

CHAPTER 6

WAGES, INCOME AND POVERSY OF CHILD LABOUR HOUSEHOLDS

6.0 Introduction

Illiteracy and economic backwardness coupled with massive under-employment and ignorance are the main reasons for the extensive prevalence of child labour. Children are employed, to supplement the inadequate family income in many cases and they also earn to maintain the family in many other cases. The wages paid to working children might be a pittance and very meager but they save the family from financial crisis and starvation. In this chapter, an attempt is made to understand the wage structure the employers follow for paying remuneration to child labour in the income of their families and the incidence of poverty in the sample household

6.1 Wage Structure

The statutory minimum wage rates which consists of a basic wage and cost of living allowance are announced by the authorities from time to time. The statutory board has identified a list of occupations for which minimum wage rates are fixed to be followed by the employers. However, there are many other occupations which did not find a place in the list for the fixation of minimum wages. Bangle making, *Agarbatti* making, Safety-pin making, *Zari* embroidery, Domestic services are some of the occupations which were not identified by the Minimum Wages Act but cater to the needs of a vast majority of girl workers in the urban informal sector. Lack of recognition and not inclusion of these occupations in the list by the Wage Board might be due to the invisibility of the extent of employment the girl workers are involved in, as these occupations are related to strictly home-based industries. Even where the minimum wage rates are applicable, the child workers hardly know about the rates and

the employers conveniently flout the rules to their advantage and pay wages much lower than the announced minimum wages. In fact, one of the reasons for the employers to engage children in certain occupations is that children are not only submissive, humble and sincere in their work but also readily accept the meager amount of wages without any resistance. Since the majority of girl workers were employed in the occupations of piece-rate wages, the practice of wage discrimination against them is not likely to be detected, though the ill-treatment of children by the employers in terms of abuses, strict vigilance (Bangle making), rejection of wares (embroidery, *Beedi* leaves), wrong count of wares (*Beedis*, *Agarbattis*) were widely practiced.

6.2 Statutory Minimum Wages and Actual Wages

In this context, it is relevant to make a comparison between the statutory minimum wage and actual wage rates followed by the employers for the occupations identified in the list of Daily Wages Act. The minimum wage rates are fixed separately for skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers, and it is stated that where the nature of work is same, no discrimination in payment of minimum wages shall be made on the basis of sex (see **Appendices 1, 2 & 3**). More importantly, the minimum basic rates of wages are linked to consumer price index, and therefore cost of living allowance would also have to be paid to workers along with daily wages. But the reality and practice revealed that none of the employers ever seemed to have bothered to get acquainted themselves with the prevailing norms of official daily wage rates. In the absence of strict enforcing authority, the employers went scot-free and paid wages much below the official wage rates.

As Table 6.1 shows, the employers in construction industry are supposed to pay monthly wages along with cost of living allowance to the workers. In practice, not only that they make payment on daily basis, but they also pay less wage for girls who carry head-loads and other unskilled work along with the boys at work site. If the daily wage is multiplied with 26 (normal average working days in a month), it would

be higher than the official monthly wage rate. This absurd phenomenon could be attributed to intermittent, irregular and very casual nature of employment, besides the strenuous work. Employers in any industrial activity of the informal sector would non-informal arrangement. In Petty stalls like eatable Dhabhas, Kirana stores and Bewarage stalls children were paid much below the official minimum wage rates. No employee working in an eatable establishment dealing with foodstuffs knew that there was a hierarchy in the remuneration to the vessel cleaners, vegetable cutters and house-keepers. The children, doing all types of menial chores were paid an equal amount of wages at around Rs.400-500 P.M. with increment of Rs.20 for each subsequent year.

Table 6.1
Actual and Statutory Minimum Wage Rates
(with effect from 01-01- 2002)

Sl. No.	Occupation	Actual Wage Rate		Statutory Wage Rate	
		Male(Rs)	Female(Rs)	Basic Wage	Cost of Living*2 Allowance for Point Increase(Rs)
1.	<i>Beedi</i> Rolling*1 (1000 <i>Beedis</i>)	-	30.00	35.00	0.10 Paise
2.	Construction	60.00 (Per day)	50.00 (Per day)	(Monthly) 675.00-Unskilled 880.00-Semi-skilled 1150.00-Skilled	3.90 5.00 6.25
3.	Restaurants	400.00 (Per month)	-	(Monthly) 750.00-Cleaner 810.00-Veg. cutter 850.00-House keeper 945.00-Cook	4.25 4.50 4.75 5.25

Source: Law of Minimum Wages Part-II, Minimum Rates of Wages in Assam

*1. Assam Gazette- Labour, Employment, Training and Factories Dept. (Lab.II), 2002

