

Categories of Victims

Introduction: Victimhood

This chapter examines how categories of relief receivers were defined by the government and select relief societies according to the effects of the earthquake, social relations and the political economy of the government. By examining the way categories of relief receivers and damages were defined, the chapter seeks to explore how socio-economic categories and the particular damages of the earthquake intersected and created needs for relief that would come to shape the rehabilitation phase.

After the earthquake, the idea of relief as a compensatory scheme of relative provisions, allocated according to needs based on social and financial class, in many ways bears resemblance to divisions in famine relief. During famines in the nineteenth century, relief societies and the government both allocated and distributed gratuitous relief to categories of relief receivers divided into 'classes' defined by social standing and financial losses. The 'middle classes' became a class apart among relief receivers as charity and philanthropy were increasingly institutionalised in famine relief. Labourers and the so-called able-bodied carried out 'works of public utility', for instance, on the notorious famine works, while the rest were left to charity of the public and private kind.¹ The government's definition of 'able-bodied' was not uniform, as in the case of the 1892 Orissa famine when the local government classified workers according to skills, physical abilities and whether or not they were considered accustomed to hard labour.²

Famine relief by the colonial state divided people according to who were 'the deserving and the undeserving', according to Sanjay Sharma: 'By introducing new measures of need, by attempting to distinguish between ordinary beggary and crisis-destitution, and by exacting work in return for relief to prevent indolence,

the colonial state set the parameters in which new notions of the deserving and the undeserving crystallized over a period of time.³ In the context of the eighteenth-century Madras Presidency, Ravi Ahuja has noted how famine relief classification detailed subsistence and means for survival.⁴ The colonial administrators allotted a right of subsistence unevenly to different groups by giving preferential treatment to house-owners, occupational groups of strategic value, 'poor Europeans', so-called Eurasians and sepoys and 'possibly' Brahmins.⁵ Later policy documents such as the Bengal Famine Manual from 1941 continued the tradition of needs-based relief with stratification of relief according to class and physical abilities. In order to enable poor villagers to buy a basic diet in the market, the government provided 'test' relief for those prepared to work, gratuitous relief for those incapable of labour and agricultural loans for those with land to cultivate. The so-called able-bodied members of indigent *bhadralok* families, unwilling to undertake manual labour, were provided for from private donations to charitable relief funds administered by district relief committees.⁶ While famines and 'natural' disasters undoubtedly have different causes and effects on society, categories of relief after the earthquake shared many definitions with categories drawn up in famine relief, most importantly the classification of middle classes as a privileged category and the ability of labourers, agriculturalists and a category of so-called poor to undertake manual labour. In the colonial period, 'labourers' mainly referred to agricultural wage labourers but also included a general category of people who carried out manual labour,⁷ as well as a so-called working class of agriculturalists among the peasantry.⁸ While damages to property and loss of income due to the earthquake played a role in defining the needs for compensation for the middle classes, perceptions of social classes also influenced relief provisions and the allotment of financial aid. The middle classes emerged as the primary category of relief receivers both for charitable relief as well as government loans. The urban middle classes were univocally portrayed as in need of aid to rebuild their houses, even though data on ruined houses varied starkly, while rural damages and rural needs for relief varied greatly in official reports and documentation of damages by the Revenue Department. The definitions of relief receivers and of property would come to occupy the relief and reconstruction process, showing the importance of both material losses and social standing in defining needs for relief according to different categories.

The categories of earthquake victims can be understood as based on categories drawn up during previous disasters, primarily famines, each of which had been created to respond to the demands of its corresponding social group (for instance, labourers, middle-class persons). The earthquake's aftermath

represented a moment when the needs of these categories would be redefined in relation to damages, while still being constituted on previous understandings of socio-economic relations. By addressing how first of all the middle classes were conceived as a category of relief receivers, the chapter shows how the category was produced in relation to other groups considered less deserving of relief. In a larger perspective, these relief categories may have further entrenched or increased the vulnerability of poorer communities in future disasters. Financial aid to the middle classes enabled them to rebuild better houses, that is, with improved constructions and material, while labourers and the poor reconstructed with smaller budgets and recycled building materials assembled by their own capacity and with limited amounts of charity.

In this sense, the urban middle classes emerged as winners in the relief and reconstruction phase.⁹ They were, however, portrayed as the biggest losers in terms of having lost urban property and sources of income according to contemporary spokespersons for these classes in the Legislative Assembly and newspapers. In the aftermath the middle classes received considerable charitable relief and subsidised loans with low interest rates. At the other end of the spectrum, rural and to some extent urban labourers, according to the same logic, received less attention in compensatory relief schemes: labourers had lost the least in the earthquake. Since they owned nothing valuable before the earthquake, they could not have lost anything: they did not own property according to the official definition, had no regular income and, most importantly, their only asset, 'the ability to labour', was intact and in demand. In the rhetoric by the advocates of financial relief to the middle classes, those with the ability to labour emerged as winners.

