

LIVELIHOOD DIFFERENCES BETWEEN APL –BPL OF BORAGARI VILLAGE, JALPAIGURI DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL

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ABSTRACT

Poverty has many dimensions but the most commonly highlighted concept of poverty is income – oriented. The lack of adequate income leads to generate poverty which is measured by a number of households whose income falls below a poverty line set by a particular Government. Households falling below the poverty line are known as BPL or “Poor” households and above the poverty line is APL or Non-poor households. Such a poverty line indicates the income level along with its impact on livelihood which ultimately analyses the differences between Poor from the Non-poor. In common, two types of poor viz. Rural Poor and Urban Poor have been identified so far, among which most of the BPL household are belonging to rural areas as Rural poor. In addition, among the rural poor belonging to BPL, there are lots of households who are poorer among the BPL families. The underdeveloped livelihood of BPL families as compared to APL families is an important theme of discussion as most of the countries have been stressing on human development or poverty eradication through a varieties of strategies since a few years. Hence, the paper highlights here the livelihood differences among APL and BPL families seeking development of the well being of the poverty stricken people of rural India.

Keywords: Poverty, APL, BPL, NSSO, MDGs

Introduction:

The term “poverty” has deep connotation and may be defined in several ways. Etymologically, the definition of poverty is not only controversial rather complex and multi dimensional as it varies place to place and to some extent, is depend on human perception also. Commonly poverty is analyzed in terms of economic dimension which is basically oriented on income of the people. Hence, it is also too hard to distinguish “poor and non-poor”. In the recent times, income disparity to meet basic needs of livelihood is the foremost matter of discussion in developing countries like India.

In India, poverty-stricken rural families have to depend on unpredictable agriculture based income or labour based uncertain works. Thus, poverty in the form of crisis of income opportunities has been playing significant role in creating dehumanization conditions that adversely affects well being of people. As stated earlier BPL households are considered as “poor” and among them, there is also income disparity whose livelihood is enough important to find out to what extent they have been suffering and to find out the causes of their misery. The findings may be helpful to make policies or to form innovative ideas to improve their conditions so that they remain socio-economically confined with the main stream of society instead of isolation or exclusion.

Objectives of the study:

The basic objectives of the paper are-

- 1) To identify poor group of people in the study area.
- 2) To understand the nature of poverty and its consequence.
- 3) To suggest a few remedies to reduced this disparity.

Location of the study area:

The rural village Boragari is located under the Bhatibari Gram Panchayat in Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. The area is situated between 26°30'00" N and 89°31'12" E co-ordinates.

Importance of the study:

UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was formulated in 2000 and enacted since then to eradicate human poverty within 2015, but still there is highly existence of BPL people in different part of Rural India. So, question arises that what sort of goal it has achieved within this 10 years, when poverty is still vibrant and that is why authors wants to highlight the actual scenario of Rural India through the sample village study.

Methodology:

Methodology includes selection of village for the study, data collection, analysis and interpretation of the collected data. Data have been collected particularly from primary sources through door to door survey and secondary data have been collected from report of the village register.

Identification of APL and BPL households

Govt. has identified BPL families based on 13 parameters which are as follows-

1. Size of operational land holding 2. Type of house, 3. Availability of clothes, 4. Food security, 5. Sanitation, 6. Ownership of consumer durables, 7. Literacy status, 8. Status of household labour force, 9. Means of livelihood, 10. Status of children, 11. Type of indebtedness, 12. Reason for migration from household and 13. Preference for assistance.

Scores or numbers have been allotted to each of the aforesaid parameters. The score ranges from 1 to 5, where as 1 indicates very low status and 5 denotes very good well being. Hence, a family who will score 33 or below after summation of numbers obtained against questions based on stated parameters, will be treated as BPL, otherwise, if the score crosses the limit of 33, the family will be considered as APL.

Differential livelihood Characteristics between APL and BPL:

As the study is completely based on qualitative data, interpretation of the paper is descriptive and it is quite evident that the best way of understanding of misery of poor is to study and describe their way of living and nature as it is. Their words and statements have been taken into consideration to analyze their livelihood pattern.

Survey reveals that the total household of the village is 559 which consist of 2494 population. Among them 1277 are male and 1217 are female population. Among the 559 households, there are 192 BPL families and 367 APL families. Striking differences among the livelihood pattern can be seen between the two strata of the society despite residing in the same rural area of the district.

