

BASELINE SURVEY OF MINORITY CONCENTRATION DISTRICT

Executive Summary of Araria District (Bihar)

Background:

- The Ministry of Minority Affairs (GOI) has identified 90 minority concentrated backward districts using eight indicators of socio-economic development and amenities based on 2001 census data with a purpose to improve all these indicators and bring it to the all India level through a multi-sector development plan under the eleventh five year plan. Since, it is expected that there must be changes in those indicators after 2001, a baseline survey has been conducted to inform the multi-sectoral development plan with the latest deficits and priorities.
- Araria, one of the most backward districts of Bihar, stands at the bottom of the 90 minority concentration districts.

District profile (2001 census based)

- Araria is primarily a rural district; 93% of the total population live in the rural areas (713 villages). Only two out of nine tehsils have urban population that is concentrated in Forbesganj and Araria towns (Census 2001).
- There is a substantial concentration of minority (mainly Muslims) population. Against the state average of 16.2 %, Muslims constitutes 44.4 per cent of the total rural populations, but their percentages are 77.5% in Jokihat, 62.70% of Araria, and 46.8% in Palasi subdivisions. The number of minority groups -- Christian, Sikh, Budhist and Jains -- are negligible.
- The rural literacy rate is 33.2 percent, much below the state and national averages. The worst is female literacy rate, i.e., 20.4%. In other words, only one out of five women is literate. Even sex ratio, i.e., 917 is less than state and all India level.
- The overall work participation rate is 40.3 percent , which is much less in case of the female population. Agriculture labourers dominate the labour force (64.7% of the total) that is almost double of the national average.
- Most of the villages lack some basic infrastructure: 92 percent are without any medical facilities; 20 percent of the villages lack formal facilities of education of any type; 597 out of 713 villages are without electricity; and 50 percent of the villages are without all weather road connectivity.

Survey findings: Socio-economic Conditions and other Amenities in 2008

- In 2008 (survey findings), Araria lagged behind the all India average in seven out of eight indicators and also lagged behind the all India level in terms of two more health related indicators. Table below shows the gap between all India and district figures vis-à-vis ten indicators and prioritises the development intervention vis-à-vis eight indicators. The district figure is based on the survey findings (2008) and all India figures are of 2004-05 and 2005-06. The distance from the all India figures may be higher, as all India data are a little old.

Development Gaps and Priorities for the Multi-sector Plan

Sl. No.	Indicators	Araria 2008	All India 2005	Development Gaps Between All India and District	Development Priority of the District
		(1)	(2)	(3=1-2)	(4)
1	Rate of literacy	58.0	67.3	-9.3	5
2	Rate of female literacy	46.5	57.1	-10.6	4
3	Work participation rate	34.8	38.0	-3.2	6
4	Female work participation rate	19.3	21.5	-2.2	7
5	Percentage of households with pucca walls	16.2	59.4	-43.2	2
6	Percentage of households with safe drinking water	96.2	87.9	8.3	8
7	Percentage of households with electricity	7.6	67.9	-60.3	1
8	Percentage of households with water closeset latrines	3.0	39.2	-36.2	3
9	Percentage of fully vaccinated children	18.2	43.5	-25.3	-
10	Percentage of child delivery in a health facility	20.1	38.7	-18.6	-

Note: (1) Survey data of the district (Col. 1) pertains to the rural area only, but all India data (Col. 2) pertains to total.

(2) Data in Col 2 from Sl. No. 5 to 8 pertains to year 2005-06 from NFHS-3 and the rest of the data in Col. 2 pertain to the year 2004-05 from NSSO.

Development Priorities as per Eight Indicators:

1. Electricity:

Availability of electricity remains the most critical gap: 597 out of 713 villages are without electricity and only 7.56 percent of the households have electricity facility (6.54 percent in case of Muslims and 9.40 percent in case of Hindu households). The district lags behind all India figure by a huge 60.30 point.