Surveys of Rural Damages

'Labourers', 'agriculturalists' and the 'poor' were in newspaper accounts, government reports and official debates generally not portrayed as the primary victims and sufferers in the aftermath; rather, they were seen as only marginally affected by the earthquake. In the immediate aftermath, the labouring classes and to a great extent the rural population were, in fact, seen as unaffected by the disaster—so far. Rural relief instead was directed towards preventive measures in view of the negative effects that the earthquake was anticipated to have on soil productivity and the vulnerable flood landscape during the upcoming monsoon. Broken embankments and large tracts of agricultural land under

water—observations made by local government officers early on signalled that the earthquake would have a significant impact on waterways.¹⁰ A connection between increased flood vulnerability and earthquakes have been documented in Assam, where both the 1897 earthquake and the 1950 earthquake contributed towards more severe and changed patterns of floods. Geological changes brought on by the earthquakes and man-made engineering solutions meant to ‘manage’ rivers led to more instances of floods and increased vulnerability.¹¹ In Bihar, changes in land levels affected, above all, the river beds: like in 1934, the earthquakes of 1833 and 1988 impacted the river Kosi’s flow.¹² In the immediate aftermath of the 1934 earthquake, however, government officials undertaking the air and land surveys were divided in their opinions regarding the effects of sand and water on agricultural land.

Two early reports by the Commissioner of Tirhut division were based upon an air survey and a tour by road across parts of the worst-affected rural areas.¹³ Another report by the Director of Agriculture and the Director of Industries contained contradictory information.¹⁴ These reports show the difference in appreciation of rural damages in accounts made by high officials in the local administration. In his second report the Commissioner wrote that the ‘damage is serious, but not nearly so serious as I feared’:

Round Katra and Aurai crops are excellent, fully normal where not swamped by sand, and swamped only to about 5 or 7%. The sub-divisional officer took us out the Sursand road to see ‘widespread and irreparable damage’. We consider that even here, not more than from 10 to 15% of the standing crop is affected. It seems certain now that so long as the crop, rather, wheat, oats, barley, even tobacco, has a fair number of leaves above the deposit, it is going to survive, and the deposit brought, and to some extent retains, a good deal of moisture. It is definitely not correct to assume that wherever there is standing water there is damage from deposit. (...) I shall be surprised if by the end of March, when most of this water will have disappeared, the country does not look much more normal and healthy.¹⁵

Though the Commissioner of Tirhut found the damage ‘serious’, he dismissed the sub-divisional officer’s description of ‘wide-spread and irreparable damage’ to crops. His second report thereby reconfirmed his initial findings which described damages as ‘negligible’, and ‘no where’ [*sic*] did the damage exceed 10 per cent of the crop, in some areas less than 2 per cent, according to him. Contrary to the previous negative effects feared as a result of the sand deposits and standing

water, he believed it could have a positive impact and make it appear 'much more normal and healthy'. As he had noted in the first survey a week after the earthquake, more worrying than the outcome of the yield was the effect of 'very extensive mud deposits' on future crops. However, the damages were patchy: the Commissioner did not estimate 'that outside this area [i.e. the area between Sitamarhi and Muzaffarpur] we shall require to give any assistance to *raiya*t or villagers on the score of damage to houses or fields, nor do I think there is any risk of water supply or any call for medical assistance'.¹⁶ Despite the Commissioner's optimistic take on damages to the land, he thought it difficult to translate the estimates into figures in terms of outcomes on the harvests and thereby revenue. On top of that, floods had affected the area in the previous year and 'a very poor yield' had been expected.¹⁷ His reports thereby recognised the need for assistance in sand clearing in some areas but large-scale relief, economic compensation or medical assistance for the rural population on a broader basis were not regarded as necessary.

The Director of Industries and the Director of Agriculture, instead of agreeing with the Commissioner's perception of rural damages, raised alarm about the sand deposits' impact on the soil's productivity in a report submitted a few days after the Commissioner's first report. Contrary to the Commissioner's report that had found extensive 'mud deposits', also referred to as 'silt' which normally provides nutrition to the fields in annual inundations, their report stressed that a sample sent for analysis showed that it was pure sand. Unless the sand mixed with the soil, the land would become 'infertile and unproductive', or even worse: 'Where the deposit is thick the area will within a short time assume the appearance of a desert.' Assessment of the impact on the crops would only be possible after a detailed survey of the land, but in the areas 'within a radius of 7 to 8 miles round Sitamarhi and Riga, the *rabi* crop may be taken as a total failure'.¹⁸ These two reports carried out in the same area in the weeks following the earthquake, reflect the differences in perceptions of the damages among government officials.

