

HERAMBA CHANDRA COLLEGE



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS



**Dietary Patterns, Happiness and Socio Economic
Conditions of Households at Totopara Alipurduar**

CONTENTS

Acknowledgement

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| 1. Introduction | 1 |
| 2. Literature Survey | 6 |
| 3. Objective of the Study | 7 |
| 4. .Survey methodology | 8 |
| 5. Socio economic profile | |
| 5.1 Economic Condition | 8 |
| 5.2 condition of houses | 9 |
| 5.3 Number of the Rooms | 11 |
| 5.4 Toilet Availability | 12 |
| 5.5 Toilet Type | 14 |
| 5.6. Sources of Drinking Water | 14 |
| 5.7. Sources of Fuel | 15 |
| 5.8. Sources of Light | 17 |
| 5.9. Loan Taken | 18 |
| 5.10. Types of Institution | 19 |
| 5.11. Migration | 20 |
| 5.12. Place of Migration | 21 |
| 6. Food Consumption Pattern | 22 |
| 7. Expenditure on Different Items | 24 |
| 8. Government. Schemes | 26 |
| 9. Conclusion | 36 |
| 10. Bibliography | 37 |

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Introduction

Jalapaiguri district was bifurcated to create Alipurduar District as the 20th district of state West Bengal on June 25, 2014. The district headquarters at Alipurduar which is situated on the eastern bank of River Kaljani on the foothills of the Himalayas. The district is the gateway to Bhutan and North Eastern states of India. This district is located in the Dooars region renowned for its forest, wildlife, timber, tea and scenic beauty. The entire area is divided into four main watershed areas by Torsha, Kaljani, Rydak and Sankosh rivers. A large numbers of rivers and rivulets originate from the hilly areas of adjacent Bhutan and carry the excess water of heavy downpour of monsoon to the Bay of Bengal through the Brahmaputra. A fairly large portion of this District is under forest cover, managed by Cooch Behar Division and Buxa Tiger Reserve. These Moist Mixed Tropical Forests are constituted with 8(eight) distinct types of forests with a rich diversity of Trees (352 species), climbers (100 species), Canes (6 species), Shrubs (133 species), Bamboos (144 species) including rare plants of about 25 varieties. The forests are abode of a spectacular range of faunal variety with mammal (69 species), reptiles (41 species), birds (249 species), amphibian (4 species), fishes (33 species) and entomofauna /insects (353 species).

In the later part of 1870's establishment of tea gardens reclaiming the forests and marshy swamps was initiated. There are 62 tea gardens, which add to the scenic beauty of the forest and the Himalayan background. Fairly large portion of population depends on these tea gardens for their livelihood, directly or indirectly. Most of the plantation laborers were migrated from different parts of Chhotonagpur, Westem Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya pradesh. The plantation labourers usually speak in their own tribal language within the tribe. 'Sadri' a language practiced by their ancestors in Chhotonagpur area is used as link language among the different tribes. Now a day's Hindi is also used for this purpose. The area is inhabited by tribes and castes like Ravas, Garos, Meches, Totos, Dhimals, Koches, Nepalis and Rajbanshis etc. The exodus of Hindus from the erstwhile East Bengal at the time of partition in 1947 and their settlement in these areas reduced land-man ratio in a great extent. The culture of these migrated Hindu people mingled with rich folk culture of the aboriginals and thereby enriched overall culture of these areas. With the advent of time people had come and settled in this area from almost all corners of India. These people speak about 141 languages including some distinct dialect. However, Bengali is commonly spoken language. Intermingling of heterogeneous ethno-cultural groups helped evolve

a strong eco friendly material culture in this area since prehistoric period. Admixture of traditional knowledge of different ethnic groups with advanced technology, easy availability of indigenous materials and climatic condition of this area augmented this process to gain a different shape than other parts of Bengal.

Small village Totopara is located at 89°20' E of longitude and 26°50' N of latitude in Madarihat block of Alipurduar district in the state of West Bengal. Totopara is surrounded by the foothill of Bhutan in north, Torsa River to the east, and Hauri River and Titi reserve forest on the south-west separated by Hauri River. The area of Totopara is known as Laxmi-Duar or Lucky –Duar. The village is linked with National Highway 31 through a single lane motor able road. Total geographical area of the village is about 8.08 sq.km. Travelling distance of the study area is about 22km. from Madarihat.

