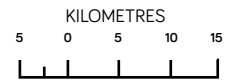


# BAHRAICH



INDIA  
UTTAR PRADESH  
**DISTRICT BAHRAICH**



Source: India Administrative Atlases, Census of India

# Realising India Series (2018-2019)

## District Bahraich

This Realising India report is a part of the series compiled by the ISDM Knowledge and Research Centre to disseminate the secondary research put together by the students of the PGP-DL programme at ISDM along with their reflections from the field as an output of their Rural Immersion.

Each part of this series contains findings from secondary research on the district in the first section and individual reflective pieces written by the students in the group while in the specific district. Some of these pieces have also been published in blogs and/or other web portals.

*\*Names have been changed to protect identities and privacy of persons students interacted with.*

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# BAHRAICH

## History of Bahraich

According to mythology, Bahraich is believed to have been the capital of Lord Brahma. It is said to have been a part of the Gandharva forest which developed by Lord Brahma as a place for the sages to pray. The second story of the origin of the name is that Bahraich was made the capital of Bhar Dynasty which led to the origin of the name “Bahraich”. (District Administration, History, 2018)

Bahraich was invaded in 1033 by Sayyid Sālār Masūd. Masūd and his descendants reigned the region until they were overthrown by Prince Nasiruddin Mahmud - son of Iltutmish who was appointed governor of Awadh in 1226 AD. Nasiruddin was responsible for colonizing and settling the Muslims in the south of the district. In all of the struggle, Bahraich was left without any Imperial control from 1287-1351 on account of the dynastic trouble which followed the death of Sultan Balban in 1287. (District Administration, History, 2018)

**Mughal Roots-** In 1556, during the reign of Akbar, Bahraich was made headquarters of an administrative division known as Sirkar Bahraich within the subah of Avadh.

**The East India Company beginning-** The Mughal dynasty reigned over the land till the East India Company declared its rule on Awadh. Bahraich was made the headquarters of a division with Mr. Wingfield as commissioner. Soon after Bahraich was to become a key part of history, playing an important role during the Mutiny of 1857 which broke out in Meerut. (District Administration, History, 2018)

**Political Awakening-** The Indian National Congress in 1920 amplified the political significance of the district. To oppose the Simon Commission a total strike was called in Nanpara, Jarwal & Bahraich Town. In 1926, Sarojini Naidu visited Bahraich where she appealed to all the workers for self-rule (Swaraj) and to wear Khadi (Swadeshi). In 1929, Gandhi held a public meeting in an old high school of the district, the Maharaj Singh Inter College. It politicised the masses further. During the Quit India Movement in 1942 there was a series of events in Bahraich which resulted in the arrest of several local leaders. In 1947, the day of freedom was celebrated with great enthusiasm along with whole of the nation. (District Administration, History, 2018)

## Topography

The district is located in the northern part of the Devipatan Division. Bahraich lies between 280.24' and 270.4' N latitude and 810 65' to 810 3' eastern longitudes. The geographical area of the district is 4696.8 sq. km in total and it is a part of the vast Ghaghara basin. On the northern side, Bahraich shares its border with Nepal, Barabanki and Sitapur districts in the south, Kheri in west and Gonda and Sravasti are in the eastern side. The topography of Bahraich district is almost flat with a gentle slope towards the south. In the local language, uplands are known as *Uparhar* and lowlands are known as *Tarhars*. (Rai, n.d.)

The northern part of the district is Tarai region and is a natural forest covered area. With 75 districts and 822 blocks in Uttar Pradesh, district Bahraich comprises 14 blocks as lower administrative units.

Bahraich has about 7% of its area under forests. The soils of the district are very fertile. They consist of “*Matiya*” also known as clay, “*Dumat*” also known as loam. The *Matiya* is ideal for rice cultivation and the *Dumat* is ideal for the cultivation of various types of crops. (Rai, n.d.)

## Climate

Bahraich has a warm humid subtropical climate. Winters are cool and dry from December to February with dry and hot summers from April till June. Monsoons last from mid-June to mid-September, and the district gets an average annual rainfall of 1124 mm. Average temperature in winter is around 22.6°C. The highest humidity is in August with an average of 80%. The months of March to May are relatively dry. (Rai, n.d.)

## Floods and disasters

Due to annual devastation caused by floods in Bahraich, the people have accepted this natural phenomenon as their destiny. Residents usually either try to save their belongings or migrate. 2014 was the year of devastation. 200 villages submerged in Bahraich region alone and some of them were erased from the map. Ghaghra and Saryu rivers are famous for their devastating spell during the rainy season. (Usama, 2015)

One of the consequences of floods in Bahraich is displacement in different villages. Geographical and topological conditions and human intrusion in the name of development cases havoc regularly. Flood damages and creates several problems, one of which is loss of Livelihood. (Kumari & Pathak, 2017)

<b>Collapsed Village</b>	<b>Year of Displacement</b>	<b>Number of People</b>
Khragpur	1968	10000
Gangapur	1994	4000
Panchadupur	1998	4000
Baharpur	1998	5000
Silauta	2001	7000
Umariya	2001	3000
Bhauri Sipahiya	2002	8000
Munsari	2003	4000
Maikapurawa	2003	6000
Sansari	2004	2500
Kapraul	2004	4000
Golaganj	2006	8000
Magraul	2007	7000
Pipri	2007	4000
Bansgadhi	2011-12	6000
Tarapurwa	2012	3000
Jarwal	Till today	4000
Kayampur	Till today	3000
Baundi	Till today	3000
Jogapurwa	Till today	5000

Trends in displacement in different villages of Bahraich

(Source: Kumari & Pathak 2017)

## Water Quality

Accessing drinking water that is safe to use is a grave challenge in the district. Water quality problems in Bahraich are caused by the following factors:

1. Pollution
2. Over-exploitation
3. The rapid pace of agricultural growth combined with financial and technological constraints and non-enforcement of laws that have led to huge quantities of waste and pollution entering ground water
4. Non-uniform distribution of rainfall
5. Sewage discharge, run-off from agricultural fields

6. Floods and droughts
7. Lack of awareness and education among users
8. Bacteriological Contamination
9. Other contaminants include excess arsenic, iron, fluoride, nitrates and salinity. (Mehrotra, Mishra, Tripathi, & Shukla, 2014)
10. Increase in groundwater extraction through deep tube-wells for drinking and irrigation purposes, leads to salinity ingress (Rai, n.d.)