After the initial superficial and contradictory land surveys, the government announced that for relief in rural areas two acts previously applied foremost during rural distress and famines would be used.¹⁹ The Agriculturalist's Loans Act, 1884 (Act XII of 1884), and the Land Improvement Act, 1871, had served to distribute grants and *taccavi*, a system of agrarian loans provided by colonial and Mughal rulers during agrarian distress or famines.²⁰ The two acts enabled the government to use the Bihar and Orissa Provincial Famine Relief Fund, the government announced in February.²¹ The famine fund was normally used for relief after 'natural calamities' such as floods and droughts, and after the province

split into Bihar and Orissa, the Bihar Famine Relief Fund Act would relieve agriculturalists and *rayiats* in 'distress' after 'natural calamities' by relying on the Bihar Famine Relief Fund.²² However, this was a temporary solution since the government at the beginning of March decided to cover the amount from the VERF set aside for small grants to remove sand.²³ The Provincial Famine Relief Fund covered agricultural loans of a little more than one million rupees to those affected by the earthquake and the subsequent floods, and about 450,000 in grants for sand clearance.²⁴ This was considerably more than its yearly average expenditure on disaster relief of 100,000 to 150,000 rupees.²⁵ However, as Brett notes in his report, 'two schools of thought' developed as to the sand's possible damage on the soil and waterways: one claimed that the sand would mix with the soil relatively soon with the help of rain and wind, while the other argued that it was necessary to remove the sand. The local government and the Agricultural Department sided with the latter position, which was supported by a set of surveys discussed next. However, the GSI's comprehensive report on the earthquake published in 1939 claimed to have difficulties in finding reliable observers of the phenomenon of sand vents, limiting their accounts of sanding to narratives by mainly Europeans in high positions or those involved in the sugar cane industry. Yet the volume devoted a section to explain and compare the phenomena of sand and water emerging from vents in the land and their occurrence in historical earthquakes. According to the GSI, the extent of sanding was 'popularly much exaggerated' and 'the actual damage due to sanding would be almost negligible'; not unlike the Commissioner of Tirhut's perception of the areas covered by sand and water, the geologists thought the land to have become more fertile.²⁶

A report commissioned by the local government, based on a brief survey conducted in the first half of March 1934 by K. S. Caldwell, a professor in Chemistry at Patna Science College, expressed the view that the sand needed to be removed.²⁷ Regarding the sand's negative effects, the important point was first of all to clear waterways since it had blocked roadside drains and *nullahs* which risked to breach the bunds of small landholders. In moderation, the sand had no harmful effect on the quality of the land, but thick deposits had to be removed or diluted, according to him. Based on the unknown effects of the sand, coupled with the serious risk of floods in the ensuing monsoon, he recommended the government to 'reward' peasants in order to expedite sand clearing, a process which otherwise worms and ants or rain and wind would gradually take care of.²⁸ Caldwell's report and the GSI's *Preliminary Report* on the North Bihar Earthquake* were used by the Japanese earthquake expert Nobuji Nasu (1899–1983)²⁹ from the Earthquake Research Institute at Tokyo University who visited

the earthquake area for 50 days.³⁰ Japan's earthquake expertise was by 1934 well established, based on the catastrophic experiences of the Nobi Plain. Japanese seismologists conducted research expeditions to Assam in 1897 and to epicentral zones of major earthquakes such as the 1906 San Francisco and the 1908 Messina earthquakes, sharing advice and using methods based on lessons from the 'earthquake nation'.³¹ Nasu agreed with Caldwell that the sand originated from the layer of water-bearing sand from a depth of 20–30 feet, and not 300 to 400 feet as 'frequently reported'.³² In this context, the Muzaffarpur District Board commissioned the publication of a booklet with guidelines for how to instruct the peasants to remove sand, use scrapers, fertilizers and seeds, with detailed costs for the equipment.³³ The local government arranged 400 ploughs for the peasants to remove or mix the sand with the soil. The ploughs were not for free and since 'very few' were sold, the government lent them to the *chaukidari* unions who were expected to oversee their utilisation.³⁴

In view of distributing rural relief and based on the initial reports by the two directors, the Revenue Department by the end of January started preparing for a survey of land damages. The survey from 10 March to May 1934 mapped the earthquake's effects on agricultural land in terms of sanding, standing water and changes in land levels. The findings were presented in *Final Report on the Survey of Lands Damaged by Earthquake in North Bihar in 1934* (short title: *Final Report on the Survey of Lands Damaged*) submitted in July 1934 and published in September the same year.³⁵ The survey formed the basis for the distribution of grants and *taccavi*.

Taccavi, Grants and Revenue Remission

Since reports on rural conditions in the earthquake area contained little comprehensive information, the local government and the Government of India hesitated to estimate costs of rural relief and reconstruction until the Revenue Department's survey had provided data.³⁶ The central government, however, assured financial support since it was clear that the local government would be unable to bear the expenditure.³⁷ The lack of information about damages in rural areas can be explained by the urgency of relief in the often devastating destruction of brick buildings in towns: it was only after the situation in the towns was under control at the beginning of February that the administrations in the worst-affected districts were requested to submit reports on relief work and damages in villages.³⁸ While waiting for information on the nature of rural relief, the district administrations in the affected districts had gone ahead to deal