The Rajiv Gandhi Rural Electrification Mission targets universalisation of electricity connection to the rural households by the end of 2009 and there is a memorandum of understanding between Bihar Government and Rural Electrification Corporation of

Government of India for extending electric connection to all the villages of Araria. It seems that the progress appears nowhere to the target.

2. Houses with Pucca Walls:

All weather protected, pucca house, remains another critical, as only 6.22% of the households are living in Pucca houses (Hindus 8.15% and Muslims 5.16%). The rest are living either in thatched houses (71.56%); Kacha (10.89%) and semi-pucca (10%). There is a difference of 43.2 points between all India and district figure in this regard.

The number of houses constructed under IAY, which is not a universal programme, is quite insufficient to fill the gap in the district. The IAY can be topped up with the multi-sectoral plan.

3. In-house toilet facilities:

About 96 percent of the households are without any toilet facilities and practice open defecation. Similarly, about 82% of the households are without any drainage facilities. There is not much differential between Hindu and Muslim households regarding toilet and drainage facilities, which shows uniform lack of sanitation facilities in the rural household.

Again a "Total Sanitation Campaign", a Centre sponsored scheme, aiming at universalisation of sanitation facilities is going on for quite some time with the target to achieve universalisation of sanitation facilities by the end of 2009. Nevertheless, 96 percent of the households are without any in-house toilet facilities. It clearly indicates that the district would completely miss the target. It is important that the TSC is properly implemented and the remaining gaps can be topped through the multi-sector development plan.

4. Overall Literacy Rate particularly Female literacy rate:

There is a significant improvement in overall and female literacy rates of the rural population in the district since 2001, courtesy the Sarva Shiksh Abhiyan and the Mid-day meal scheme. The former (overall literacy) increased from 33.2 percent in 2001 to 58.0 percent in 2008 and the latter (female literacy) improved from 20.4 percent in 2001 to 46.5 percent in 2008.

Nevertheless, the district lags behind all India average and, hence, needs serious attention. Some important reasons are: non-availability of primary schools, poor enrolment ratio and high drop-out rates. There are a number of villages, which are still without primary school and further the number of girl's school is quite low. Hence,

expansion of primary and elementary schools, both for boys and girls, should be taken on a priority basis along with effective measures to minimise drop-outs.

5. Employment opportunities more so for women.

The low work participation rate of both the male and female population clearly indicates unemployment and lack of employment opportunities. In fact, when asked about the preference of the households, most of the households demanded employment. The low level of agricultural activities and over dependence of population on the same aggravate the problem.

There are a large number of artisan workers in the district; quite a few of them migrate outside; and a number of them goes to Varanasi and work in the 'sari' industries on a very low wage rate. A number of plywood industries were functioning in the districts, which got shut down due to non-availability of wood from the forest after the restriction imposed by the Supreme Court. Bamboo cultivation is in plenty in the district. Bamboo based handicrafts industries can be promoted through skill generation and training. Other skill-based activities should be identified and appropriate programmes of skill development and credit support should be initiated.

Additional Areas of Intervention

1. Access to health facilities is another area of concern, as 92 % of the villages are without any medical facilities. Institutional delivery of child is only 20 percent of the total cases and only 18 percent of the children are fully vaccinated. The number of PHC and sub-centre per one lakh population is also low in the district.

The availability of health facilities has critical bearing on the overall economic conditions of the households, particularly their indebtedness, as medical expenditure is the main reason for the indebtedness of the households in a large number of cases.

2. Access to institutional borrowing is quite low (82 % of the borrowings are from the traditional sources (Hindus 78% and Muslims 84.71%) even though 42 % of the households are indebted (Hindus 38 % and Muslims 44.58%). Substantial expansion of credit should be an important priority in the district.
3. All weather road connectivity is another glaring infrastructural deficit. As per 2001 Census, 50 % of the villages are without all weather road connectivity. Though rural

connectivity has improved since then, yet significant numbers of villages are still without all weather roads.