Therefore, we note that the problems linked to groundwater use were not limited to depleting sources, but additionally related to contaminants.

### Arsenic affected areas

Out of fourteen, ten blocks of Bahraich district have reported arsenic poisoning. These are, Mahasi, Kaiserganj, Jarwal Balaha, Chitaura, Phakharpur, Mihinpurwa, Shivpur, Huzoorpur, Tejwapur. (Pandey, Lehri, Mehrotra, & Srivastava, 2015)

In 1993, the World Health Organisation lowered the health based provisional guideline for a 'safe' limit for arsenic concentration in drinking water to 10 µg/L because of the ill effects arsenic has on human beings. Consumption of drinking water containing more than 50µg/L arsenic concentration is known to put the person at risk of cancer and of arsenic related skin lesions. (WHO, 1993)

### Categorisation of arsenic ranges in Bahraich

After analysing the arsenic range distribution in Bahraich, results show that out of the total 46% tested hand pumps, 52% hand pumps contain arsenic. Within the hand pumps affected by arsenic, most (57%) have a contamination of 10 - 40 µg/L, and almost 11% have arsenic in excess of 50 µg/L. (Mehrotra et al, 2014)

Geographic Information System (GIS) based arsenic categorization illustrates that worst high-arsenic hand pump sources are found in depression zone and low-lying topography LIKE Huzoorpur and Tejwapur. (Mehrotra et al, 2014)

### Administration

#### Tehsils

- There are six Tehsils in district Bahraich
- There are 1387 revenue villages under these Tehsils



#### Blocks:

There are 14 blocks in Bahraich which are listed below:

- Visheshwarganj
- Jarwal

- Nawabganj
- Tejwapur
- Kaisarganj
- Balha
- Payagpur
- Hujurpur
- Mahasi
- Pakharpur
- Chittaura
- Mihinpurwa
- Shivpur
- Risia

There are two Lok Sabha and ten Vidhan Sabha constituencies in Bahraich. (District Administration, 2018)

## Livelihood

The most basic definition of livelihood is a means to earn a living. Livelihood is a set of economic activities governed by a complex system of political, cultural, social, and environmental factors.

In a country such as India, livelihood is also determined by factors such as caste and class. According to Harsh Mander, *“the middle class feel that they are where they are because of hard work, whereas the poor are poor because they are lazy, lack the skills, or abilities. The place of birth, and not the capabilities, determine the opportunities given to the individual, thereby affecting the livelihood.”*

Livelihood in India, therefore, isn't a problem that affects every individual equally. What makes livelihood complex is that is affected not by the capabilities of the individual, but by the opportunities of education and health, place of birth, class, caste, and gender. Therefore, a boy born to a businessman in Delhi will not have the same livelihood ecosystem to a girl born to a landless farmer in Uttar Pradesh.

Agriculture, with its allied sectors, is the largest source of livelihoods in India. 70% of the rural population in India still depends on agriculture for livelihood, with more than 80% of the farmers being marginal - cultivating less than 1 hectare of land and small - cultivating more than 1 and less than 2 hectares of land. (FAO, n.d.)

## Livelihood in Bahraich

Because of the high fertility of land and low industrial activity in the district, more than 80% of the total workers depend on agriculture. However, more than 75% of the total agriculture workers are cultivators of which more than 50% are small and marginal farmers.

Bahraich also has a forest area of ~14%. Net sown area, the area covered by crops and orchards, is 67% - almost the same as that of UP. Cropping intensity of 172 indicates that the more than 70% of the cultivable land area is under double cropping indicating high fertility of land and proper planning for agriculture. Only ~4% of the cultivable area is fallow land, i.e., areas temporarily out of cultivation, implying that there is a lot of pressure on available land, leaving not enough land for regeneration. (Dept. of Agriculture Cooperation & Farmer welfare, n.d.) Furthermore, this pressure on the land resources leads to increased use of fertilisers, deteriorating secondary productivity and also the primary productivity of land in the longer run.

The district also faces the problem of inequitable distribution of land as the land that 8% of the people own is equal to the area owned by 77% of the people collectively. Moreover, given that 77% of the land holdings are marginal and 13% are small holding with an average family size of 6.5 it makes lives precariously dependent on the vagaries of agriculture output. (Garia, 2008). As a larger number of people are involved there than what is actually required for the purpose of agriculture, this makes disguised employment a norm.



## Worker Profile of Bahraich

Workers Profile [in '000]	
Cultivators	449
Of the above, Small/Marginal Farmers	242
Agricultural Labourers	143
Workers engaged in Household Industries	16
Workers engaged in Allied Agro-activities	NA
Other workers	111

Source : District Profile (PLP 2013-14; Sankhyikiya Patrika)