with the effects on land with only cursory support by the local government in Patna. Contrary to the perception of the Commissioner of Tirhut, the district officer of Muzaffarpur foresaw difficult times for the rural areas. He anticipated the situation to get worse once the effects of the soil and the lack of water had taken its toll on resources. In the Tirhut division, the impending monsoon floods and difficulties in extracting the *rabi*³⁹ crop from the sand-covered fields were expected to worsen the situation for the agriculturalists. In anticipation of an increasing need for relief among the rural population, he saw large advances as necessary 'for improvement of lands or many cultivators will be almost completely ruined'. Contrary to the almost positive account impact on the landscape by the earthquake according to the Commissioner of Tirhut, he thought 'that the problem of rural areas would become more and more acute as time goes on'.⁴⁰ Similar accounts appeared in the reports by other district officers in north Bihar. The district officer in Champaran had eased conditions of debts and payments in the rural areas and, without waiting for instructions, he had granted remission of rent for destroyed standing crop and areas permanently thrown out of cultivation. Rent and arrears, as well as certificate sales and proceedings, had been postponed until March. The relief work in Champaran was facilitated by the fact that the Bettiah Estate made up 1,350 square miles out of 1,700 square miles in the worst-affected area. Since the estate's administration had taken responsibility for *taccavi* loans in by far the largest part of the district, the district officer was in charge of only 350 square miles 'where the Sub-divisional Officer is constantly touring, and the Kanungo is preparing estimates of sand deposits, with a view of granting *taccavi* loans immediately'.⁴¹ The anticipation of a widespread and growing need for rural relief proved to converge well with the previously mentioned report by the Directors of Industries and Agriculture, who had predicted aggravating conditions in Tirhut. Despite the local government's hesitant stance towards announcing assistance to rural areas, the administration in the districts saw it necessary, if not to provide relief, at least to temporarily relieve the rural population with regular payments in order to cope with the apparent effects of the earthquake on agricultural land.

Based on the initial land surveys by the GSI and government officials, ahead of the publication of Caldwell's report, and based on the Revenue Department's survey from 10 March to 28 May 1934, the government announced that it would distribute large sums in *taccavi* and in gratuitous relief to cultivators for clearing sand from their fields. Since the sand deposits were feared to cause waterlogging once the rains started in June, the government was in a hurry to initiate the work. The survey—resulting in the Revenue Department's *Final Report on the Survey*

of *Lands Damaged*—and the distribution of relief proceeded in tandem: officers distributing *taccavi* and grants followed in the footsteps of surveyors from the Revenue Department. In order to ensure that the work of sand clearance was completed, half of the grant or loan was to be paid after the work had been carried out. The Board of Revenue's relief measure included the postponement of land revenue due in March, to be paid instead in June 1934 in the areas with most severe agricultural damages, that is, Champaran Sadr, Muzaffarpur Sadr, Sitamarhi, Darbhanga Sadr and Madhubani.⁴²

The distribution of *taccavi*, like the distribution of loans and grants, suffered from a lack of staff. The 120 survey officers expected to cover more than 4,000 acres of land and 6 million plots in three months, before the rains that were expected to start in June (Table 5.1), were from the outset found to be insufficient for the task.⁴³ Instead of the initial survey method proposed by the Board of Revenue, the new, 'speedier method' referred to as *nazar paimaish*' (literally 'eye measurement' or 'eye survey') required less staff since surveyors were only required to 'make a guess of the areas of each plot damaged' and take the average depth of sand in each plot.⁴⁴ In practice, survey officers speeded up the progress of the survey further by estimating the damage based on the *nazar paimaish* of the villagers, not even setting eyes on the land themselves. According to the *Final Report on the Survey of Lands Damaged*, the majority of the damaged land was covered by 6 inches to 1 foot of sand, and sand measuring 1–2 feet covered a substantial area (Table 5.2). These estimates meant that the majority of the agriculturalists could ask for a *taccavi* of 20–30 rupees per acre (Table 5.2).

Proof of being a landholder was initially an essential requirement for obtaining a loan or a grant, a rule which in practice had to be bent several times. The district administration instead organised for distribution of grants and *taccavi* according to the districts' own systems and the *Final Survey* mentions local practices for grant distribution.⁴⁵ In Champaran, the *khesras* (official village field book)⁴⁶ had been destroyed and the *khatian* (land register of the full holding),⁴⁷ for some unidentified reason, could not be taken out of the record room, which obstructed the work. Possible cases of attempts to fraud, or perhaps what can be seen as a chance to easily access loans, arose in the cases of *raiya*s claiming loans for land reclamation of plots which, according to the last survey, had been recorded as uncultivated land. The holdings of the *raiya*s were, however, small and, with the time constraint in mind, it was decided 'to roughly survey' the entire area as one plot and record the tenants as 'joint owners', a system which meant that they collectively took a loan. Similarly, 'a few cases' arose where a considerable area, recorded as *zirat*⁴⁸ of the landlords, had been settled with tenants as separate

Table 5.1 Damages of area and plots surveyed in 4,152 villages

	Total survey	Acres/number damaged	Percentage of the surveyed area/plots damaged
Area	2,647,591 acres (4,137 sq. miles)	393,977 acres (616 sq. miles)	15 %
Plots	6,028,210	1,810,958	31 %

Source: Appendix E in *Final Report on the Survey of Lands Damaged*.