According to 2001 Census the tribal population of India is little more than 84.3 million, which constitute 8.2 per cent of total population of the country while the tribal population of West Bengal constitutes 5.2 per cent of total tribal population of the country. On the basis of population strength of tribals in India, West Bengal secures ninth position. The total tribal population in West Bengal is estimated as 4.4 million against 84.3 million tribal population of India as a whole. The distribution pattern of different tribal groups of West Bengal shows two broad and distinct geo-ethnic zones, (a) Mongoloid tribes of North Bengal, and (b) Proto-Australoid tribes of South Bengal. It is very interesting to note that the tribes of Mongoloid origin have been mostly confined to northern districts of West Bengal, especially in Himalayan and Sub-Himalayan regions of the state, consisting mainly of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts, while the tribes of Proto-Australoid ethnic group are mainly confined at southern parts of West Bengal. The northern region of West Bengal is considered to be the most unique place of this state both for its geographical characteristics as-well-as cultural diversities. This area is the homeland of large number of populations who speak different languages having diverse ethnic origins (Grierson, '09) and varied cultural traditions. They have come from different directions and at different times by various routs of early migration, namely, the northern passes of Bhutan; Tibet, Nepal, Assam-Mayanmar routes of eastern side; and the valleys of the western direction formed by Ganga and Brahmaputra rivers. Nearly 0.64 million tribals live in the Jalpaiguri

district of North Bengal which constitute 14.56 per cent of the total tribal population of West Bengal.

Totos, a tribal population of India is known all over world for its unique heritage, culture and language. They settled mostly live ecologically marginal areas of hills, forests and other places isolated from main stream. The Toto is a primitive Indo-Bhutanese tribe residing in small enclave called Toto para in the Alipurduar district of West Bengal. Totos were nearly extinct in 1951 when there population was only 321 (census 1951), but now there number is increasing very slowly. Toto family is patrilocal in nature dominated by nuclear type. Totos mainly live in elevated bamboo huts. Totos are mainly Hindus. Therefore, they have two main Gods viz. Ishpa and Chiema.

We have selected Alipurduar district from North Bengal for our research study on socio-economic profile and food consumption pattern of the households at Totopara.

Overview of the District

Climate Condition

Alipurduar district experiences subtropical climate, which is characterized by hot summer from March to May and well distributed rain fall during southwest monsoon from June to October. Winter season in the area is marked by dry and cold weather during the month of November to February. Normal average rain-fall of this area is 1500 - 1800 mm. Number of rain-fall days is about 72 (February to October). Maximum temperature ranges between 31° C - 35° C with minimum temperature between 6.8-9.5° C. In general, climate of this station is hot and humid.

(Source: <https://en.climatedata.org>)

Floods in district Alipurduar

Special mention must be made about the occurring of floods in the Alipurduar district. These districts are flood-prone and three main reasons for floods in these districts are excessive rainfall of small duration on small catchments, continuous rainfall for several days on bigger catchments

and the district being situated in the Himalayan foothills and being crisscrossed by the Himalayan rivers. It is observed that the melted snow of the high mountains also causes overflowing the perennial rivers which adds to the worry of common people. History reveals that the district hasn't escaped from the floods in any single decade. All the riverbeds in the district have risen to the height of 1 to 2.5 m in between 1985 and 1999. Ruthless river bank erosion has caused diversion of the course of almost all the rivers between 1993 and 1999. The riverbeds of the district have expanded by 2 to 4 times in the last 100 years and if the destruction of the environment continues at the present rate, probably by the year 2050, creation of a coalescing mega valley consisting of some rivers within the radius of 3 to 15 km. at the Himalayan foothills is obvious. This would mean forever destruction of two-third of the tea gardens and forestry of these districts (Source: Census, 2011).

Demography

The district encompasses a geographical area of 3136sq km and has a population of 1426018 (persons) including 732395 males and 693623 females. Sex ratio of Alipurduar District is about 948/1000. Population density of the district is about 539/sq.km. The major religions in the district are Hindu and Buddhist of the total population. The literacy rate in the district is 63.72% (persons), 69.80% males and 57.30% females. Official languages of the district are Bengali and English. Regional languages are Bengali, Hindi, Bodo & Nepali. Main livelihood is agriculture in Alipurduar District. Boro, Mech, Toto and Santhal are main tribes of this district. (Source: Census, 2011).

Cropping pattern

The majority of the people of the district are engaged in agriculture. The economy of the district is mainly dependent on agriculture and plantation activity. Rice is the principal crop of the district. Other important crops are paddy, jute, tobacco, mustard seeds, sugarcane and wheat. Three varieties of rice viz. aus, amanandboro are grown. Gradually more and more areas are coming under wheat production in the district. Pulses like musur, mug, gram, maskalai, khesari and arhar are also grown. Alipurduar is famous for its tea and timber. Tea stands as the most valuable crop of the district.