## Land Utilization Pattern in Bahraich

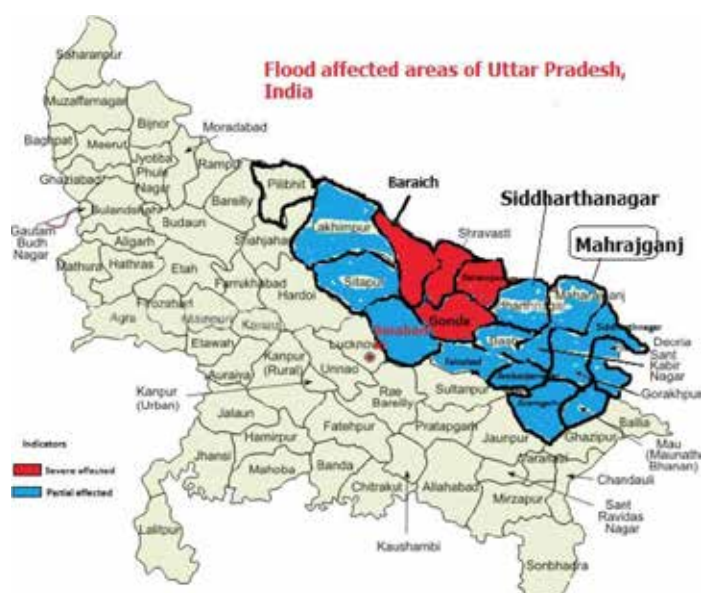
Land Utilization	Hectare
Total Area Reported	486062
Forest Land	67928
Area Not Available for Cultivation	3650
Permanent Pasture and Grazing Land	553
Land under Miscellaneous Tree Crops	6070
Cultivable Wasteland	2211
Current Fallow	13364
Other Fallow	5328
Net Sown Area	329739
Total or Gross Cropped Area	499898
Area Cultivated More than Once	170159
Cropping Intensity [GCA/NSA]	163

Source : District Profile (PLP 2013-14; Sankhyikiya Patrika)

## Consequence of floods on livelihoods

What makes the problem of livelihood worse is the recurrence of floods every year. In Uttar Pradesh, Bahraich has been identified as one of the most severely flood affected districts. The border with Nepal and the presence of Ghagra and Saryu rivers make Bahraich vulnerable to floods. Moreover, illegal sand mining aggravates the problem.

Source : PGVS & Christian aid flood situation report 2017



In the floods of 2014, a large part of the state of Uttar Pradesh suffered. (“Flood situation report”, 2017). In Bahraich alone, 200 villages submerged and few villages were erased completely. 130 villages of Nanpara, 44 of Mehsi and 28 of Kaisarganj were severely affected. (Up flood toll mounts to 49, 2014). Worst affected blocks in Bahraich are Shivpur, Mahsi, Mihipurwa, Kaisarganj and Fakharpur.

“A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (both natural and social) and activities required for a means of living; a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with the recovery from and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base”. (Meyer, n.d.) According to this definition, Bahraich doesn’t have the coping mechanism to cover from shocks and natural disasters, making livelihood more uncertain than it already is.

Floods have both direct and indirect consequences on the livelihood. While on the one hand, floods wash away the crops, on the other hand, the devastation caused by floods damages the stock of grains and the infrastructure including the schools, buildings, and roads. (Kumari & Pathak, 2017)

### **Child Labour as a consequence of unstable livelihood**

According to 2011 census, while in India the number of child workers had declined significantly from 1971, in Uttar Pradesh, the number of child workers had shown an increase in every census. (Prasad & Rizwan, 2015). In 2011, it stood at an all-time high, crossing 21 lakhs (21,76,706), with a child worker ratio of 4:27. In the state, 59% of child workers are boys, while the remaining are girls. As per the 2011 census, the highest number of child workers in Uttar Pradesh were found to be in Allahabad district. However, Bahraich district was identified as the most critical district in the state for trafficking, since an overwhelming majority of children rescued from and repatriated from other States hailed from this district. (Prasad & Rizwan, 2015) According to a study, in 2015 Child Labourers in Bahraich District and the adjoining districts of, Gonda and Shravasti accounted for the bulk of the children rescued from other States.(Chauhan & Bindra, 2017)

Small land holdings, coupled with an average family size of 6.5 members, makes sustenance a struggle for the families. Consequently, the family depends on the child's income as it augments the family income, making child labour an acceptable phenomenon. The problem of child labour is further worsened by middlemen or traffickers. They deceive and convince parents to send their children for paid work, where they provide cheap labour, work for long hours at minimal rates, are vulnerable to exploitation and cannot complain. Children, with the consent of the parents, migrate either to other districts in the state and other states such as Maharashtra to work in dhabas (roadside eateries). Moreover, according to primary research, the children are first generation learners, making parents hesitant about the outcome of education.

### **Health in Bahraich**

Health an Important Theme in Developing a Nation

Health is one of the main themes that every government and institutions are looking at, as part of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The health indicators of the nation speak of the strength of the nation. By an online fact provider based in the United States, India was ranked at 163 on the basis of life expectancy of the citizen. (Life Expectancy of Countries, 2015) The ability to have a long-life expectancy does not derive from having only facilities, however, should come along with the best qualities.

India as a complex nation is moving towards promoting good governance through a healthy nation. NITI Aayog, a Think Tank of the Indian government has come up with parameters and indicators in line with the SDGs on health. Aspirational District Programme (ADP) of the country is one of the strategies where

the government is trying to put health as an important Theme. ADP has been developed to bring convergence in all the development programmes with a holistic approach. Health and nutrition have been taken as a indicators to calculate and identify Aspirational Districts which shows the nation's commitment towards the sector. (Aspirational District Programmes, n.d.) (See table below)

Theme	Weight	Data Points
Health & Nutrition	30%	31
Education	30%	14
Agriculture & Water Resource	20%	12
Financial Inclusion	5%	6
Skill Development	5%	10
Basic Infrastructure	10%	8
Total :		81

Data point weightage breakup for Aspirational District Programme (NITI AYOOG, 2018)