*2. The minimum basic rates of wages are linked to consumer price index for the industrial workers at 242 points (base year 1982=100). For any rise in consumer price index over and above this level, a cost of living allowance shall be paid as specified in the column and it shall be notified by the Commissioner of Labour for every six months i.e. on 1st April and 1st October

6.3 Wage Rates and Market Value

Usually market value of the product has a direct bearing upon wage rates. Hence, an attempt is made here to compare the market value of the products with the wage rates paid to the actual producers in the occupations, where workers received piece-rate wages. The maximum exploitation (Table 6.2) can be noticed in *Agarbatti* and Safety pin making industries where wage rate is fixed as per the production of 1Kg. of wares while the product was sold by number count in the market. While 1Kg. of *Agarbattis* and 1Kg. of Safety pins at the work place yield very meager wages of Rs.10 and Rs.5 respectively, the market value of the products varied between Rs.40-50 per a packet of 100 incense sticks (basing on the brand name, fragrance, aroma, etc.), and Rs.2 per a bunch of 10 Safety pins. Even in the Bangle making industry, girls under strict vigilance, sitting near the small furnace whole day made Bangles for which they were paid a pittance of Rs.15 to 20 for 10 sets of Bangles each set containing 6 Bangles. The market value for each set of 6 Bangles, basing on the design, was between Rs.40 to 50. Even after considering the material cost met by the employers, the difference between labour cost and product price was enormous.

For instance, in *Agarbatti* making, for 1Kg. of *Agarbattis* (approximately 1000 sticks), a girl child was paid Rs.10. That is, for making 100 *Agarbatti* sticks, the price-rate was Re.1. Whereas, the market value of a packet of 100 incense sticks is around Rs.40. After deducting the cost of raw material including labelling, packing, etc. which is worked out approximately at Rs.10 per a packet, the employers' profit is around Rs.29 for a packet of 100 incense sticks. In the same way, in Bangle making industry, girls were paid a remuneration of Rs.20 for making 10 sets of Bangles. That is, the piece-rate of one set of Bangles was Rs.2. As already noted that the market value of each set of Bangles (which consists of 6 Bangles) varied between Rs.40 to 50. The cost of raw material required for making one set of Bangles, as observed at the work-site, would not be more than Rs.5. Therefore, the employer's profit would be around Rs.35 per a set of Bangles. Similarly, *Beedi*-making, for rolling 1000 *Beedis*, a girl child was paid Rs.30. This worked out to 3 paise per *Beedi* works out to around

20 paise. In contrast, the market value per *Beedi* works out to around 20 paise. Even when 5 paise per *Beedi* is the cost of the raw material, the employer is left with a maximum profit of 12 paise per *Beedi*.

The worst exploitation in the field of remuneration was found in Safety pin making industry where young girls even at the tender age of 8 to 10 were paid a very paltry remuneration of Rs.5 per 1Kg. of wares (approximately 1000 pieces of Safety pins). The piece-rate for a bunch of 10 Safety pins was worked out to be 5 paise and the market value was Rs.2. It appears that production cost includes only the cost of raw material and not the labour cost. In other words, the labour cost was so low that it is almost negligible when considered the cost-benefit analysis. In every occupation mentioned in the table, the employers extracted as much labour as possible by engaging children at very low wages and earned huge profits at the cost of children's innocence and poverty.

Table 6.2
Employment Category-Wise Piece-Rate Wages and Market Value of Products

Sl. No.	Category of Employment	Piece-Rate Wages (Rs.)	Market Value of the Product (Rs.)
1.	Bangle making	15 to 20 (For 10 sets each set containing 6 bangles)	40 to 50 (Each set of bangles-rate varies basing on design)
2.	<i>Agarbatti</i> making	10 (For 1 Kg. of <i>Agarbatti</i> sticks)	40 to 50 (A packet of 100 insense sticks-rate varies basing on brand name)
3.	<i>Zari</i> embroidery	30 to 40 (A simple designed embroidery work) 400 to 500 (A rich designed embroidery work)	1500 to 1800 (Based on quality of material) 2500 to 3000 (Based on quality of material)
4.	Safety pin making	5 (Per 1 Kg. of safety pins)	2 (A bunch of 10 safety pins)
5.	<i>Beedi</i> making	30 (For 1000 <i>beedis</i>)	2 to 4 (A packet of 15 to 25 <i>beedis</i> -based on the brand name)
6.	Tailoring (Sewing centres)	5 (Petticoat) 10 (A frock of small size)	50 (Based on quality of material) 120 to 150 (Based on quality of material)

Source: Field survey.

