

**A brief report on**

**Floods in Gopalganj 2010**



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Report prepared by  
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**Based on a Rapid Assessment Undertaken by**

**Dalit Watch, Bihar**

Bihar is a state prone to different natural hazards, e.g. floods, droughts, earthquakes and high velocity winds. These hazards occur due to various reasons, including the geographical location of the state. Among various types of disasters prevalent in the state, floods are a regular phenomena and ruinous by nature. Large parts of northern Bihar (north of the Ganga river) constitute a low lying area and are prone to floods on account of a number of rivers. These rivers originate from the Himalayas and become more dangerous during monsoon seasons. Nearly 73.06% area of Bihar, falling in over 20 districts, is prone to floods. Bihar accounts for 17.2 % of the flood-prone area of India. The problem of floods is further aggravated due to prolonged waterlogging caused by thousands of kilometers of embankments constructed on the sides of the rivers. Districts like Purnia, Saharsa, Darbhanga, Khagaria, Samastipur have been more prone to floods in the past.



In the year 2010, 6 out of 14 blocks in Gopalganj district faced severe floods. These blocks were Gopalganj Sadar, Brauli, Kutchaikot, Manjha, Sidwalia and Manjhagarh. The disaster happened due to a breach in the embankment of Gandak river. The most affected block was Brauli. According to Government reports more than 4400 families were affected by floods in the district. However, studies undertaken by various NGOs reveal a different scenario. Dalit Watch – a network of dalit-focused organizations in Bihar – undertook a monitoring exercise as well and this report presents the key findings of the exercise.

## **Objectives of the monitoring study**

- To analyze losses of property, livestock, crops and human lives due to floods in Gopalganj district;
- To analyze responses of the Government and NGOs after the floods – in terms of accessibility of relief interventions for the affected dalit communities;

## **Approach and Methodology**

The study was conducted by using participatory methodology, involving local people. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect quantitative data from a sample of different categories of respondents.

## **Sample for the Study**

Out of fourteen blocks, six blocks of Gopalganj district affected most severely by the floods were taken into consideration. A total of 90 work days of data collection was undertaken across 37 villages of 17 Panchayats. The survey covered 77 social groups (castes) in 37 villages of 17 panchayats and captured more than 6500 voices. Respondents were drawn from different community groups based on age, sex, caste, class and different occupation groups. During the process, the teams also held discussions with key local stakeholders, including Government officials, NGO workers and local citizens. Key stakeholders consulted in the process included teachers, PHC staff, local police functionaries, social activists and panchayat leaders.