Agriculture & Irrigation

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Railway network: Alipurduar is well connected by Rail. Railway link to this region was introduced during British Raj to facilitate exploitation of timber and for tea plantation. After partition of the country in 1947 major railway links were cut because of formation of East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh) as most of the railway routes passed through the erstwhile East Pakistan. Any way after independence of our country, the scenario is changed. To establish a link for the North Eastern states to the rest of the country new railway network in this region was set up. Now Alipurduar Division one of the largest Railway Division in the country with 710 kms of Railway track. Alipurduar Junction railway station is on the New Jalpaiguri-Alipurduar-Samuktala Road line (originally meter gauge but later converted to broad gauge) and New Alipurduar railway station is on the New Jalpaiguri-New Bongaigaon/Guwahati main line (broad gauge). After conversion of New Jalpaiguri-Alipurduar-Samuktala Road line from meter gauge to broad gauge and increase in number of frequencies of running trains, communication by railway from this district as well as from North Eastern States to other parts of India has now become very easy. However, this has brought disaster for wild animals of this area particularly elephants. New Jalpaiguri-Alipurduar-Samuktala line runs through the “elephant corridor.” As a result, hundreds of elephants have been killed so far and being killed regularly, being knocked down by the rushing trains.

Tourist attractions

Buxaduar Tiger Reserve, Jayanti Hills, Buxa fort, Jaldapara National Park, Chilapata forest, Rajabhatkhowa museum & Tiger Rescue Centre, Rai Matang, Santrabari, Rovers Point, Roopang Valley, Lepchakhawa, Chunabhati and the Tea gardens of this district.

Literacy and education

The average literacy rate mounting to 78%. Among this, 56.02% are literate males whereas 43.98% are literate females. As per 2001 census, number of primary schools in Alipurduar were 840.

TOPIC OF SURVEY

We have chosen a sample population from the village of Totopara, under block Madarihat CD block located in the town of Birpara for conducting of our research project entitled on **Dietary pattern, happiness and socio-economic profile of the households at Totopara in Alipurduar District**. The village falls under the jurisdiction of **Totopara Ballalguri** gram panchayat.

OBJECTIVE OF OUR STUDY

We have organized this survey to get a detail account and witness the socio economic conditions and food consumption pattern and happiness status of the households at Totopara.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Our sample site is in Jaldapara area of Alipurduar district of West Bengal. We have chosen Totopara of Madarihat block. This village is economically poor region compare to the other region in Jaldapara area. We have used multi-stage stratified purposive sampling method for the collection of primary data. We have used face-to-face, questionnaire based survey and collected 140 numbers of samples from the Totopara in Alipurduar district.

SOCIAL ECONOMIC PROFILE

Socioeconomic status (SES) is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic access to resources and social position in relation to others. When analyzing a family's SES, the household income, earners' education, and occupation are examined, as well as combined income, whereas for an individual's SES only their own attributes are assessed. Recently, research has revealed a lesser recognized attribute of SES as perceived financial stress, as it defines the "balance between income and necessary expenses". Perceived financial stress can be tested by deciphering whether a person at the end of each month has more than enough, just enough, or not enough money or resources. However, SES is more commonly used to depict an economic difference in society as a whole.

We, the student of Economics Department of HERAMBA CHANDRA COLLEGE, did a survey about the socio economic condition of the people of Totopara, Madarihahat. In this survey we covered many topics. Among them one was about the economic condition of the families. 140 families responded in our survey.