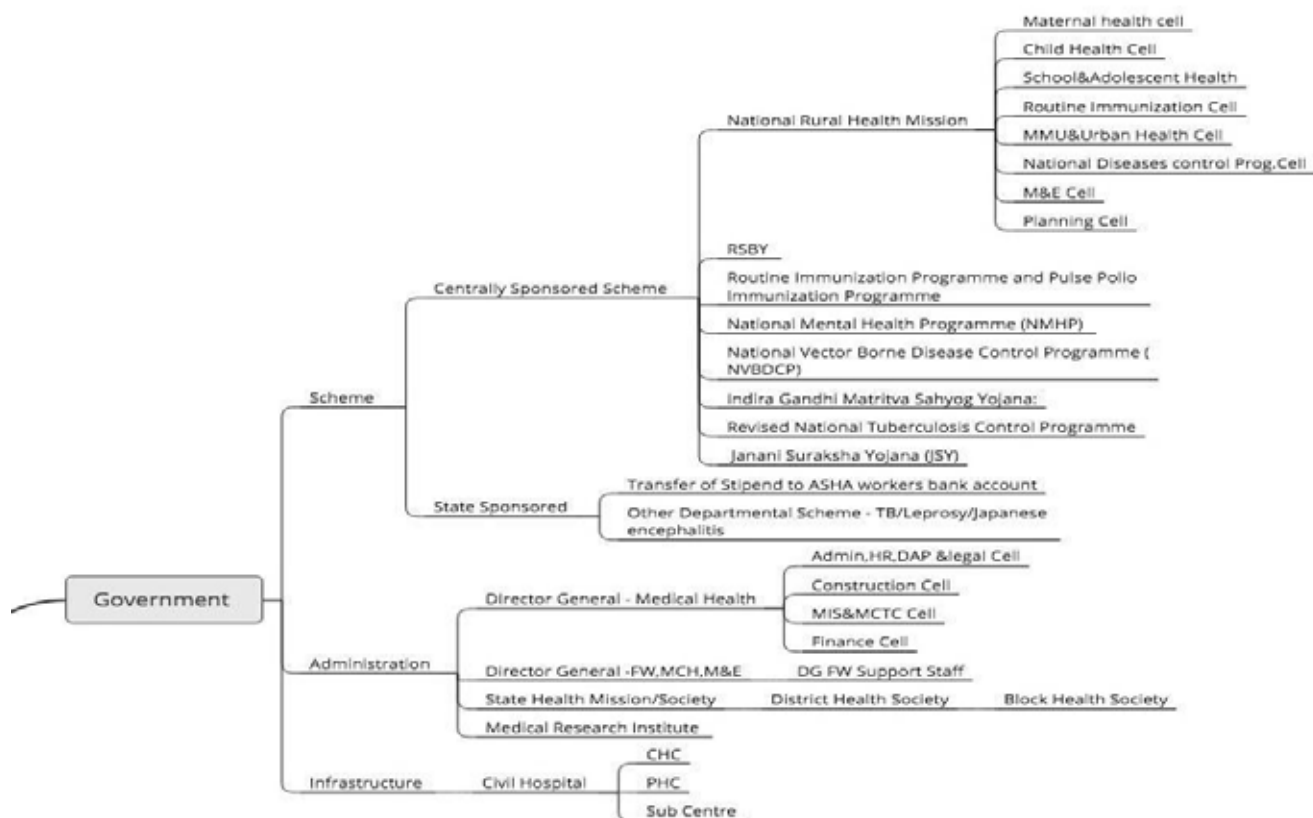
Bahraich has a long history of facing several natural calamities and is also a victim of diseases which have impacted the entire country along the course of development. A district considered to be one of the least developed districts in India. As per NITI Aayog, several diseases have struck the district as a whole and the state. Uttar Pradesh was struck with Filariasis and Malaria extensively during 1950s till the 2000s. The government of India has initiated many interventions to control the spread of such epidemic by establishing research centres and prevention units around the State. Bahraich was one of the districts of Uttar Pradesh that received support from National Filariasis Control Program (1955-56) intervention through their Village Prevention Units around the District.

A flood prone district with minimal health infrastructure and lack of information to fight endemic issues that have created a vicious cycle reinforcing itself into a spiral loop. In 1999 Bahraich witnessed 100 deaths or more in a single PHC pertaining to *Plasmodium Falciparum* which became a concern for the state at large. Studies conducted by the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) and the National Institute of Malaria Research show that the causes of malaria spreading in the district have been from human settlement and cattle sheds which were breeding ground for mosquitoes. (ICMR-National Institute of Malaria Research, 2017)

## Health Administration

Uttar Pradesh is a state with a population of 19,95,81,477 as per 2011 census and a projected population of 22 crores by 2018. This clearly indicates an ever growing need for a strong administration and policies for UP's governments.

Uttar Pradesh follows similar health administrative structures as at the national level. The apex body at the state level is the Directorate at district with the Chief Medical Health Officer at the helm and the block level Medical Health Officer and the Public Health Centre of the respective block. There are 1349 villages in the district which do not have hospital facilities and 1324 villages without PHC facilities. Of these 570 villages have the facility of a hospital available within 5 kms, 291 villages have to cover a distance of 5-10 kms in order to avail this facility. 488 villages have to travel a distance of more than 10 kms to avail this facility. (Bahraich District Level Statistical Health Information, n.d.)



Mind Map – Government Intervention in Health

With regard to Primary Health Centres, 473 villages avail this facility at a distance of less than 5 kms, 513 villages at a distance of 5-10 kms. The remaining 338 villages have to travel a distance of more than 10 kms. Availing this facility would be a difficult task and such gaps have made life in the village difficult.

There are 2 district Hospital with no sub-divisional hospitals in the entire district. Bahraich finds itself with 14 CHC, 63 PHCs and 310 Sub Centre serving 34 lakh population which implies that 1 CHC serves around 2.5 lakh population. As per government guidelines a sub-centre would cater to a population of 3000, PHC to 30,000 and a CHC to 1,20,000. Ideally 6 SCs refer to 1 PHC and 4 PHCs refer to 1 CHC (Mission, 2017).