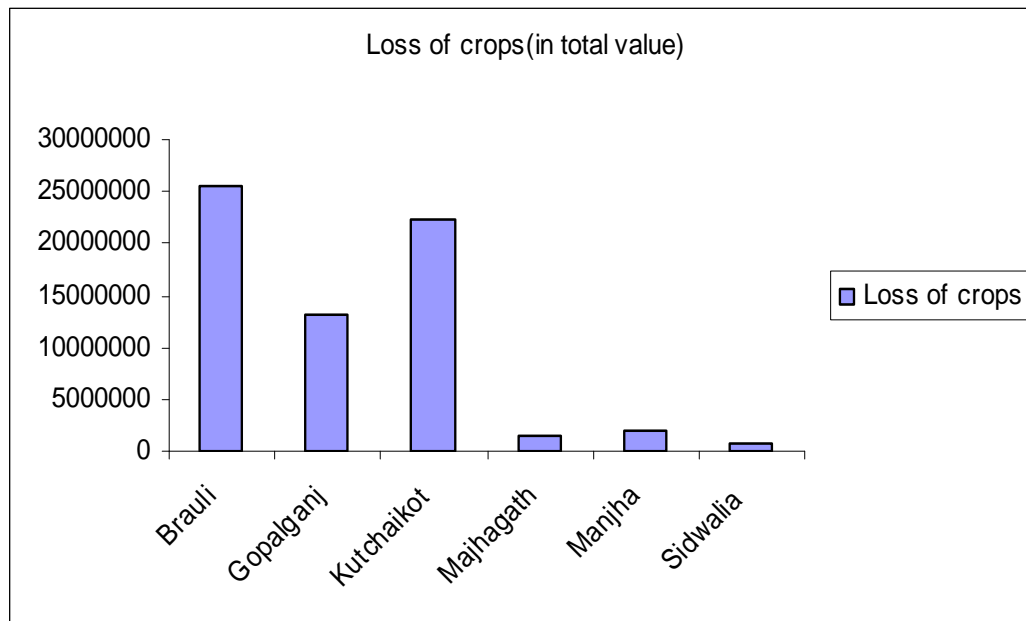
## **Team Composition**

The study team comprised development professionals from different disciplines with a Team Leader. All the team members were professional social workers and were well versed with different techniques of data collection. Most, if not all, persons in the team were those with experience of working in flood affected areas in recent times. Coordinators and Animators of Dalit Watch, including people associated with Dalit Samanway, Barh Sukhad Mukti Aandolan, Lok Shakti Sangathan, Nari Gunjan and Bachpan Bachao Andolan were involved in carrying out the Study, with support from NCDHR and Praxis.

### Critical Findings from the Study

The analyses of the data collected during the survey strongly reflect that there was a huge loss of crops suffered by the people of Gopalganj. Brauli block was the worst hit out of the six flood-affected blocks, followed by Kutchaikot and Gopalganj Sadar blocks (ref. Diagram 1). Rest of the blocks were moderately affected in terms of crop losses. The overall loss of crop was estimated to the tune of over Rs. 6.5 crores, of which damages amounting to Rs. 1.1 Crores were incurred by dalit households.

**Diagram 1 – Damages to crops due to floods in different blocks of Gopalganj**

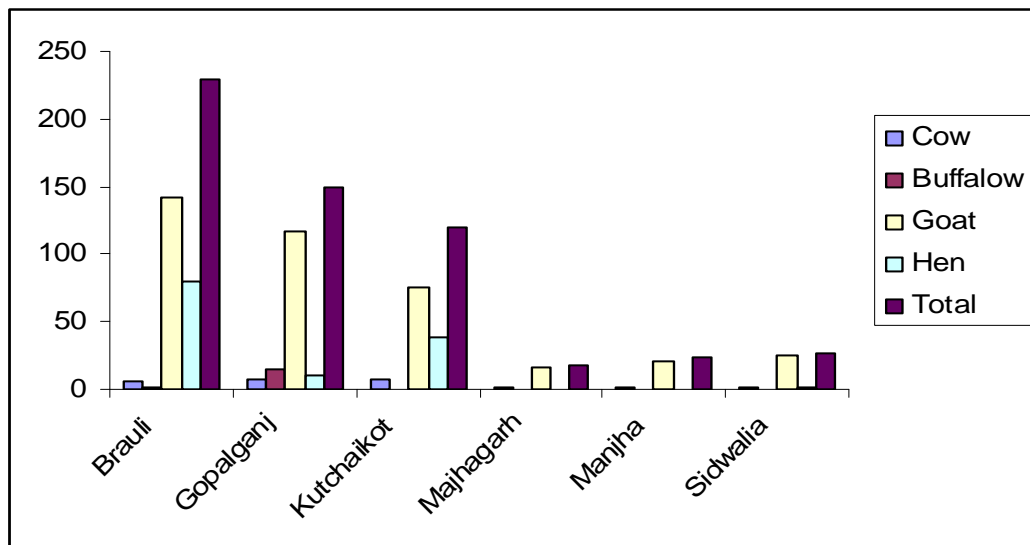


Panchayats that faced maximum destructions due to the floods include Sarphara (21% of the entire value of crop losses in Brauli block); Katgharwa (86% of damages in Gopalganj Sadar block); Durgmetinia(79% of damages in Kuchaikot block) and Nimuia (68.5% of damages in Manjhagarh block)..

Seikh Haider Ali a resident of Shalepur Panchayat of Kutchaikot block, suffered damages to his paddy and sugarcane crops spread across 18 bighas of land in the 2010 Gopalganj flood, valued approximately at Rs. 5.5 lakhs. Many other families of the area suffered similar losses due to the disaster.

At the time of emergencies like floods, cattle often provide valuable support to people, being important sources of income as well as complementary diet. In Indian society, goats are often called cows of the poor people. In Gopalganj, a total loss of 566 cattle were reported in the sample, including 24 cows, 16 buffalos, 397 goats and 129 hens. In terms of losses of livestock, Brauli, Gopalganj Sadar and Kutchaikot blocks suffered the most, as shown in Diagram 2.