Exposed to diseases:

According to the view of people of APL category, they suffer mostly from gastritis, malaria, diarrhea, occasional fever and cough in particular. This incidence is prevalent among age-old group of people, although the frequency of child diseases is somewhat lesser as compared to the aged person of the society among them. Different matters can be pointed out why these people exposed to a particular disease. This evident is not only related with socio-economic parameters like income of the family, cleanliness, nutritional condition of food, lack of health infrastructure etc., but also based on the physical environment of the area, which is confined into damp weather due to location of *Tarai* region, impurities of water and climatic change also. In case of child oriented diseases, most of the children have been suffering from disease like fever and cough even though their income is sufficient to get nutritional food; they have easily paid attention to this matter. But lack of health care infrastructure along with ignorance and negligence are highly responsible for this.

In case of people belonging to BPL category, always exposure to disease from almost all the age groups are remarkable, children due to malnutrition suffer a lot. This directly reflects the low income scenario of the family members wherein they belonging. In addition their parents often neglect them and do not take care properly of their children and provide food to them whatever going with their daily earnings. The age-old people suffer pain from cold, gastritis, diarrhea, malaria like APL people. But the basic difference lies in the fact that the APL people can afford medical expenses which BPL people cannot and consequently they are most disease prone than those. People of BPL category, while affected by disease as stated, depend upon rural *kabiraj* or take homely medicine which often do not work to minimize the illness. Moreover male members of the family often took local liquor (wine) which seriously affects their lung and colon resulting lung and intestine based diseases.

Housing environment:

In spite of belonging to APL category, the household environment and the use of water are not satisfactory here as the study area is deprived of some basic infrastructures for which they have to travel long distance. In fact, most of the APL people of *Boragari* village living in *Pucca* houses, the roof of which is predominantly made up of tin, having two-three rooms, separate kitchen and adjacent toilet facilities. In addition complete structure of tin except plinth is found in many cases. Cleanliness within the rooms and courtyard is the salient feature of these houses. Trees of mango, banana, bamboo etc. are remarkable features of their houses. Interestingly, despite maintaining cleanliness, they often use unpurified water due to their unconsciousness. A few people, who are belonging at the lower strata of APL, follow traditional inherited house type of mud and straw of their ancestors.

Remarkable differences have been found while observing the house types of BPL families which again reflect their low economic profile. Most of the houses they live are made up of bamboo fence with straw roof; some of those are also made up of mud and clay. Brick structure or use of cement in construction is absent here. A house consists of two or three rooms each with mud-made floor and thatched roof with poor ventilation. The housing environment is not hygienic enough as compared to APL category due to their unconsciousness about cleanliness. The common thing between the APL and BPL houses is that both have

courtyard with a few trees of mango, banana, or bamboos. While interacting with the people of BPL category to know about the poor housing status, they express their financial hindrance regarding building of compact houses which is non-vulnerable to national disaster like heavy downpour or cyclone.

Living equipments

Use of both simple and modern equipments of living is another characteristic feature of this group. In case of cooking, they use very simple kitchen utensils made up of aluminum. Way of cooking is tradition bound i.e. they use fire wood, cow dung in particular and gas in occasional as fuel. Although the second one is not available in near by areas. Most of the APL households enjoy electricity and have TV, wooden furniture but other modern equipments of living like computer, refrigerator etc. are almost absent in the household.

Being the poorer section of the society, the BPL people cannot use modern sophisticated household equipments in their daily life. From morning to night they have to depend on low cost or traditional equipments which are very simple. Most of them use firewood or cow dung for cooking, clay pot as cooking utensils and a few aluminum utensils have been noticed in a few families. They cannot enjoy Television despite having electricity or news paper despite educated as the cost of those make a burden on their family expenditure. They often use low cost, locally available wooden *chouki* as bed, even they have not the capacity to use mosquito net in most cases. Therefore, the entire phenomena reveal their financial hurdles they have to overcome daily with distressing dream.

Household status

As there is no criteria for identifying the APL families set by the Government, therefore it is too hard to identify the individual status of the area. In addition, there is income variation of each and every household among the APL families also, which directly determine the quality of life that APL household leads. Hence, it is clear that in many cases, income has been playing pivotal role in building the status of the family, and interestingly it can not be denied that the same is relative as many of the people belong at the upper strata of APL feel themselves as poor in spite of having their better economic base than others. So this phenomenon is somewhat related to psychology or attitude of the family members of APL category also.

