

Female-Headed Households: A Database of North Bihar

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ABSTRACT Female-headed household (FHH) is not a new phenomenon due to large-scale changes in socio-economic spheres over the past few decades. FHH are those, where female is the major provider and/or protector, carrier and bearer and decision-maker in the household. A study was planned to gain an insight into problems faced, support structure available and survival strategies adopted by females as they assume responsibilities as head of the family. A descriptive survey on 200 hundred families residing in Madhubani district of rural north Bihar were selected through multistaged sampling design. An interview schedule was used to collect data. The results of the study revealed that three fourth of respondents belonged to low middle class. The problem faced were mostly economic in nature i.e. shortage funds for various purposes. The family problems were generally related to caring and rearing children. Absence of male member made them dependent on others for negotiations on social issues such as marriage of children. At personal level also they faced problems such as sexual advances from males, criticism from in laws etc. Purchasing livestock and findings labor to work on fields were work related problems. The analysis of support structure revealed that the respondents sought support from neighbors, employers friends moneylenders and shopkeepers. In emergency families received support from neighbors. The survival strategies adopted by respondents were borrowing money from money lender and relatives. They had no access to bank loans. Pledging land and personal belongings was also used as survival strategy by them. The results of hypothesis revealed that problems faced by respondents were significantly related to age, and education of respondents, family income, duration of heading family, and participation in developmental programmes. The strategies adopted by them were not significantly related to any of the variables however the problems faced were significantly related with strategies adopted by respondents. The results highlighted need for educating female heads of household about various developmental programmes offered by government and financial schemes for women in rural sector. A need was also felt to raise literacy level among women so that they become aware of various schemes for their benefit and they become independent.