Table 5.2 Sanding, *taccavi* allowance payable per acre, and percentage of the damaged lands according to the survey

Classification of damages	Degree of sanding	Maximum <i>taccavi</i> payable per acre	Sanded [damaged] area in sq. miles	Percentage
Class I	Less than 6 inches	10 Rs	28,160 acres 44 sq. miles	7 %
Class II	Less than 1 foot	20 Rs	206,080 acres 322 sq. miles	52 %
Class III	More than 1 foot	30 Rs	145,920 acres 228 sq. miles	37 %
Class IV	2 feet and above	35 Rs	13,440 acres 21 sq. miles	4 %

Source: Compiled data from *Final Report on the Survey of Lands Damaged*, cf. 1–20.

holdings since the last settlement.⁴⁹ Officially, the question of landownership was crucial to determine eligibility for a loan, and only owners of the fields, zamindars and *rai'yats* were recorded in the 'Damage *khesras*', as the new survey document was named. Other types of landholders were defined as 'temporary', such as *zerpeshgidars*⁵⁰ or *bataidars* (tenant-at-will paying rent in kind) and excluded from the survey, except for *bataidars* who had held the land for over 12 years on a fixed produce rent.⁵¹ In practice, however, alternative solutions were used since papers regarding landholding rights could rarely be submitted.

In addition to the fact that the sand was only occasionally measured, the surveyors' difficulties in cooperating with tenants make the accuracy of the

survey questionable. In the beginning, the surveyors reported how the tenants took no interest and how, despite the efforts made by the surveyors, 'they would not come out of their houses to show their fields'. According to the surveyors, this seemingly odd behaviour could be explained by pressure from moneylenders in the villages who hoped to profit from granting loans with high interest. The government countered by mobilising support from 'non-official agencies', perhaps local associations and relief organisations, and conducted 'counter propaganda' of undisclosed character, resulting in the cooperation of the tenants in the survey.⁵²

Sugar cane planters and agriculturalists of more substantial means made up an exclusive and favoured relief category. The Government of India from the outset promised to arrange loans⁵³ and provide a grant of 500,000 rupees exclusively for the disposal of the sugarcane harvest, relief to the cultivators and the mills.⁵⁴ Officially, the government's *RPER* claimed the support and control of the sugar cane market to be necessary, as without it 'unscrupulous contractors' would persuade the *raiya*t to sell cane at nominal prices. According to the local government's opinion, sugar cane cultivation was the means for the 'average Bihari *raiya*t' to earn money to pay rent and buy what was not reaped in the fields.⁵⁵ In terms of financial support, the planters were clearly favoured, although the government viewed the grant as a way 'to show our consideration for the cane-grower'.⁵⁶ The stated purpose of the Cane Marketing Board was to serve as the only selling agent of cane in order to explicitly prevent the agents of the two 'unscrupulous' factories that were still functional to take advantage of the situation by buying the cane at low rates.⁵⁷ As a result, the board fixed the price of cane paid to the cultivators at 'very little less' than what was received normally, a measure which benefited five out of the eight severely damaged factories which could resume crushing and continued working 'well beyond' the normal season, the local government noted.⁵⁸

Instrumental in securing relief to plantation owners was the Bihar Planters Association and the local government who cooperated in submitting proposals for taking steps in speeding up the grant and loan process. In Champaran, one of the larger cane-growing areas, the government regarded a chief concern the urgent disposal of sugar cane crop valued at above 1 million rupees.⁵⁹ When the earthquake struck, 54 estates farming from 500 to 5,000 acres (202 to 2,023 hectares) all over north Bihar produced sugar cane. The case was urgent since the cane was ready to be harvested and the local factories were rendered non-functional by the earthquake. The government grant was motivated by the value of the harvest and spent on the conversion of 6 million *maunds* (almost

224 million kg) of sugar cane into *gur* (jaggery) and to a lesser extent *khandsari* sugar by country mills and pans, and to some extent on freight concession on the railways for transports to undamaged factories.⁶⁰ A return to local production methods of *khandsari* sugar and *gur* was a temporary solution financed by grants from the Government of India. The production method was normally confined to the interior areas without access to sugar factories and it was by comparison more labour-intensive and did not require electricity, as it in this case was powered by bullocks.⁶¹ According to the local government's yearly report, 'the cultivators had to be taught the forgotten art of making good *gur*'. In addition to lacking skills and the additional labour required for the method, producing *gur* meant a smaller profit, which was only accepted by the cultivators after exhausting all options of selling to sugar-producing factories.⁶²

Property, Losses and Finding 'Genuine Sufferers'