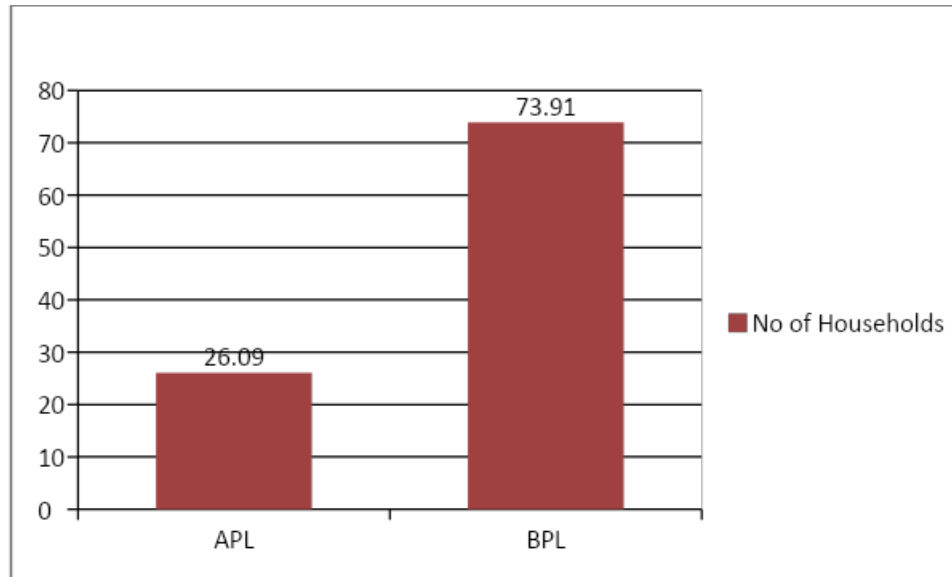
Economic Condition

Firstly we consider the economic conditions of the households at the villages in the district

Poverty line is the level of income to meet the minimum living condition. It is the amount of money needed for a person to meet his basic needs. It is defined as the money value of the goods and services needed to basic welfare to an individual. It differs from one country to another, depending upon the idea of poverty. It changes from one country to another.

The poverty line is the level of income needed to meet the minimum standard of living. People who have an income less than this is considered as below poverty line i.e., BPL and the people who have an income above this, is considered as above poverty line i.e. APL. The concept about minimum consumption standards and consumption levels were changed based upon recommendations of the various expert groups/task force. Our sample represents that 73.91 percent peoples are laying in the category of Above Poverty Line (APL) and 26.09 percent peoples lying in the category of BPL at the village.

Figure-1



Condition of Houses

Along with food and clothing, housing is one of the basic necessities of mankind. Adequate housing is an important component in the overall growth and development of an individual wherewith he can enjoy both mental and physical health and live in a state of security, peace and dignity. Rural areas of India in general are in great distress today because of continued apathy and neglect from the policy makers and scholars. Farm sector, non-farm sector, basic infrastructure such as roads, electricity, water, irrigation facilities; development of agro-processing industries etc. have been left lurching for prioritization. Lack of public fund during the early planning era has compelled the policy makers to adopt the overarching philosophy of the growth pole theory. Unfortunately, that didn't happen. Not only the physical infrastructure, but also social infrastructures such as education and health have remained ignored. Thus, the rural areas have been bypassed by the successive economic revolutions that have made India vibrant economic superpower. The overall result is immensely debilitating. This general neglect of the rural areas also has its bearing on the rural housing sector. Currently, the housing shortage in the rural areas is in excess of 43 million houses

- As the survey has been done at Totopara in the year 2023. An important analysis for the Condition of houses is being considered for the human welfare in West Bengal.
- The condition of houses been observed for the 2 classes of people i.e., APL and BPL.

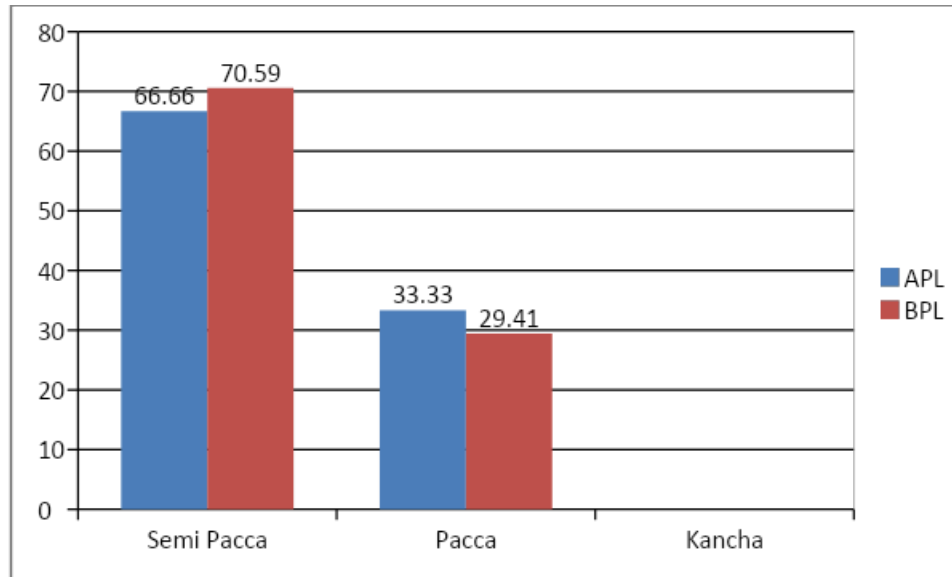


Fig-2

- As far as the condition of house is considered the APL people are having 33.33% of pacca house whereas 66.66% are having semi pacca houses.
- Now when we are considering the BPL class, the percentage of semipacca house is greater than that of pacca houses. The survey shows that 70.59% of BPL class families are having semi pacca houses and 29.41% are having pacca houses.