6.4 Earning of Child Workers

If market value and wages indicate the proportion of exploitation, the wages earned by the child workers would reveal their economic status. Hence data were collected on this variable. The monthly earnings of child workers in respect of their occupations are presented in Table 6.3. Among all the occupations where girl workers were employed, Safety pins, Bangle making and *Agarbatti* making industries offered very low wages and average monthly income of girls in these industries worked out to Rs.214.30, Rs.287.50 and Rs.300.00 respectively. While none of the girls in *Agarbatti* and Safety pin making occupations earned more than Rs.400.00 per month, some girls in *Zari* embroidery and Bangle making earned upto Rs.600.00 per month. Though girls require specific skills to perform Bangle making and *Zari* embroidery work, their earnings were very low. For instance, 56.3% of the girls in Bangle making and 58.3% of girls in *Zari* embroidery could earn between Rs.200-400 and Rs.400-600 respectively. In *Beedi* making industry, more than one-fifth of the girls (23.1%) were able to earn a monthly income between Rs.600-800. The highest average paid occupation was Domestic services (Rs.506.50) where about 35.5% of the girls' income was between Rs.600-800.

In the case of boy workers, while 82.5% of the boys in Manufacturing industry earned more than Rs.600.00 per month, there were no boys in Mechanic industry whose earnings exceeded Rs.600.00 per month. In Petty business industry, 62.2% of boys were made to earn between Rs.600-800. The monthly incomes of child workers are calculated approximately on the basis of average daily production of wares and

Table 6.3
Occupations and Earnings of Child Workers

Sl No	Occupation	Below* 200	200-400	400-600	600-800	800-1000	1000- 1200	1200- 1400	Total	Average Earning	
A. Girl Child Workers											
1	Bangle making	4(25.0)	9(56.3)	3(18.7)	-	-	-	-	16(100)	287.5	
2	Agarbatti making	-	17(100)	-	-	-	-	-	17(100)	300.0	
3	Zari embroidery	2(16.7)	3(25.0)	7(58.3)	-	-	-	-	12(100)	385.3	
4	Safety pin making	6(42.9)	8(57.1)	-	-	-	-	-	14(100)	214.3	
5	Beedi making	3(7.7)	6(15.4)	21(53.8)	9(23.1)	-	-	-	39(100)	484.6	
6	Tailoring	2(6.9)	10(33.3)	13(43.3)	5(16.7)	-	-	-	30(100)	440.0	
7	Domestic services	4(12.9)	2(6.5)	14(45.2)	11(35.5)	-	-	-	31(100)	506.5	
	Sub-Total	21(13.2)	55(34.6)	58(36.5)	25(15.7)	-	-	-	159(100)	409.4	
B. Boy Child Workers											
1	Manufacturing	2(2.7)	8(10.8)	3(4.1)	50(67.6)	11(14.9)	-	-	74(100)	662.2	
2	Mechanic work	9(16.1)	10(17.9)	37(66.1)	-	-	-	-	56(100)	400.0	
3	Petty stalls	10(22.2)	-	7(15.6)	28(62.2)	-	-	-	45(100)	535.6	
	Sub- Total	21(12.0)	18(10.3)	47(26.8)	78(44.6)	11(6.3)	-	-	175(100)	545.7	
C. Both Boy and Girl Child Workers											
1	Construction industry	Boys	-	-	-	-	-	15(36.6)	26(63.4)	41(100)	1226.8
		Girls	-	-	-	-	-	25(89.3)	3(10.7)	28(100)	1121.4
		Total	-	-	-	-	-	40(58.0)	29(42.0)	69(100)	1184.1
2	Rag picking industry	Boys	-	12(52.2)	11(47.8)	-	-	-	-	23(100)	395.7
		Girls	-	14(53.8)	12(46.2)	-	-	-	-	26(100)	392.3
		Total	-	26(53.1)	23(46.9)	-	-	-	-	49(100)	393.9
Sub-Total		Boys	-	12(18.8)	11(17.2)	-	-	15(23.4)	26(40.4)	64(100)	928.1
		Girls	-	14(25.9)	12(22.2)	-	-	25(46.3)	3(5.6)	54(100)	770.4
		Total	-	26(22.0)	23(19.5)	-	-	40(33.9)	29(24.6)	118(100)	855.9
Grand Total			42(9.3)	99(21.9)	128(28.3)	103(22.8)	11(2.4)	40(8.8)	29(6.4)	452(100)	578.8

Source : Field survey.

* Monthly earnings per child worker

working days. In Construction industry, however, though the daily wages were known, their monthly incomes were not calculated by multiplying with 26, but approximate monthly incomes were estimated based on the workers' response at the work site and keeping in view the casual and irregular nature of work, and not attending to work daily (since there was no regular contract between the employer and child workers). Accordingly, the average monthly incomes of boy and girl workers in this industry were Rs.1226.80 and Rs.1121.40 respectively. In Rag picking, the average monthly income of children worked out to Rs.394.00. Besides Construction industry, the highest occupations for girls were Servant maids (Rs.506.50) and *Beedi* making (Rs.484.60) and for boys, Manufacturing (Rs.662.20) and Petty business industry (Rs.535.60). The proportion of girls whose earnings were Rs.600.00 and above was 15.7% as against 50.9% of the boys, which was more than three times.