From the views put forward in the press emerged an idea of needs according to the socio-economic layers contained in the broad category of the middle classes as opposed to the labouring classes and the sub-tenants of the agricultural population. According to an opinion in the newspaper, professionals of the middle classes—'pleaders, *mukhtears* (attorneys), doctors, school-teachers, "gurus" (teachers) of *pathshalas* (schools teaching in vernacular languages) and petty businessmen'—after the earthquake had to fend for themselves, while coolies, labourers, *ekkawallahs* (cart drivers) and *taxiwallahs* (taxi drivers) could easily find work.⁶³ Such attempts to emphasise the suffering of the middle classes, forcefully voiced in the Legislative Council as well as in the press, amplified the strong lobbying carried out on their behalf by persons in influential positions such as council members and representatives of relief societies.⁶⁴ In particular, in the Legislative Assembly, the middle classes were well represented by lawyers and landholders, who formed a substantial share of the Provincial Councils at the beginning of the twentieth century. With the emergence of political rights according to groups and collectives in the first decades of the twentieth century, political representation included group interest as well as individual representation.⁶⁵ Planters formed one such group which was wholeheartedly in support of the view that the middle classes were entitled to relief for reconstructing houses. In addition to a likely self-interest in arguing for the needs of the middle classes, there was the fact that franchise in the province was, like elsewhere in India, based mainly on property.⁶⁶ With franchise in the province

being dependent on the payment of a certain amount of revenue, rent or cess in rural areas and on the payment of municipal tax in urban areas, people who had the right to vote also had an interest in the reconstruction of property. Although it is beyond the scope of the present discussion to address the possible impact of financial support towards the reconstruction of property on electoral politics, it is interesting to note the relation between disaster reconstruction, property and the possibility of increasing electoral participation in the aftermath. According to the 1931 census, the electorate for the provincial legislature was the lowest in India, at only 1.1 per cent (5 per cent urban; 1 per cent rural). As per recommendations by the report of the Indian Franchise Committee in 1932, franchise to the provincial legislatures was to be increased to 10 per cent of the population.⁶⁷ Since this target was to a large extent achieved by extending the existing property qualifications,⁶⁸ financial aid towards the reconstruction of property was likely to benefit a group of new voters.

One of the strongest advocates for relief to the middle classes was Speaker Chandreshvar Prashad Narayan Sinha, belonging to the local elite class of landowners in Muzaffarpur. He argued for relief to the broad middle classes and opined that houses of 'permanent nature' should be considered for a loan and the greatest group of potential house-loan takers was the large body of the middle classes inhabiting urban, suburban and rural areas.⁶⁹ The abilities of the middle classes to voice their need for relief in public and to the authorities appeared as strong in the rural as in the urban areas. The police in Champaran reported a case of unrest where the insufficient relief to the middle classes from the government and the Bettiah Raj was the cause of complaint by a leader of a local relief society.⁷⁰ In such complaints, the middle classes forcefully expressed a critique of the local government and portrayed themselves as a deprived group. Although the middle classes as a group was often argued for based on whether they were house-owners, as a category it was differentiated in terms of quality of property and professional and financial status.

In framing needs for relief, the middle classes were often portrayed as dependent on each other, yet markedly different from each other. As Sanjay Joshi writes, being middle class was a project of 'self-fashioning'.⁷¹ In arguing for relief, the middle classes fashioned themselves as being in between and, foremost, above the 'labouring' classes. The middle classes were demarked as a category by both social and economic criteria which made them different from each other, and yet dependent on each other as well as on other relief-receiving categories in the aftermath. This interdependency of skills and assets was largely articulated from the perspective of the middle classes and financial elites such as planters

from the sugar industry. The middle classes of Bihar fit within the standard definition of the group in colonial India, often distinguished by belonging to the upper strata of society, without being at the very top.⁷² In colonial India they were, as Partha Chatterjee writes, 'simultaneously placed in a position of subordination in one relation and a position of dominance in another'.⁷³ Among Bihar's largely rural middle classes in towns and villages, the government, under normal circumstances, relied to a great extent on the well-to-do peasants for the administration of the rural areas. These persons constituted the top layer of the peasantry and employed other lower categories of the rural population, the agricultural labourers and the under-*raiyats*.⁷⁴ The colonial government mostly relied on these well-to-do landed *raiyats* as intermediaries in exercising its power in the districts.⁷⁵

There were people who noted the relative silence on the rural situation and a tendency to speak in favour of town residents even as the village population remained 'not vocal like its brethren in the towns'.⁷⁶ A speaker from Darbhanga argued for relief to the rural population who remained marginally addressed as a group in need of financial aid:

The prevailing idea is that the villagers have got merely huts and mud-wall buildings and therefore they have not lost much. In the local committee this sort of view was expressed, but it was perhaps not remembered that these villages, who previous to this calamity were heavily indebted and whose produce was selling very cheap, were even before the quake financially in a very straitened condition and had to purchase their necessities of life such as kerosene oil, salt and cloth at a higher rate than what was prevailing in the towns. (...) They were already in a bad plight and it was on account of their poverty that they had mud-walls and very few brick walls. But all the same they have all suffered and their mud-walls were for them like brick walls. I think their troubles were not fully realised and consequently their claims were brushed aside in giving them immediate relief.⁷⁷

The speaker's statement addressed 'the prevailing idea' that the villagers had not lost much since they did not own much in terms of property, by arguing that though the loss was relatively less compared to sugar-factory owners, it was still a loss which was felt financially. The 'immaterial' value of rural houses was contrasted with the middle classes' houses as 'assets'. In the relief process, a house figured to the middle classes as an investment accumulated over the years. With the destruction of the house, they had lost the invested earnings and inheritance.