**Diagram 2 – Losses of Domestic Animals**



**“I lost my lifeline!”**

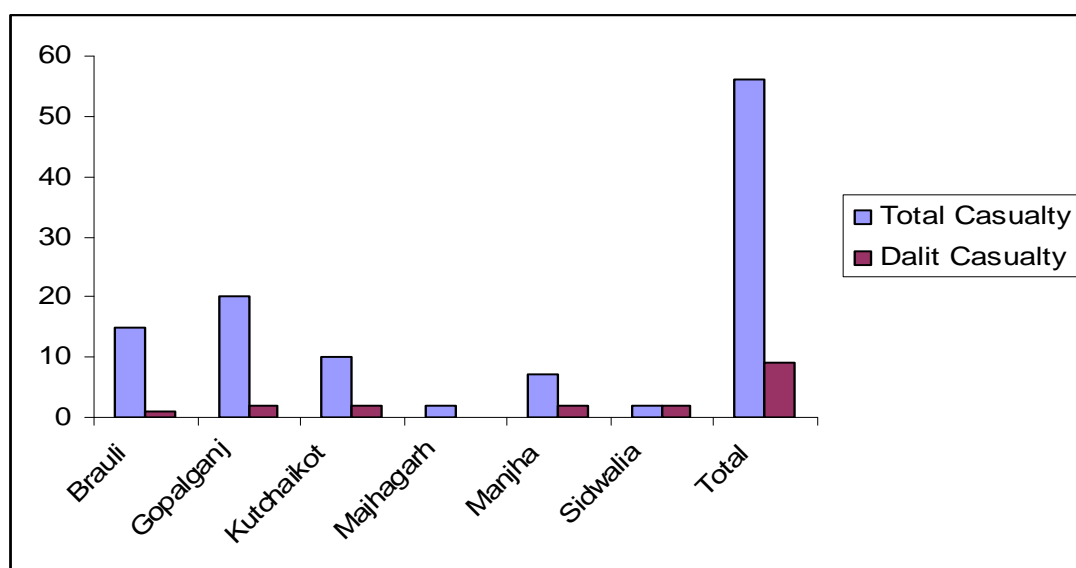
“My poultry business valued at Rs. 30 thousand, which I had started after taking a loan, was washed away by the floods of 2010. It totally ruined my life!” were the statements explaining the sufferings of Umeshwar Sharma, a resident of Chhota Badeya Kalkalaha village in Sarphara Panchayat of Brauli block.



Losses of human life are the ultimate impacts of a natural disaster. In the Gopalganj floods, human casualty reported was 56, which included 10 men, 6 women, 7 children and 33 people with disability. More than 16% of the casualties reported were from the SC community. Gopalganj Sadar block was the worst affected where 20 people lost their life. Diagram 3 shows losses to human lives in different flood-affected blocks of Gopalganj.



**Diagram 3 – Total Casualty of Human life**



In addition, losses to property were also reported during the study. Overall 1509 families (i.e. 22% of the total sample) suffered damages to their house property.





### **Salient Features of the Study**

- More than six thousand families were covered in the survey.
- 6 blocks, 17 Panchayats, 37 villages and 77 social caste group were covered.
- More than Rs. 6.5 crores worth of crops was lost out of which dalits suffered losses amounting to Rs. 1.1 crores. Worst affected Panchayats were Katgharwa of Gopalganj and Durgmetinia of Kutchaikot Block.
- During the flood 566 cattle lost their lives out of which 397 were goats. 33 physically disadvantaged people lost their life out of total 56 casualties reported in the sample.
- Out of total cattle loss 123 were of dalit Community.
- Maximum no of Human casualty recorded in JaginTola Panchayat (14) of Gopalganj Block.
- The casualty of Dalit community was 9.
- Out of the total family survived 22 percent lost their houses
- Out of the total survey family 55% of the families did not get any relief advantages.
- 47% of the people from the SC community have faced exclusion in accessing relief.
- Out of the total sample 50% were of laborers.
- Scheduled caste constitutes 22% of the total sample size.
- Out of total sample survey only 14 persons reported having APL/BPL card.

*Gathering of information undertaken by*

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Rapid Assessment of Gopalganj Flood 2012 undertaken by

Dalit Watch, Bihar