6.5 Contribution of Child Labour

The basic factor responsible for child labour was the poverty of the households. Hence, it was considered necessary to examine whether the economic contribution of the child workers to their families had brought any relief. The particulars of the contribution of child workers to household income are presented in Table 6.4. The purpose of calculating monthly earnings of child labour was to estimate their share of contribution to the household income. The share of childrens' contribution varied with reference to the total amount of household income. In very poor families, the earnings of children from low paid occupations might have formed a substantial part of household income, while in relatively high income households, the earnings from better paid occupations might not be a substantial part of family income.

Table 6.4
Occupations and Contribution of Child Labour to Household Income

Sl No	Occupation	Upto 10%	10-20%	20-30%	30-40%	40-50%	Total	Average Contribution	
A. Girl Child Workers									
1	Bangle making	3(18.8)	5(31.2)	8(50.0)	-	-	16(100)	18.1	
2	Agarbatti making	9(52.9)	8(47.1)	-	-	-	17(100)	9.7	
3	Zari embroidery	3(25.0)	9(75.0)	-	-	-	12(100)	12.5	
4	Safety pin making	12(85.7)	2(14.3)	-	-	-	14(100)	6.4	
5	Beedi making	4(10.3)	14(35.9)	10(25.6)	7(17.9)	4(10.3)	39(100)	23.2	
6	Tailoring	10(33.3)	11(36.7)	5(16.7)	4(13.3)	-	30(100)	16.0	
7	Domestic services	4(12.9)	13(41.9)	12(38.7)	2(6.5)	-	31(100)	18.9	
Sub-Total		45(28.3)	62(39.0)	35(22.0)	13(8.2)	4(2.5)	159(100)	16.8	
B. Boy Child Workers									
1	Manufacturing	5(6.8)	18(24.3)	32(43.2)	16(21.6)	3(4.2)	74(100)	24.2	
2	Mechanic work	22(39.3)	27(48.2)	7(12.5)	-	-	56(100)	12.3	
3	Petty stalls	10(22.2)	30(66.7)	5(11.1)	-	-	45(100)	13.9	
Sub- Total		37(21.1)	75(42.9)	44(25.1)	16(9.1)	3(1.7)	175(100)	17.7	
C Both Boy and Girl Child Workers									
1	Construction industry	Boys	-	10(24.4)	23(56.1)	8(19.5)	-	41(100)	24.5
		Girls	-	7(25.0)	17(60.7)	4(14.3)	-	28(100)	23.9
		Total	-	17(24.6)	40(58.0)	12(17.4)	-	69(100)	24.3
2	Rag picking industry	Boys	-	20(87.0)	3(13.0)	-	-	23(100)	16.3
		Girls	8(30.8)	13(50.0)	5(19.2)	-	-	26(100)	13.8
		Total	8(16.3)	33(67.3)	8(16.3)	-	-	49(100)	15.0
Sub-Total		Boys	-	30(46.9)	26(40.6)	8(12.5)	-	64(100)	21.6
		Girls	8(14.8)	20(37.0)	22(40.7)	4(7.4)	-	54(100)	19.1
		Total	8(6.8)	50(42.4)	48(40.7)	12(10.1)	-	118(100)	20.4
Grand Total		90(19.9)	187(41.4)	127(28.1)	41(9.1)	7(1.5)	452(100)	18.1	

It can be observed from the table that contribution of girls from poorly paid occupations of *Agarbatti* and Safety pin making industries was very nominal at 9.7% and 6.4% respectively. Even the Bangle workers' average contribution (18.1%) could not reach one-fifth of the household income. So in the case with *Zari* embroidery workers whose average contribution was just 12.5%. However, in *Beedi* making industry, 10.3% of girls, majority of whom belonged to the Backward Class Community were able to contribute as high as 40-50% to their household income. In this community, as already observed that some of the menfolk were rendered unemployed and therefore womenfolk including girls resorted to *Beedi* making which is an age old occupation of *Santhal* community in some parts of Kokrajhar. Therefore, nearly 28.2% of girls in this industry were contributing around 30% and above to their household income. In the occupation of Servant maids, though the average income of girls was recorded highest, their average contribution to household income was only 18.9%.