As Chandreshvar Prashad Narayan Sinha put it in the Legislative Council, this group of middle class men was positioned between the lowest class, the 'labourers', and a class of people with substantial means, 'the bigger *zamindars* and planters'.⁷⁸ The one thing in common among the middle classes according to the argument forwarded: to have lost a house built of bricks, the most common type of building defined as a house in the towns. Houses were further assessed as a means of income: in Monghyr and Jamalpur, the government deemed the reconstruction of houses of 'destitute Anglo-Indians and Europeans' eligible for assistance since these served as a means of income. Similarly, widows of railway subordinates in Jamalpur, who claimed to have invested all their savings in house property, represented 'hard cases' in need of relief, and the same held true for an 'old Anglo-Indian lady' in Monghyr who had lost five houses and thereby her whole income derived from rents.⁷⁹

In his report from 1935, Relief Commissioner Brett wrote that many attempts had been made to estimate the number of houses damaged and to compute the financial loss involved but the attempts 'proved to be of very little value' since the houses varied in their construction and damages.⁸⁰ The disparate figures in the appreciation of damaged houses are to a large extent explainable by the fluid definition of a house that resulted from the variety of constructions in terms of building material. Official reports recognised three common types of constructions: *kuccha* buildings, foremost in villages, and *pucca* buildings used for official constructions in towns, and *kuccha-pucca* houses, in both urban and rural areas. The vast majority of the rural village population, who also formed the large majority of Bihar's population, lived in *kuccha* buildings of mud, or mud and wattle, with a roof carried on bamboo poles and walls of bamboo-wattle work covered with a thin layer of mud. The GSI regarded this type of construction 'equally liable to damage' during regular monsoons, noting that they should 'never have heavy roofs' in order to at least reduce mortality in case of collapse in a future earthquake.⁸¹ Such *kuccha* constructions were commonly referred to as 'huts' and generally excluded from the category of buildings which qualified as 'houses'.⁸²

A combination of the *kuccha* constructions, mud, bamboo or straw and the *pucca* material bricks became a *kuccha-pucca* construction as long as it was built without a fixating substance such as lime or mortar. A *pucca* house was in general made of bricks or stones, fixed with cement or lime, or if of a better standard, with a structure of concrete. The majority of the damaged houses in north Bihar were of the type *kuccha-pucca* and constructed with 'mud mortar'. With little to bind the bricks together, they had collapsed in the central area of the earthquake.

Similarly, townhouses made of bricks were described as ‘merely laid in mud’ without being fixated. Adding to their fragile structure, they were often built with numerous additions over a period of time and were of considerable height in the bazaars. These most common brick houses, sometimes fixed with mud and sometimes built with lime or mortar in the towns, and the *kuccha-pucca* houses in the villages were the most severely affected according to Brett and the GSI. Without a uniform standard and a variety of material, they formed the majority of the damaged houses which needed to be reconstructed.⁸³ An accepted idea of a ‘house’ therefore ranged from brick buildings made by cement or mortar to constructions made of brick and mixed with a variety of materials such as mud, lime, bamboo and grass.

The loss of property was according to Brett ‘the greatest and the most universal of the losses’, yet data with approximate numbers to sustain such a claim are missing from his report. The scheme of distribution set up by the VERF according to him ‘pre-supposed’ that recipients needed money to rebuild houses. Another rather contradictory explanation for the lack of data was that it would have been ‘inadvisable’ to record statistics on the damages since they would have been of ‘no practical value’ considering the urgency to reconstruct.⁸⁴ Though neither the exact number of damaged private properties nor the nature of damages was known, the destruction was regarded as extensive and the category of reconstruction of houses received a large share of charitable relief and government-sponsored loans.

The official lack of initiative for recording damages to private property in Bihar, except for general references by the GSI to the destruction of buildings while mapping isoseismals of the earthquake,⁸⁵ partly explain the confusion in counting the number of damaged houses which varied greatly depending on sources. Towards the end of February, as the budget for reconstruction was being negotiated, the number of houses and financial relief was intensely debated in newspapers and in the Legislative Assembly.⁸⁶ Two examples of the ‘many attempts’ at estimating the scope of ruined houses mentioned by Brett are given in the Marwari Relief Society’s (1935) and the BCRC’s publications—*Report for the Period Ending 30th June 1934* and *Devastated Bihar*.⁸⁷ According to the 1931 Census, the total number of inhabited houses in the five towns of Muzaffarpur district was 16,739, as quoted by the BCRC.⁸⁸ Both the BCRC and the Marwari Relief Society appreciated ‘considerable’ damages to 318,175 ‘houses’ and ‘house properties’ in Muzaffarpur,⁸⁹ that is, the damaged houses were many more than the number of houses according to official records in the main towns of the district.⁹⁰ Another sign of the Marwari Relief Society’s concern

for house-owners, and to some extent involvement in their interests, is evident in a telegram sent two weeks after the earthquake in which its general secretary requested the local government to send engineers for giving advice on 'cracked' houses in Muzaffarpur.⁹¹ As evident from the data, these reports' classification of houses included constructions other than of those of the *pucca* quality. For instance, the BCRC included 'mud houses' as a type of 'house'.⁹² The criteria put up by relief societies thereby differed from the official criteria which, according to Relief Commissioner Brett, defined a 'house' as made of bricks and mud or mortar. Though the two relief societies' reports do not describe damages in detail, the fact that dynamite was used to demolish houses still standing but dangerous to inhabit indicate that solid materials such as cement, concrete and/or bricks constituted construction material to some extent.⁹³