### Population Trends in Bahraich

As per the 2011 Census, the population of Bahraich is 34,87,731 with a decadal growth of 46.48%. This is a very high rate of growth relative to the state average of 20.23% and the national average which is 17.64%, suggesting that Bahraich can expect rapid increase in population growth if the current trend is maintained.

The increasing population can be analysed to illustrate trends of the community not accepting family planning measures. Usage of contraceptives such as condoms and pills in Bahraich is low compared to the state usage.

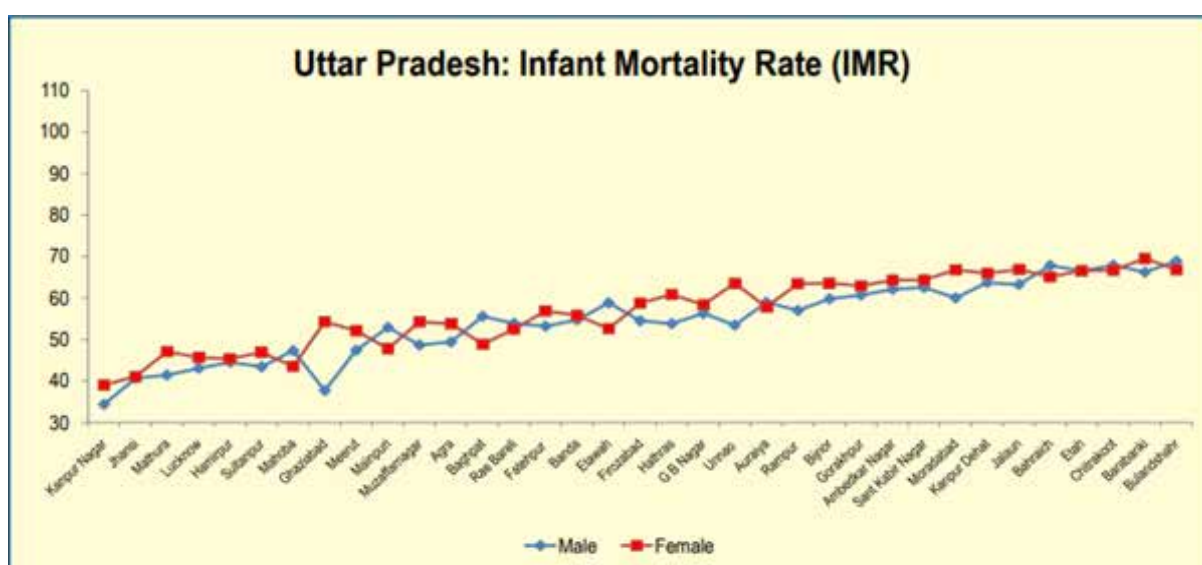
## Infant Mortality Rate

The failure of immunization reaching last mile has led to the creation of a systemic culture of children being vulnerable to diseases. The figure shows Bahraich contribution in terms of IMR with 66/1000 deaths below the state average of 68/1000. The failure of basic health care acts as a deterrent towards the mental as well as physical development of a child.

There is a high prevalence of child wasting, stunting, and underweight children (below 5 years) in Bahraich, when compared with other Indian districts. (Annual Health Survey report on clinical, anthropometric and bio chemical survey - II)

- Ranked 55 in Wasting with 26.4 % population
- Ranked 22 in Stunting with 68.3% population.
- Ranked 17 in Underweight with 59.5% population.

### District wise Infant Mortality rate of Uttar Pradesh



Source: Annual Health Survey report on anthropometric and bio chemical survey - II.

	Bahraich	Uttar Pradesh
Diarrhoea	11.6%	10.8%
Acute respiratory Infection	13.7%	27.9%
Fever	98%	-NA-

Source: (Annual Health Survey report on clinical, anthropometric and bio chemical survey - II)

## Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR)

The high MMR in Bahraich district is on account of large distances to health infrastructure which makes accessibility to the facilities a problem.

Institutional Delivery is one of the important drivers of MMR, as the figure below shows home delivery is 65.9% out of which only 26.7% are performed by skilled individuals. High number of home delivery leads to low quality of delivery, causing various problems including Sepsis and Asphyxia which causes high MMR rate in the district.

## Distribution of Deliveries occurring in Bahraich

	Uttar Pradesh	Bahraich
Institutional Delivery	56.7%	32.4%
Delivery at govt Institution	39.0%	26.6%
Delivery in Private Institution	17.6%	5.8%
Delivery at home	42.1%	65.9%
Delivery at home by skilled personnel	28.9%	26.7%
Safe Delivery	63.3%	50.0%

Source: (Annual Health Survey report on clinical, anthropometric and bio chemical survey - II)

## Education in Bahraich

The development of a nation depends heavily on education and literacy. It allows people to be productive, to earn their livelihoods, and also contributes to a country's overall economic growth. Apart from playing an instrumental role in reducing poverty, education contributes to improving health as well.

Historically, education in India has been for the elite. Before British rule, 'Hindu Education' entailed Brahmin teachers inculcating knowledge in Brahmin children. The education system in India under British rule further reinforced this tendency, catering greatly to the elite. This along with India's focus on Higher Education more than on Primary Education post-independence, contributes strongly to the alarming state of the education sector in India.

India, after China, has the second largest elementary education system and one of the largest Higher Education systems in the world. All states and Union Territories in India have adopted the 10+2 system. The education system is divided into Primary Education, Secondary Education, Senior Secondary Education, and Higher Education. A student can pursue Higher Education in India after passing the XII standard. According to the stream, graduation in India can take three to five years. In Uttar Pradesh, the minimum age for admission into primary school is 6 years, and the age limit for writing the Secondary Education (Class X) examinations is 14 -18 years while only 39% of the women are literate. (Bahraich District: Census 2011-2018 data)

## Primary Education

According to Unified District Information System for Education (U-DISE), there are 4,334 schools in Bahraich. 80% of schools in 2016-17 at the Primary level are government schools, which have declined from 89% in 2011-12. (MHRD, 2017) The high number of Government schools can also be attributed to the vast percentage of rural areas in Bahraich. 83% of the schools in rural areas are government schools, while the percentage in Urban areas is 28%. The number of government schools in different blocks varies from 78% to 88% in different blocks of the region. Mihinpurwa block has a greater number of schools, compared to other blocks of the district. (Blocks in Bahraich, n.d.)