The average contribution of Boy workers in Manufacturing industry was 24.2%. The contribution of about 25.7% of boys in this industry was above 30%. However, none of the boys in Mechanic and Petty business industries were able to contribute more than 30% to their household income. Therefore, the average contribution of boys in these industries was 12.3% and 13.9% respectively. In Construction industry, both the boys and girls whose average earnings was above Rs.1000, were able to contribute a share of about one-fourth to their family income. 19.5% of boys' and 14.3% of girls' contribution in this industry was above 30%. This industry enabled the children to contribute the largest share of household income as compared to that in all other occupations.

Caste, being another important variable, data relating to caste-wise contribution of the sample child workers to their family incomes collected. The details of data in this respect are presented in Table 6.5. About 30% of households in Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes communities were receiving contribution from their children around 40% and above. More than 50% of households in these communities consisted of children's income between 20-40%. The average earnings of children in the total income of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes households was 33.6% and 32.8% respectively.

In Backward Caste households, only 16.4% were receiving children's contribution around 40% and above, while as many as 71.8% of households consisted of the children's contribution upto 30%. Therefore, the average contribution of children in Backward Caste community was lowest at 22.3%. In Muslim community, while 16.3% of households had the childrens' income of around 40% and above, 67.4% of households were receiving childrens' contribution upto 30%. The average earnings of children in Muslim households was 27%. The average contribution of children in all the sample households was 28.7%.

Table 6.5

Caste-Wise Households and Share of Earnings by the Sample Child Labour

Caste/Community	Percentage Share of Child Earnings							Total Households	Average Percent-age of Earnings
	Upto 10%	10-20%	20-30%	30-40%	40-50%	50+			
Scheduled Caste (households)	4 (5.2)	8 (10.4)	18 (23.3)	20 (26.0)	19 (24.6)	8 (10.4)	77 (100)	33.6	
Scheduled Tribes (households)	...	9 (15.5)	19 (32.8)	12 (20.7)	12 (20.7)	6 (10.3)	58 (100)	32.8	
Backward Castes (households)	15 (22.4)	20 (30.0)	13 (19.4)	8 (11.9)	9 (13.4)	2 (3.0)	67 (100)	22.3	
Muslim Community (households)	7 (8.1)	15 (17.4)	36 (41.9)	14 (16.3)	10 (11.6)	4 (4.7)	86 (100)	27.0	
Others (households)	...	4 (33.3)	2 (16.7)	6 (50.0)	12 (100)	26.7	
Total	26 (8.7)	56 (18.7)	88 (29.3)	60 (20.0)	50 (16.7)	20 (6.7)	300 (100)	28.7	

Source: Field survey.

1. Total income of all the Hhds. = Rs.9,87,555

2. Total income of Children = Rs.2,77,499

a) Income of Boys = Rs.1,59,980

b) Income of Girls = Rs.1,17,519

3. The proportion of Boys' and Girls' earnings = 57.7:42.3

4. Percentage share of Child = 28.1

a) Percentage share of Boys = 16.2

b) Percentage share of Girls = 11.9

The total income of all the sample households worked out to be Rs.9,87,555 in which children's contribution was Rs.2,77,499. In terms of percentage, this contribution was 28.1%. The proportion of earnings of boys and girls in the total earnings of child workers was 57.7% and 42.3% respectively. The percentage share of boys' and girls' income in the total income of households was 16.2% and 11.9% respectively.

6.6 Household Poverty

The contribution of children enable the households to mitigate, to some extent, the poor living conditions of the family. In order to examine the household poverty and children's earnings, it was felt necessary to calculate household poverty on the basis of the poverty line so that it could be analysed as to how many households would fall below the poverty line when children's contribution was withdrawn from household income. Economists and various organizations had estimated poverty lines differently on the basis of the calorie intake required for minimum level of living (see **Appendix 4**). They have calculated poverty lines separately for rural and urban areas as the cost of living differed between the regions. The poverty line for urban Assam at 2004-05 prices, as given in the State-wise poverty lines was Rs.600.00. This was inflated by the consumer price index for industrial workers of Kokrajhar for 2004-05 and it worked out to be Rs.624.00 at 2004-05 prices. This estimate of poverty line was used to find out the households and population who fell below the poverty line. Since most of these households were relatively low-income households, income was treated on par with expenditure. Per capita income was used proxy for per capita expenditure in identifying poverty of households.

Particulars relating to the caste-wise households and the children's contribution in the mitigating of household poverty are shown in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6

Household Poverty with and without Children's Contribution

Poverty Line Rs.624.00

Caste/Community	Total Number of Households	Number of Households Below Poverty Line			
		With Children's Income	% of Households	Without Children's Income	% of Households
Scheduled Caste	77	20	25.97	47	61.04
Scheduled Tribes	58	24	41.38	49	84.48
Backward Castes	67	25	37.31	57	85.07
Muslim Community	86	33	38.37	70	81.40
Others	12	6	50.00	10	83.33
Total	300	108	36.0	233	77.67

Source: Field survey.