NUMBER OF ROOMS

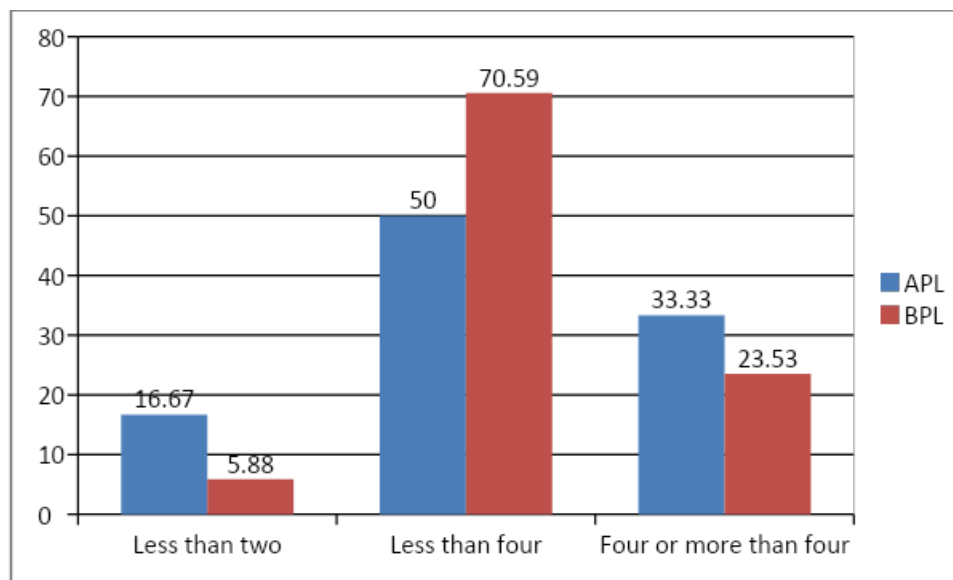


Fig-3

In the above diagram we have considered the number of rooms on the basis on economic class wise. We have classified the total population into two categories i.e., APL and BPL.

It is quite clear from the above diagram that the number of rooms for APL class is greater than the BPL class at the village of Alipurduar. Almost all the BPL people at Totopara area have a less than four rooms in average, whereas APL category have average more than four rooms at the village in the district.

Toilet Availability

Access of households to toilet is one of the most important parameter to judge their awareness of sanitation and health. It is also the issue of the success of Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) as it is necessary to eliminate open defecation and promote cleanliness. Access to toilet indicates access to own toilet for their sanitation.

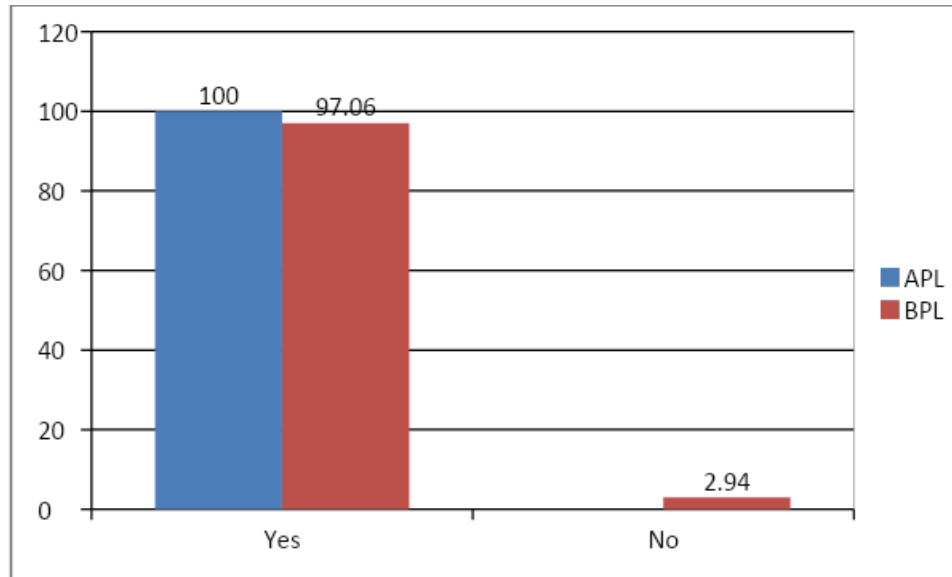


Fig-4

From the above diagram we observe that the populations of rural areas are also aware about the using of toilets for their sanitation. From the field survey, we see that around 100% of APL families and 97.06% of BPL families have access and used own toilets.