## Indicators

In both Primary and Upper Primary education, Bahraich has underperformed compared to Uttar Pradesh based on certain defined universal indicators. The female enrolment ratio in Bahraich is less than half of that of India, as well as Uttar Pradesh. A number of Community Based Organisations are working towards girl education in the district since Bahraich is considered to be one of the most backward districts of India. (Uttar Pradesh Education for All, n.d.)

The drop-out rate in Bahraich is higher than India's average which can be attributed to the high number of cases of child trafficking for child labour. ("National Judicial Data Grid", n.d.) Although, with respect to having toilets for both genders in Primary government schools, Bahraich performs as well as other districts in Uttar Pradesh and India. The conditions of constructed toilets are questionable. It is interesting to see that percentage of schools with electricity in the district compared to India is one-fourth.

The proportion of enrolment of children from the Scheduled Castes (SC) to that of total children in Bahraich is almost at par with that of India. Mihinpurwa has a high enrolment of children from Scheduled Tribes in school compared to other blocks in the district, since this block has a high Tribal population compared to other blocks. 3,350 out of 4,334 schools do not have the requisite number of teachers as per RTE norms. (MHRD, 2017)

## Madarsas

Because of high Muslim population in the district, there are a lot of Madarsas and CBOs for Muslim education. The situation of Muslim education is dismal in the region. The literacy rate amongst Muslims in the region is 43.7%, compared to 49.3% for the whole district. Usually, these Madarsas are located next to Mosques. (Garia, 2008).

## Social Security

The following organizations are working under the Department of Social Welfare: –

- Directorate of Social Welfare, Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow.
- Tribal Development Directorate, Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow
- Directorate of prohibition, Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow.
- Uttar Pradesh Scheduled Caste Finance and Development Corporation (Ltd) Lucknow
- Uttar Pradesh Social Welfare Works Corporation (L) Lucknow
- UP Scheduled Caste / Tribal Research and Training Institute, Lucknow
- Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj Research and Training Institute, Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow
- Uttar Pradesh Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Commission, Lucknow

Various Schemes/Services for the District Population are –

1. Students –
  - a. Scholarships
  - b. Book bank scheme for scheduled castes / tribes
  - c. Fee reimbursement scheme
  - d. Non-recurring assistance scheme
  - e. Technical education facilities
2. Social Welfare –
  - a. Scholarship scheme for Scheduled Castes / tribes and Vimukta castes
  - b. Scholarship scheme for economically backward group belonging to the General Category
  - c. Upgradation of slums scheme for maintenance of Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Tribes Prevention Act, 1989
3. Special Schemes
  - a. Scheme for self-employment
  - b. Sanitary mart scheme
  - c. Shop construction scheme
  - d. Skill enhancement training
  - e. Free borewell scheme (Administration, 2018)

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# Stories from the Field

## *Increasing Burden of Farmers*

On the first day we reached our designated district Bahraich we met the Mrs Savita, a fantastic lady who has been working for many years towards the upliftment of women. We had a nice conversation with her. After that, she took us to Nagar village to receive first-hand experience of village life in the district.

Nagar village is just behind the district headquarter. Despite being near the district administration, the condition of the village is dismal. Children of the village school have not been served mid-day meals for the last two and a half months. People were complaining about many issues including inept implementation of MGNREGA, senior citizens not receiving their Old Age Pensions, people not being able to access gallas (Subsidised Rations) at the proper time etc. However, the most striking problem that I heard was the plight of farmers. Farmers, as we know, face so many problems like not receiving the proper price of their produce, not being forwarded institutional credit, and vagaries of climate. Due to these factors, farmers do not receive the price of inputs that they put into the farming and have to incur a loss. However, the story we got to hear from farmers of the village was completely new to us.

Farmers bear the burden of many problems and added those is a recent problem of cattle grazing their standing crops. This ruins their farm produce. It also demotivates them greatly. The problem of cattle entering fields and grazing crops isn't one farmers weren't familiar about, however the issue has become worse under the present government at the centre. I was amazed to hear this.

The issue of cattle grazing standing crops was underlined by stories of many others in villages like Keshwapur, Baudi and Vishnapur. I thought that this issue could be addressed by taking collective ownership by making community groups for guarding the crops. With these thoughts in my mind, I was talking to a shopkeeper in Vishnapur. During that conversation, a person came and told the shopkeeper his name was on the day's list. I inquired what list that was, and he said that this is the list of persons who are to guard the field from being grazed by cattle. I was taken aback and was happy as my thought was being vindicated. I also realized that the community is taking ownership and not lamenting that cattle are grazing their standing crops without agency.

*—Sruthi Dhayapullay*

## *Unbeaten Commitment of A Tribal Woman*

I would like to share a story about a lady I had interacted with during my Realising India journey. Before my exposure to Bahraich, I carried several biases within me about what I would see during the journey. As most rural Indian stories illustrate that life in villages would be harsh and hard, accessibility to resources would be a

problem, healthcare would be non-functional and education would be a failure. This story proves these true as well as false.

I was happy find an opportunity to interact with tribal communities in other parts of the country and was about a tribal lady who was a Pradhan in the village. Her name was Madhu (name changed). Madhu was a crusader for education and development of people of the Tharu tribe. She was especially concerned about the education of girls.

On my second day in the village, I found an opportunity to meet Madhu in a village called Fakhirpuri where she was once a Pradhan. It was a great opportunity for me to learn about the governance structures of persons from different communities and tribes. On reaching Fakhirpuri, I could observe quite clearly that this village was different from others in the district. We were told that Madhu was visiting her farm in Bishnapur village and we headed there. We spoke to her while she was managing her farm.