As the table reveals, the percentage of households falling below poverty line was highest in the Scheduled Tribes (41.38%) followed by Muslims (38.37%), Backward Castes (37.31%) and Scheduled Castes (25.97%). However, when children's contribution was withdrawn from the household income, the community which was affected most was the Backward Castes because the percentage of households falling below poverty line in this community increased to 85.07 which was the highest among those of all the caste-communities. Next to Backward Castes, the corresponding increase among households which fell below the poverty line was 84.48% in

Scheduled Tribes, 81.40% in Muslims and 61.04% in Scheduled castes. In the total 300 households, due to the withdrawal of children's income, the proportion of households below the poverty line increased from 36% to 77.67% which was more than two times. Thus, a substantial increase in the percentage of households below the poverty line was observed in all the caste-community households.

6.7 Sample Population and Below Poverty Line

Table 6.7 shows both the proportions of households as well as the population in the respective households along with the incidence of poverty. Like households, even the population below the poverty line was also highest in the Scheduled Tribes (45.01%) followed by Backward Castes (37.10%) and Muslim community (35.76%). Further, when children's contribution was withdrawn from household income, it was again the Backward Caste households that suffered most as the proportion of population below the poverty line in this community increased to 86.41%, the highest increase (i.e., by 49.31%) as compared to the corresponding situation in all other caste-communities. The lowest increase was recorded in the Scheduled Castes in both, households (i.e., by 35.07%) as well as in population (i.e., by 31.3%) after the withdrawal of their children's contribution from household income. On the whole, the proportion of households and population below the poverty line rose substantially when the income from child labour was not considered. The population below the poverty line would increase from 35.84% to 76.52% if children's contribution from household income was withdrawn. Therefore around 41.67% (77.67-36.00) of households and 40.68% (76.52-35.84) of population seemed to have crossed the poverty line by supplementing their income through child labour.

Table 6.7

Distribution of Households, Population and Incidence of Poverty

Poverty Line = Rs.624.00

Caste/Community	No. of Households	No. of Households Below Poverty Line		Total Population	Population Below Poverty Line	
		With Children Income	Without Children Income		With Children Income	Without Children Income
Scheduled Caste	77 (25.67)	20 (25.97)	47 (61.04)	527 (25.05)	141 (26.76)	306 (58.06)
Scheduled Tribes	58 (19.33)	24 (41.38)	49 (84.48)	411 (19.53)	185 (45.01)	352 (85.64)
Backward Castes	67 (22.33)	25 (37.31)	57 (85.07)	434 (20.63)	161 (37.10)	375 (86.41)
Muslim Community	86 (28.76)	33 (38.37)	70 (81.40)	674 (32.03)	241 (35.76)	531 (78.78)
Others	12 (4.0)	6 (50.0)	10 (83.33)	58 (2.76)	26 (44.8)	46 (79.31)
Total	300 (100)	108 (36.0)	233 (77.67)	2104 (100)	754 (35.84)	1610 (76.52)

6.8 Per Capita Income of the Sample Households

The per capita income of both the entire households as well as the households below poverty line was calculated and the details are presented in Table 6.8. The data of this kind was felt necessary for calculating per capita income to be required for households to cross poverty line and this data were presented in Table 6.9. As can be noted from the Table 6.8, the average per capita income of the people in the Scheduled Caste households was the highest (Rs.729.50) followed by the Scheduled Tribes (Rs.675.90), Muslims (Rs.642.40) and Backward Castes (Rs.637.70).

Table 6.8

Distribution of Per Capita Income of the Households and Incidence of Poverty

Poverty Line = Rs.624.00

Caste/Community	Per Capita Income of all the Households		Per Capita Income of the Households Below Poverty Line	
	With Children's Income	Without Children's Income	With Children's Income	Without Children's Income
Scheduled Caste	729.50	569.20	573.80	470.10
Scheduled Tribes	675.90	518.10	580.00	483.90
Backward Castes	637.70	550.40	578.30	535.50
Muslim Community	642.40	533.10	566.30	504.80
Others	637.50	520.80	555.80	494.60
Total	670.00	542.80	565.50	500.50

When their children's income was withdrawn, the average per capita income in Scheduled Caste households reduced from Rs.729.50 to Rs.569.20 (i.e., by 160.30), in scheduled tribe households the decline was from Rs.675.90 to Rs.518.10 (i.e., by 157.80), in Muslim households, it was declined from Rs.642.40 to Rs.533.10 (i.e., by 109.30) and in Backward Caste households, it was from Rs.637.70 to Rs.550.40 (i.e., by 87.30). That is, the reduction in average per capita income of households was the highest in Scheduled Castes (i.e., Rs.160.30) and the lowest in the Backward Castes (i.e., by Rs.87.30). Further, when the income from the child labour was not considered, the average per capita income of the households in all the caste-communities fell much below the poverty line. This shows the extent of poverty the people are living in.