Toilet Type

Most of the peoples of this village mainly used semi pacca types of toilet. From the figure we observe that 83.33% of APL category has used semi pacca toilets, whereas most of the BPL category i.e., 64.71 % of the village also has used semi pacca types of toilet at this village. Only 5.88 % BPL families has used kacha types of toilet at the village. It is observed because most of the BPL families have benefited and getting toilets from government under MGNREGS programme.

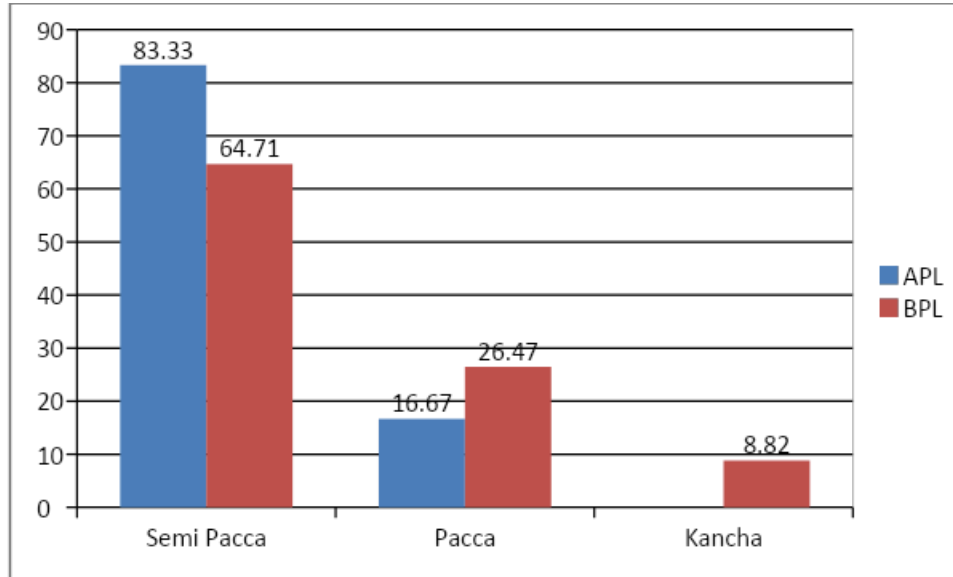


Fig-5

Main Source of Drinking Water

There is a high percentage of peoples i.e., 58.33% have been using government taps as source of drinking water among the APL category. But in the case of BPL categories, we observe that 26.47 percent people have using government tap as a source of drinking water, while around 73.53 percent BPL households of this village have been using either pond or well or other sources as a source of drinking water.