We introduced ourselves and requested her to tell us her story. She graciously asked us to join her in her house. She shared that she had been oppressed as a child and had struggled to be educated. She fought through societal norms and barriers to become a Pradhan and continued to stand up for issues on the political arena. Her focus was on education, health and the overall upliftment of her people. She said, “I did my part because I was chosen to do so. My duty is to make things easier for people of our tribes so that they do not face the same difficulties that I faced. We are Jan Jatis (Scheduled Tribes) and that we cannot change. Even if I am no longer a Pradhan, my fight against discrimination will continue.” It is at that moment that I realized that the tribal communities where I come from (in the North East) are more empowered than those in Uttar Pradesh.

We realized their need to uphold the Tharu identity. A true value for me in the Realizing India immersion was that a story unfolds only when you venture deep without boundaries.

*—Nangteibor Shabong*

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### *🌀 The Iron Grit of a Woman*

This story is about Barkha, a strong independent woman I met during my visit to Bahraich district. Barkha is the secretary of a SHG group in the Gokhulpur village of the district, the group formed by Dehat—an NGO that works on the issue of child trafficking in the district. Among the many women that I met during the SHG group meeting, Barkha stood out because she participated a lot during the meeting and wasn't hesitant to share her opinions about the issues in the village.

As I was intrigued to know more about her, I drew a daily activity chart to map out her daily routine. I learnt that she starts her day at 4 am, prepares breakfast and lunch for her family, gets her children ready for school, manages the domestic cattle, does work for the SHG group, sends her kids for tuition in the evening, prepares dinner and goes to bed by 9 pm. While her routine may seem ordinary, I learnt that it requires a lot of hard work. In her role as the secretary, she took the responsibility to encourage other SHG members to participate regularly and led or participated in initiatives that have contributed to the development of the village.

After our SHG meeting got over, she took the initiative of showing us around her village and it was during this walk that I got to know her as an individual and as a woman. I learnt that like many of us she has dreams to do meaningful work and to see her children receive proper education. What amazed me about her was her reply to the question “How did you manage to overcome to societal pressure to be the voice of the SHG group”. She replied that “Agar achche kaam karne se ye sun ne ko milta hai, to kaam thodi na rok denge (If people oppose good work, it is not the work that should stop)”.

I was surprised to know that her husband’s support has been the biggest driver in helping her achieve confidence and success. She even admitted that she hopes that she gets married to him in all the seven janmas (rebirths). Her husband’s support to let her pursue the activities debunked a lot of my preconceived notions related to both patriarchy and gender. All this while, I had an image of a patriarchal man from a village who spends the earnings from his livelihood on alcohol and beats up his wife.

Meeting Barkha not only challenged my notion of an independent and strong woman—a definition which I now realise was too narrow—but also of patriarchy and gender. I was inspired to meet a woman who is driving change in a village in one of the most backward districts of the country in her own capacity and absolutely loves her life.

*—Nancy Kapoor*

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### *🌀 The Realising India Experience*

As part of a seven-member team, I spent almost 13 days in Bahraich, a reasonably large district in the north-eastern part of Uttar Pradesh. The district shares its northern borders with Nepal, and is one of the aspirational districts, as declared by NITI Aayog.

Our goal was to create a deeper understanding of Bahraich by interacting with various stakeholders on the ground and immerse ourselves in the community. On our journey to realize Bahraich we met several stakeholders - several district and block level Government officials including the Community Development Officer, ICDS representatives, MGNREGA functionaries, Medical Officers In-Charge etc. We also met representatives of CSOs working on an eclectic range of causes like SHGs creation, supporting ASHAs, ANM. We also visited various institutions - CHC, PHC, APHC, schools, inter-college, Vikas Bhawan, Police Station, etc.

We understood that it was impossible to do justice to collecting enough information about our district within 15 days, so we decided to meet as many people and communities as possible, and develop different perspectives. From spending two days meeting the bureaucrats at Vikas Bhawan in the heart of Bahraich, to living for 3 days in a remote village in Mihinpurwa block, with endless fields on one end, and a dense jungle on the other - to create an understanding of the Tharu tribes. It was an experience, to say the least!

For me, what stood out was the interaction with the district officials, since it allowed me to gain deeper insight into their professional lives. They seemed approachable and helpful, and that made me realize my biases and prejudices against them. Also, it made me realize how crucial the government is as a stakeholder to determine the

success of any development project.

While in Mihinpurwa block, we set our plan around a Tharu village - Bishnapur. Although we were living in Bhawanipur in a small hut with Ramu Kaka and Kaku, who cooked for us and made our stay there comfortable. Sleeping on hay, carrying out daily hygiene practices in the open, waking up to the sound of different animals, having hot-cooked meals made on firewood, sitting around born-fire and discussing my day with my peers every night, and also spotting a Cheetah - are some experiences which will forever be etched in my mind. My experiences with the community were pleasant and made me further diminish the concept of 'Them and us' in my head.

Although, there are quite a few memorable experiences I happened to have, but one that stood out for me was meeting a renowned journalist by the name of Sajid in Bahraich town. His straightforward approach and matter-of-fact statements attracted me. He didn't exaggerate, but he surely was successful in putting his point across. As a group, we asked him several questions from the Political history of Bahraich to the state of Madarsas in the district. His happy-go-lucky attitude was mesmerizing.

*-Karn Singh*

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### *🌀 The disheartening shackles of caste*

There was a skill training centre in Chittaura block of Bahraich. After attending the orientation to the program, my friend I and left for the Skill Training conducted by the National Rural Livelihoods Mission. We went through the heart of the village known as Tajkhudai. I could feel the communal tension in the surroundings because there was a procession being carried out by people of Muslim faith in a predominantly Hindu community. We reached the house where all women were supposed to gather. The whole process of empowering women in the village was inspiring.