In the case of households below the poverty line, the incidence of poverty was still greater if the children did not join the labour market. In the Scheduled Castes, the average per capita of the households below poverty line was Rs.573.80 which declined to Rs.470.10 (i.e., by Rs.103.70), when children's income was not considered, in Scheduled Tribes, the decline was from Rs.580.00 to Rs.483.90 (i.e., by Rs.96.10), in Muslim households, it was from Rs.566.30 to Rs.504.80 (i.e., by Rs.61.50) and in Backward Caste households, the decline was from Rs.578.30 to Rs.535.50 (i.e., by Rs.42.80). The decline in average per capita income of the households below poverty line was the highest in Scheduled Caste households and lowest in Backward Class households. This reveals that the childrens' contribution was the highest in Scheduled Caste households and the lowest in the Backward Caste households. Referring to the earlier table 6.7, however it could be observed that when childrens' contribution from the household income was withdrawn, the proportion of households below poverty line increased from 37.31% to 85.07% (i.e., by 47.76%) in Backward Castes and in Scheduled Castes, increase in the proportion of households was from 25.97% to 61.04% (i.e., by 35.07%). In other words, the increase in the proportion of households below poverty line due to the exclusion of childrens' contribution was highest in Backward Castes and lowest in Scheduled Castes among all the caste-communities. The inference is that though the childrens' contribution was the lowest in Backward

Caste households, it enabled the largest proportion of households to cross the poverty line while it was the other way round in the Scheduled Caste households.

6.9 Per Capita Income Requirement

The children's contribution had certainly helped the households to lessen their poor living conditions. Despite the hard-earned incomes of the children, it was found that nearly 36% of households were below poverty line. This percentage would increase to about 78% if children were withdrawn from labour market. In this context, it would be appropriate to calculate per capita income requirement, an amount of income by which households incomes would have to be raised so that they could afford to live without childrens' contribution. The estimated per capita income was calculated taking the amount of poverty line as the cut-off income and this data was presented in Table 6.9. As can be noted from the table, in Scheduled Castes, in the absence of childrens' contribution, a per capita income of Rs.153.90 was needed for the households to across the poverty line. Similarly, the per capita income required by Backward Caste households, which were below poverty line, was Rs.88.50. Since the childrens' contribution to Backward Caste households was lowest, it was obvious that in the event of their withdrawal from labour market, the per capita income requirement for the households to cross the poverty line was also lowest. For all the 36% of households which were below poverty line with childrens' contribution, an average per capita income of Rs.58.50 was required, or if childrens' contribution was withdrawn, the total of about 78% of households that would eventually fall below poverty line would be in need of per capita income of around Rs.123.50 to cross the poverty line.

Table 6.9
Households Poverty and Requirement of Per Capita Income

Poverty Line= Rs.624.00

Caste/Community	Per Capita Income of all the Households		Per Capita Income of the Households Below Poverty Line		Per Capita Income Required to Enable the Households Cross the Poverty Line	
	With Childrens' Income	Without Childrens' Income	With Childrens' Income	Without Childrens' Income	With Childrens' Income	Without Childrens' Income
Scheduled Caste	729.50	569.20	573.80	470.10	50.20	153.90
Scheduled Tribes	675.90	518.10	580.00	483.90	44.00	140.10
Backward Castes	637.70	550.40	578.30	535.50	45.70	88.50
Muslim Community	642.40	533.10	566.30	504.80	57.70	119.20
Others	637.50	520.80	555.80	494.60	68.20	129.40
Total	670.00	542.80	565.50	500.00	58.50	123.50

The above analysis on household poverty indicated that child workers by contributing their meager earnings to household income were able to mitigate the intensity of poverty in their households' with the contribution of children's income; about 41.67% (77.67-36.00) of households were able to cross the poverty line. If the children were withdrawn from labour market, it was found that an appropriate amount of per capita income of Rs.123.50 must be added to the households to cross the poverty line.

6.10 Girls' Contribution and Households Poverty

Though the girls' contribution to household income was 11.9% in the total sample households (Table 6.5), their income in some of the households constituted substantial part and thus enabled them to cross the poverty line. In order to examine the role of girls' contribution in the alleviation of poverty, those households which had exclusively girl workers were taken into account. Accordingly, 188 households were found having at least one girl worker in each of the households.