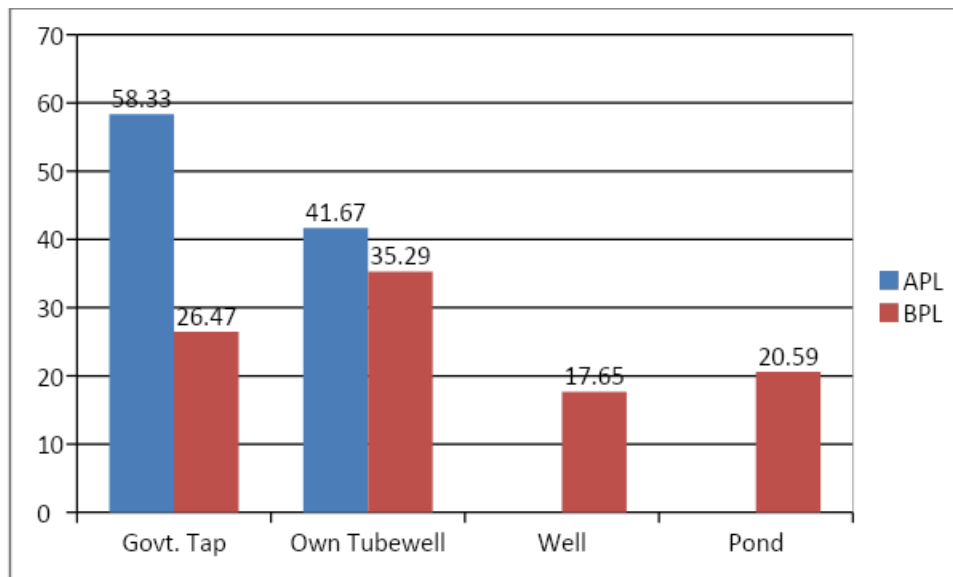


Fig-6

Sources of Fuel

In the household sector, Fuels are consumed for cooking, lighting, heating water for bathing and washing clothes. The major fuels consumed are commercial fuels like kerosene, LPG, Coal, Electricity and the non-commercial fuels like fuel wood (firewood, twigs, sawdust and wood shavings), dung cakes, crop waste, and charcoal and goober gas. From the ancient time human beings are uses different types of fuels for domestic purpose but at that time most preferable fuel type is wood. Now-a-day's human beings have a wider choice and greater accessibility to modern commercial fuels, electricity, solar equipment's' and therefore they have greater potential for fuel switching. But this picture is not same in whole part of the country like India, where almost rural population is 68.70% in 2011, according to the World Bank. To understand the change in the consumption pattern of domestic fuels by Indian households it is necessary to conduct National Survey.

In rural area many households still depend on wood as a primary fuel for domestic purpose because their choices are constrained by lack of access to more commercial fuels and markets for energy using equipment's and appliances. Often, the choice of fuel is determined more by local availability and transaction and opportunity costs involve gathering the fuel (mostly wood) rather than by household budget constraints, prices and costs.

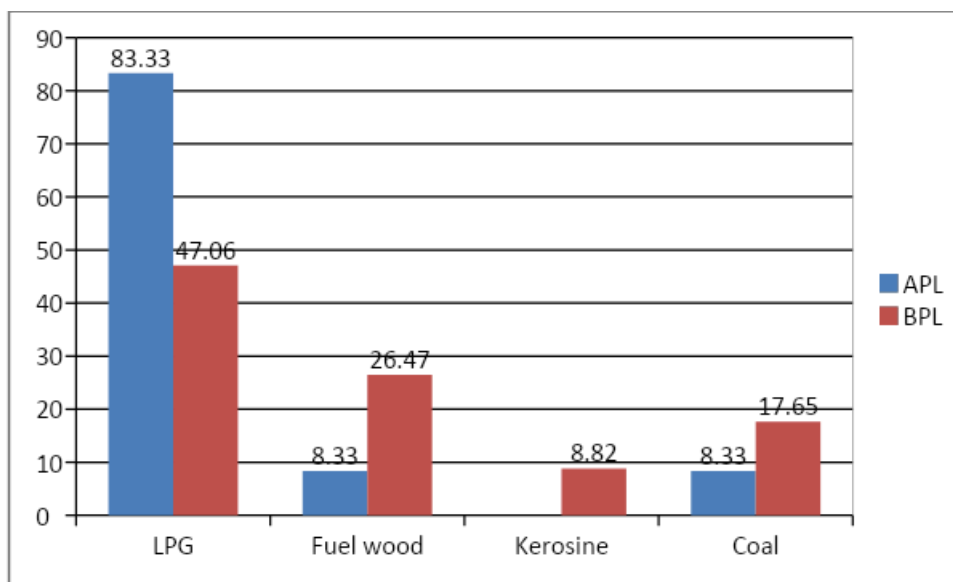


Fig-7

In our socio-economic survey. We get mainly four types of fuel that are fuel wood, kerosene, LPG, both LPG and fuel wood and coal etc. of the village of Alipurduar district. From the diagram we observed that most of the APL and BPL families used LPG as a source of fuel. .

The use of cooking fuel is sharply dictated by class — the use of firewood drops steadily with rising incomes in rural and urban areas, and LPG use is highest among the richest classes.

In the Totopara, Jaldapara, West Bengal most of the household prefer to use LPG as a domestic fuel for cooking and boiling water. From our survey we observe that the 83.33% of APL and 47.06% of BPL family's have used fuel wood as a main source of energy for domestic purpose at the village.

The use of Kerosene as a main source of energy of the village is 8.82% for BPL families. The scheme of distribution of Kerosene by the Govt. provides 3lit/month to households is also supported by this study.

The use of coal of the village is 14.71 of BPL and 8.33% of APL families.

Sources of Light

Lighting in the rural areas of developing countries is generally provided by candles or kerosene lamps, while torches (or flash-lights) powered by expensive, throw-away dry-cells are used as a portable source of light for intermittent use. All combustion lamps pose a real fire risk. Kerosene and butane are also becoming increasingly expensive and are sometimes in short supply in developing countries. Therefore the rest of the technical brief addressee since electric light is normally needed on demand, the only way of ensuring this is to provide electrical storage in the form of a battery. It is possible to use primary batteries (i.e., dry cells) which are charged when bought and thrown away when exhausted. These are convenient but extremely expensive in terms of electrical energy costs and are particularly expensive in the tropics since transport and distribution costs are incurred in moving them to the rural areas.