Similar evidences are noticed if the BPL families come into consideration. A few families whose income per month are moderate, can manage their families but there is a lot of families who can be considered as extreme poor and their daily income is so low they get a little room to find food on daily basis. Sometimes, this leads them to opt for suicide or compels them to choose illegal profession for survival.

Food habits

In case of food habits, the APL people take tea, *roti*, milk, flattened rice in morning; boiled rice, vegetable, *dal*, fish, meat, in lunch and dinner. Most of them use water of deep tube well without purification for drinking purpose. The same is used for bathing, cooking, washing and other purposes also.

Among the BPL families, who are slightly solvent, take meal three times in a day with small fish and vegetable in common. On the other hand people, who are economically more weeks, take meal twice with only a few amounts of *dal* and or vegetable only.

Occupational type and Monthly Income

Here APL people are engaged in variety of works ranging from teaching to business although these are not the activities providing exclusive source of income. As per survey report, it has been found that most of them (44%) are engaged in agricultural works. Beside, 20% of them are associated with teaching profession, 8% with masonry, 4% with electrical works, 16% with labour based activities and 8% with business related works. Almost all members except female of BPL households are belonging to labour class because most of them come from Bangladesh during partition and at that time they had not any land. Consequently they were bound to put their labour force to the land of other people like small or large *Jamindars* or land owner of this part. In the study area, 64% of total workers are confined amidst daily labourers, 20% are agricultural labourers, 8% are industrial labourers and 4% each are Rickshaw puller and Mason.

While studying monthly household income of BPL people, it has come into notice that majority (44%) of the households earn Rs. 5000-10000/month. 20% of the families' monthly income range from Rs. 10000-15000. In addition, 20% of household earn less than Rs.5000 /month. Similarly, 12% earn Rs. 15000-20000/month and rest of 12% earns more than Rs. 20000/month. Therefore, a significant variation in the field of income is reflected which ultimately determines the quality of life or in broader view, the well being of the families. Although the result as per obtained from the statements given by the APL family members reveal that they have been living within a stable condition so far as the rural status and economy is concerned (FIGURE-1).

FIGURE-1

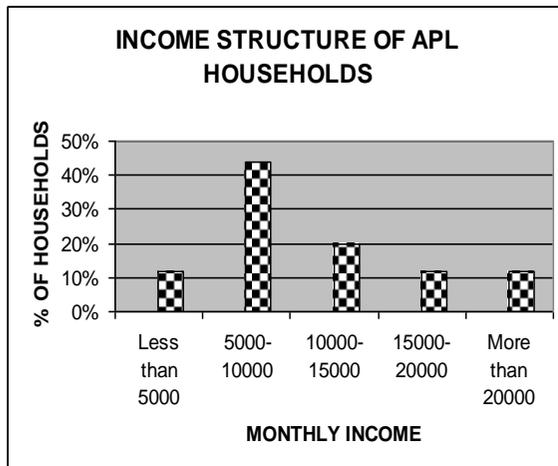
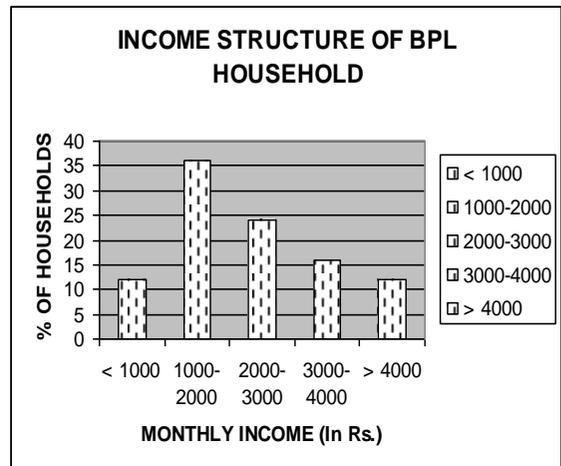


FIGURE-2



As stated earlier, most of BPL members are labourers, their monthly income never exceed Rs.5000/month. Family income of most of the households is very poor which is difficult to manage a family at present while price of every commodity has been growing up. Again, there is a variation in the income/month among the BPL families e.g. 12% households income of 12% are found above Rs. 4000/month., where 16% families income range from Rs.3000 to 4000 per month; 24% range from Rs. 2000 to 3000/month and a significant portion (36%) of BPL households income range from Rs. 1000 to 2000 per month. There are also 12% of families whose income fall at lowest level i.e. below Rs. 1000 per month (FIGURE- 2).

