santhal tribe who has distinctive characteristics of (a) santhali language, (b) clan system and (c) traditional institutions.

Set in this background, the tribal communities in Purnea who largely belong to Santhals; are in a different format much different from the mainstream tribal communities clustered in majority. They are at the fringe of the mainstream community with a marginal numerical strength. The customary social and political institutions are showing aberrations. Instead of holding the tribal communities through a common cultural thread these institutions are embroiled in dealing with various threats coming from the external environment. For example their institution is engaged in a pitched legal battle with various hostile groups including the hostile/indifferent state agencies.

Historically, for the ST communities, Purnea does not make their natural habitat. After the permanent settlement in 1793, the local Zamindars (landlords) brought the tribal communities to clear the forests to expand their cultivable land base and there by their tax net. Since Purnea, then was dreaded being the abode of all kinds of diseases, laborers from the plains were not willing to join the cleaning operation in Purnea. The Tribal laborers were brought from the erstwhile Snathalpargana on the promise that certain proportion of the land, so cleared, would be offered and settled to them. However, after

the land was cleared, the Zamindars turned their back on their promises and denied the tribals the promised share in the land cleared. They were, however, given some land to till and cultivate in lieu of their labor given to the Zamindars. Since then a simmering discontent has been running high among the tribal communities against the land lords but because of their minority position and low socio-economic endowments they have not been able to raise a voice of dissent. In between there has been manipulation and administrative actions which kept the tribal communities silent and excluded.

In 1952 when the official land survey was conducted some part of the land under the tilling control of the tribal were temporarily settled (Sikemy in the local parlance) in their own name but this did not change their position much as the land lords targeted them still with fiercer vengeance. Some time they would be implicated in false cases, some times violence would be unleashed against them. Oral accounts from the tribal leaders indicated that they were denied access to common resources like drinking water wells or grazing lands to make them yield to the oppressive designs of the high and mighty.

Being embroiled in such an embittered environment the tribal communities raised in revolt not so long (1972) against a local land lord marked by violent reprisals including multiple killings. The incidence proved a land mark and the tribal leaders and key members of the community suffered badly as the court cases and fear of retaliation kept the environment vitiated for long. Describing the violence witnessed in Dhamdaha block, one of the leaders of Rupaspur village - Pandu Hemberam had to say: "we have suffered a lot, no doubt, but this has emboldened the tribal community to assert their right and has also subdued the arrogant and exploitative powers to be. The administration, which is protector of the elite interest, is not friendly to us either but we don't care for their favor as it also comes for a price. What is important is that we have gained a new voice and the micro-dynamics has changed drastically. Now we have started moving with our heads high". So there exists in Purnea district a feud over land which is at least two centuries old and greater struggle which is at least three decades old.

Not withstanding the claims of Pandu about keeping their head high there is still an atmosphere of apprehension and distrust reflected in more than one ways:

The group discussion during the consultation witnessed a peculiar situation. Each of the groups had two facilitators. In case of the tribal groups the members had a sense of unease in explaining and analyzing the situation. One of the facilitators was a member from the district literacy committee. The tribal members felt further stifled to open up before him. When the research team offered to replace them with one of the research team members there was spontaneous approval. Subsequent discussions revealed that they were not free before the local dominant people whom they perceived as conspiring

against their interest.

Simlilarly, when Pandu(the tribal leader) was invited to share the dais with others he did not feel comfortable and preferred a physical distance from others.

The state agencies are equally not quite appreciated for their support. The consultation revealed that the government programs for the common good were maneuvered in favor of the rich and the dominant:

Birendra Kumar Singh,nee,Balo Yadava,the up-pramukh (deputy chief of the Panchayat Samiti) announced that every year there is a auction of water bodies for fishing. The tribal communities have hardly ever had the opportunity to win the bid. This is not only because of financial reasons but because the government agencies are easily influenced by the local elite and rich farmers to twist the processes in their favor.

The recent announcement of the government to open sugar mill in the area has further made things hot-up. Taking advantage of the situation the rich farmers, whose land were with the tribal communities under Sikmey (share cropping rights), have announced that they would donate their land for the common cause of industrialization in the reason. All that they (the rich farmers) intend to do is to donate the sikmy land which in fact prove severe blow to the tribal rights of land ownership.