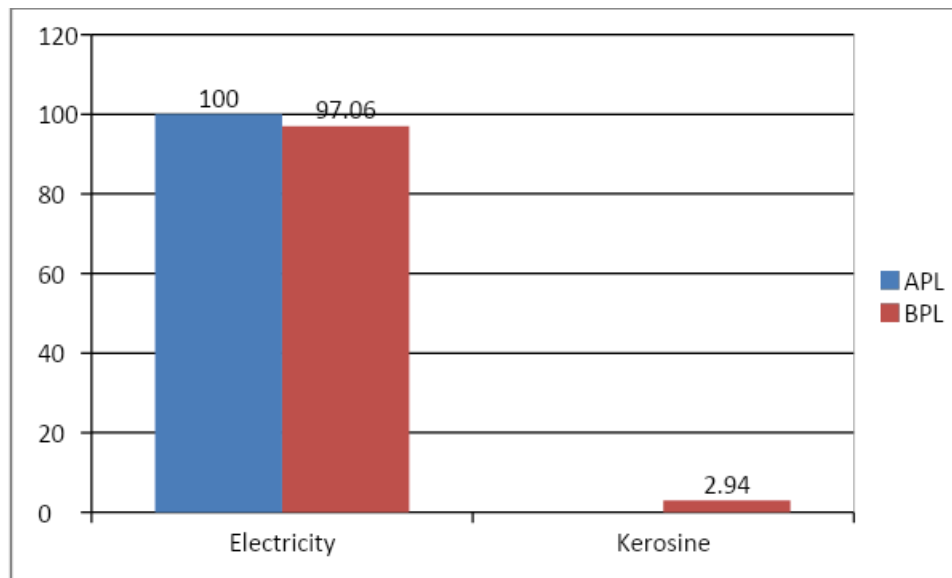


Fig-8

From the above diagram, we observed that the rural areas are mostly developing with the help of the different government schemes that provide the families with electricity. We see that 100% of APL families and 97.06 % of BPL families have used electricity as a source of light at the village. Around 2.94 % of BPL families have used kerosene as the source of light.

Loan Taken

Loan is advance of a specified sum of money to a person or business by another person or business or more particularly by a specialist financial institution which makes its profit from the interest charged on loans. A loan entails the reallocation of the subject asset for a period of time, between the lender and borrower.

According to our village survey report, we calculate total loan taken by different types of households by the following table and diagram. We see that BPL families are noted as maximum loan takers i.e., 29.41 % and then APL families as minimum loan takers i.e., 25 % in the village.

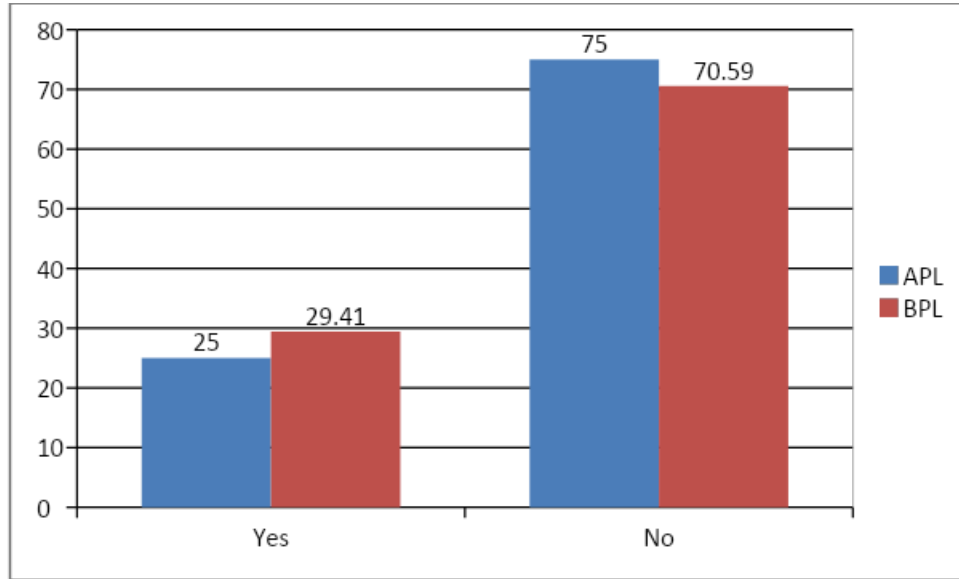


Fig-9