When the skill training was over, I was saying my goodbyes to all of them. A woman came out of crowd. I said namaste and she came near me and was trying to touch my hands but was reluctant. She wanted to touch, so I slowly moved towards her. Then she said, "Aap madam bade sheher se ho. Mein gobar ka kaam karti hu toh mein aapko choo nahi sakti. (You are from a big city, madam. I work with cow dung and I can't touch you)" I stood there frozen.

The people I was working with were calling out my name asking me to get into the jeep for our ride back. I turned towards the vehicle and when I looked back, she was not there.

"How am I any different from her?" I thought, "Is it just sheer luck that I am born with all the privileges and she is not. How can one's life get decided based on luck? How unfair can that be? And we crib sitting here that life is unfair." Tears rolled down my cheeks.

The helplessness I have seen in her eyes still haunts me.

I wish I could hug her. I wish I could tell her that there is no difference between us.

*-Shruti D*

## Gokulpur – A Border Village

Paresh Kumar Lalchandani

Last evening, we met with Mr. Shailendra, CEO and founder of one of the oldest organisations working in Bahraich. After meeting him, we all were touched, he is a one-man army who has worked for the society irrespective of harsh challenges of life.

One new word that came up in the conversation and stuck in my mind was ‘Children’s Parliament’. My mind was asking many questions - ‘What could be Children’s Parliament?’ ‘What do they do?’ ‘How it was formed?’ ‘How do they work?’. So, I decided to bring it up during the daily meeting of the group. In the meeting, we decided to meet the Children’s Parliament and called Mr. Shailendra. He told us you could visit any border village near Nepal and interact with the Children’s Parliament.

Next morning, I took a bus to Rupaidiha (Indo-Nepal Border Area) along with two members of the group who were also interested in visiting the border village. After riding in a bus for a couple of hours, we took a rickshaw which later took us to Gokulpur village. As soon as I entered the town, I tried to gather necessary information about the village. The village was in an abysmal state, and people were living in dire circumstances below the poverty line. Most of the houses were made from mud and there were only a few houses where a toilet was built. The roads of the village were in a terrible state. Their drinking water contained high levels of arsenic. Many people even didn’t have ration cards. The worst aspect was that people were not educated and unaware of any of government schemes that could support their basic needs.

After some time, we met members of an SHG. This was a SHG formed by women as part of the organisation’s intervention. They drove two significant things, one was to collect money from women and deposit them into account in the bank, ensuring that women have some savings. The second was making brooms and selling them. The required material for making a broom was provided to the women by the organization.

The next group we met was the ‘Children’s Parliament’. The group I wanted to see! Children’s Parliament is a concept introduced by DEHAT where children of the village meet and discuss issues they face. Elections were held last year for various posts resonating with the Indian Parliament. There is a Prime Minister who takes care of the proceedings and directly under that are Health, Education, Security and Communication Ministries. When I met them, All the ministers welcomed us and introduced themselves. They also updated us that the Prime Minister will be join us in a few minutes as she was busy. We then introduced ourselves and explained why we were there. We told them we are here to understand Bahraich district.

Communication minister (Nilesh Ratti, II standard) goes from door to door and conveys critical messages and meeting timings to all other children. Security Minister (Anup Tiwari, III standard) makes sure everyone knows the necessary helpline numbers. As it is border village, there were rampant cases of human trafficking in nearby areas, so he also undertakes awareness campaigns so that everyone should be aware of rescue options. Education Minister (Rinal Yadav, VIII standard) helps other children attend school. They collectively also held a small village campaign and tried to convince parents not to have children do household and agricultural work. Health

Minister (Brijesh Kumar, III standard) makes people aware about health issues. He also raised his voice along with the group and met the Gram Pradhan about making toilets as part of the 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan'.

The Children's Parliament had also launched a campaign to stop the use of Gutka and weed widely used in the village especially by children. They also wrote a letter to the BDO (Block District Officer) about school infrastructure, MDM and toilets etc. and were able to get budget for it. Meanwhile, Prime Minister, Pratima Singh (X standard) joined us. She told us about her journey how she felt being a part of Children's Parliament. She leads the parliament in a planned and confident manner.

I still remember my last words after the meeting concluded. I said 'When I was a child, I didn't think about solving even my problems. You are so smart, and I am very sure you will be leaders of the world tomorrow'. This meeting changed my way of thinking. As children, they are working on the issues that they collectively face for the development of the village. If this structure can be replicated in other villages too, it can certainly help in the prosperity of other villages. Further, another aspect I noticed was that there were no caste differences as this was a students' group. Also, this meeting raised a question mark on a few things, if children can work collectively without any difference, why can't adults work for the society keeping their differences aside?

*—Pareesh Kumar Lalchandani*

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### *∞ The Infinite strength of a woman*

The district assigned to my group as part of the Realizing India programme was Bahraich, which is situated in UP.

A couple of stories stand out for me because of the way I felt during those moments and what that meant to me as a person.

One day two of my group members and I went to one of the skill training centers. The skills that were taught in that centre were tailoring, computer skills and skills required to become an electrician.

The skill of tailoring was primarily taught to the girls. As soon as I entered the room where the girls were tailoring, I remember feeling as if I was looking at myself. I 'felt' my value of Oneness with the girls.

It so happened that I felt a very similar feeling when I met the women in Gokulpur village, a village that falls close to the Bahraich and Nepal border. There I met a woman named Phulwa. What caught my attention about her was how driven she was to build a better life for herself and her community. She was a mother of three and the Secretary of the SHG group of that village. She was bold, well-spoken and passionate about learning new skills and improving her village.

It is easy for me to see that I was drawn to strong women throughout the trip - women who took responsibility of their lives and were passionate about what they were doing. I could see in them, what I see in myself.

*—Ranya PN*

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