Table 6.10
Contribution of Girl Workers and Household Poverty

Poverty Line = Rs.624.00

Caste/Community	Number of Households	Number of Households Below Poverty Line			
		With Girls' Income	% of Households	Without Girls' Income	% of Households
Scheduled Caste	58	15	25.9	36	62.1
Scheduled Tribes	33	11	33.3	19	57.6
Backward Castes	32	18	56.3	27	84.4
Muslim Community	59	28	47.5	39	66.1
Others	6	2	33.3	4	66.7
Total	188	74	39.4	125	66.5

Source: Field Survey.

The caste-wise details of households and those falling below poverty line with and without girl workers' contribution to household income are shown in Table 6.10. As can be seen from the table, the percentage of poor households was the highest in Backward Castes (56.3%) followed by Muslims (47.5%), Scheduled Tribes (33.3%) and Scheduled Castes (25.9%). When girls' income was withdrawn from the household income, as many as 84.4% of households in Backward Castes would fall below the poverty line. The relative increase in the proportion of households below the poverty line was found highest in Scheduled Castes where the proportion of households increased by 36.2% (from 25.9% to 62.1%) and it was lowest in Muslim households where the proportion increased by 18.6% (from 47.5% to 66.1%). In the total of 188 households, 39.4% of households were below poverty line, which would increase to 66.5%, if girls' income was withdrawn from the household income. It means that nearly 27% (from 39.4 to 66.5) of households were able to cross the poverty line by supplementing their income through girls' contribution.

6.11 Girl Workers' Households and Per Capita Income Requirement

The data on per capita income of the households, household poverty and minimum per capita income needed for the households to cross the poverty line were presented in Table 6.11. As per the table, it can be noted that the per capita income of the girl worker's households was highest in Scheduled Castes (i.e., Rs.702.40) and the lowest in Backward Castes (i.e., Rs.4519.80). When the girls' income was withdrawn, the decline in per capita income was highest in Scheduled Caste households, from Rs.702.40 to Rs.584.40 (i.e., by Rs.118.00) followed by scheduled Tribe households from Rs.695.60 to Rs.580.00 (i.e., by Rs.115.60) and lowest in Muslim households from Rs.621.20 to Rs.560.50 (i.e., by Rs.60.70). When considered households below poverty line, the highest decline in per capita income due to the withdrawal of girls' income was recorded in Scheduled Castes from Rs.559.30 to Rs.410.60 (i.e., by Rs.148.70) followed by Scheduled Tribes from Rs.577.60 to Rs.429.50 (i.e., by Rs.148.10) and it was lowest in Muslims from Rs.542.80 to Rs.510.0 (i.e., by Rs.32.80). It means that the girls' contribution was the highest in Scheduled Caste

households and lowest in Muslim households. The proportion of households that seemed to have crossed the poverty line with the contribution of girls' income was highest in Scheduled Caste i.e., 36.2 percent (i.e., from 25.9% to 62.1%) and lowest in Muslims, i.e., 18.6 percent (i.e., from 47.5% to 66.1%) as already noted in table 6.10. The inference therefore was that where the girls' contribution was highest, a larger proportion of households were able to cross the poverty line where the girls' contribution was lowest.

Table 6.11

Girl Workers' Household Poverty and Requirement of Per Capita Income

Poverty Line= Rs.624.00

Caste/Community	Per Capita Income of all the Households		Per Capita Income of the Households Below Poverty Line		Per Capita Income Required to Enable the Households Cross the Poverty Line	
	With Girls' Income	Without Girls' Income	With Girls' Income	Without Girls' Income	With Girls' Income	Without Girls' Income
Scheduled Caste	702.40	584.40	559.30	410.60	64.70	213.40
Scheduled Tribes	695.60	580.00	577.60	429.50	46.40	194.50
Backward Castes	619.80	521.80	563.90	488.60	60.10	135.40
Muslim Community	621.20	560.50	542.80	510.00	81.20	114.00
Others	629.00	541.90	500.00	478.90	124.00	145.10
Total	653.50	565.20	549.10	504.50	74.90	119.50

The data on per capita income requirement also revealed that if girls' income was withdrawn from household income, the per capita income needed by the households to cross the poverty line was highest in Scheduled Castes i.e., Rs.213.40 and lowest in Muslims i.e., Rs.114.00. The increase in per capita income requirement in Muslim households due to withdrawal of girls income was Rs.32.80 (i.e., from Rs.81.20 to Rs.114.00). In Muslim households, a majority of girls were engaged in poorly paid household occupations where the remuneration was paid on piece-rate basis. Since almost all the occupations of girl workers, except Construction and Rag picking industries were of home-based industries, most of the girl workers combined work with invisible household activities. Yet, their contribution to household income saved many households from financial crisis. From the above analysis, it can be stated that with girls' contribution, around 27% of the households were able to cross the poverty line.

Thus, the above findings indicate the proportionate significance of the girl child labourers' contribution to income of the sample households in the study area.