Educational Background

Most of the surveyed households under APL category are literate and some of them have crossed the barrier of graduation also. They are related with teaching profession in particular. The number of household with below matriculation qualification is 40%. Family members of 12% households are found with qualification of matriculation to graduation, but no member of any families has crossed the limit of post graduation. A few families (12%) are found illiterate (FIGURE-3).Some basic observations related to educational background of these people are found during survey. It is found that elder people of the households have lesser educational plinth and some of them are so ignored to education that has affected the education of their children remarkably. Most of the children who go to school belong to the upper strata of APL category where their parents pay attention to education of their children. But those who are at the lower social strata based income in particular always think how to find work to earn daily and hence children education do not come to the apex of their priority list in case of these people.

FIGURE-3

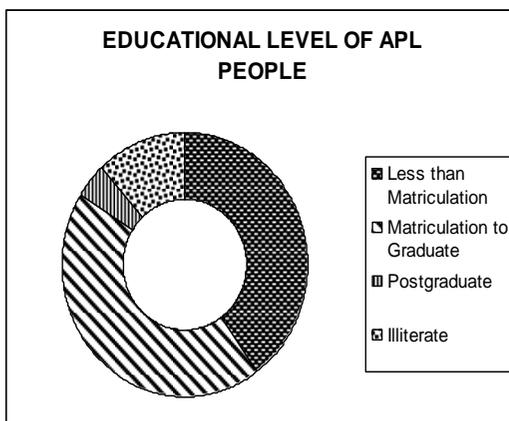
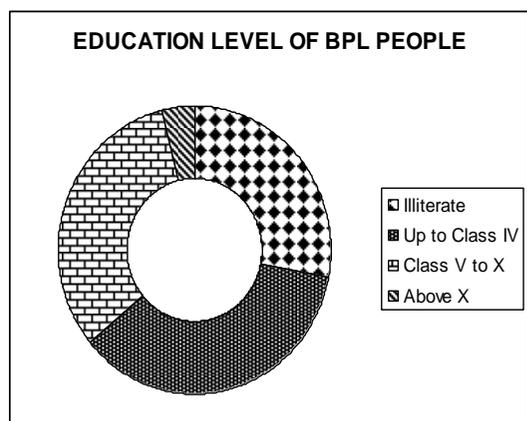


FIGURE-4



It has been widely accepted that illiterate is the main culprit of poverty. In the study area, a large number of BPL families are found illiterate. Among the BPL families 28% never go to school for study; 36% of the total families, despite school goes once, know ABC of learning. Only 32% of BPL families have got touch of

secondary school and only a few (4%) have reached up to higher secondary level. This picture reflects clearly the causes of poverty of labour class people (FIGURE-4).

Conclusion with Strategies

Poverty estimates based on 55th and 61st round of the NSSO result of the sample survey data on consumer expenditure yields the poverty ratios for 1999-2000 of 27.80 % at all India level and 27.0 % in 2004-05. It indicates that the ratio of poverty has declined to 0.8 percent but it is quite below the expected level and it is being reflected from the above discussion. Thus poverty alleviation and hunger is one of the important targets of Millennium Development Goals, the objective of which is the halving of the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. To eradicate poverty among poorer section of society particularly BPL people of the study area, first of all it is required to identify the main causes of extreme poverty which separates the BPL people from APL people. The study reveals following prime factors which cause poverty and differentiate BPL from APL people are-

- (A) Emigrated from Bangladesh and consequently most of the BPL people are landless
- (B) Lack of physique based daily work in the study area as compared to their number.
- (C) Most of them are Illiterate which has been hindering income opportunities.
- (D) Ever increasing price rise of essential commodities.

So, to eradicate the extreme poverty and minimize the APL-BPL disparity of the study area the following strategies have to be emphasized-

1. Education for all eliminating all the expense relating to that for BPL people.
2. Micro finance from Govt. and NGOs with least interest has to be introduced extensively with necessary restriction.
3. Security for Work and Food should be ensured with transparency.
4. Providing basic health care infrastructures.
5. Potential human resource based capacity for earning has to be built, may be the contribution of that will be meager.

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