The much broader definition used by the BCRC and Marwari Relief Society for a house may be seen as attempts at widening the need for relief measures, and this also broadened the classification of the middle classes and thereby expanded the distribution of aid. Arguing for relief to a broader category of houses-owners may at the same time have been a strategy to consolidate the needs of people who would cast their votes in the upcoming elections. In Bihar, the Indian Franchise Committee in 1932 had recommended to increase the franchise from 1.1 per cent to 9 or 10 per cent by lowering qualifications based on municipal tax in urban areas.⁹⁴ Data in *Devastated Bihar* estimated that half of the 70,000 houses in urban areas hit by the earthquake had to be rebuilt for a cost of 100 rupees per house, covering construction costs and building materials. In the BCRC's calculation, 3.5 million rupees would cover the cost for reconstruction of urban private property, while rural houses could be rebuilt for 20 rupees per house, indicating perhaps cheaper construction material as well as low-paid or unpaid labour as will be further discussed in this chapter. The number of buildings defined as 'houses' in rural areas was, however, considerably more than in the towns: out of a total of 1.03 million houses, roughly half of them, that is, 506,000 houses needed to be rebuilt or repaired at a total cost of slightly more than 10 million rupees. In the BCRC's calculation, the sum 13.62 million rupees was needed for reconstructing both rural and urban private property.⁹⁵ To further complicate the disparate figures, the BCRC's later publication, *Report for the Period Ending 30th June 1934*, mentioned 1,011,967 'damaged and ruined houses' in north Bihar and Monghyr, excluding the districts Patna, Purnea and North Bhagalpur for which data had not been collected.⁹⁶ This figure almost doubled the number of 541,000 houses first mentioned in *Devastated Bihar*, that is, 506,000 rural houses and 35,000 urban houses. The considerably higher number may have been the

result of revised definitions of damages and appreciation of the need for repairs. Even if providing far from reliable data, these sources reveal the difficulties in appreciating the number of damaged houses and the actual cost of rebuilding as clearly several definitions of a house were in use. With these figures at hand, it is therefore difficult to state even an approximate figure of damaged houses. The rather wide range in the number of damaged or ruined houses—somewhere between 500,000 and 1,000,000— according to the figures from these two relief societies shows the diverging appreciations of damages as well as different definitions of a house.

Reconstruction of Private Property: Middle Class Relief

The Bihar and Orissa Natural Calamities Loans Act was passed in order to support the reconstruction of damaged private houses: 'to grant loans for building to the owners of buildings which have been damaged or destroyed [*sic*] by earthquakes [*sic*] or other natural calamities'.⁹⁷ An emergency act for lending money to the public on the security of house property, it was a method hitherto untested by the local government.⁹⁸ The government referred to the conditions as a clear deviance from practice in order to arrange loans for those who normally were able to borrow money with their house as security. The act was passed in the February 1934 session of the Legislative Council without much ado, the applicable rules were published in the middle of March and loans were issued early in April.⁹⁹ The need for an act to specifically aid the reconstruction of private property was argued for based on an unwillingness among the middle classes to accept charity. A speaker in the Legislative Council argued that the fragmented group of the middle classes 'would much rather starve and die before they take help from any charitable society or from any organisation'.¹⁰⁰ Despite this description of the middle classes as being reluctant towards accepting charity, the middle classes as a relief category received large amounts in charitable aid while loans constituted a comparatively small share of the amounts distributed for reconstruction (Table 5.3).

Next to the government's loans scheme, Bettiah Estate and the Darbhanga Raj granted loans towards the reconstruction of private property. Bettiah's management announced substantial amounts for both *taccavi* and house building loans,¹⁰¹ making a distinction between the two categories of relief receivers similar to the colonial government, while the Darbhanga Raj's scheme did not differentiate between loans for restoring agricultural land and reconstructing houses—one type of loan covered both and at a lower rate than offered in the

government act. However, the Darbhanga Raj also conflated loan-takers with the middle classes, as it granted a minor amount of loans to 'Gentlemen of the middle class' who were not tenants of the Raj.¹⁰²

By May 1934 a clause was added to the Bihar and Orissa Natural Calamities Loans Act which further strengthened it as a form of relief to, first of all, propertied urban middle classes: loans could only be issued for urban houses, partly because of unspecified legal issues, but mainly for the reason that the local government after passing the act had realised that there was no free market for rural property. The additional rule for rural house loans, however, restricted loan-takers to a much stronger financial group than what initially was promised. As a result, a large number of people in rural areas instead applied for grants, in most cases of smaller amounts. Another practical reason for the local government to resort to grants in rural areas was that the loans demanded more time and paperwork than grants and thereby increased work pressure on the district administration.¹⁰³

Rural house loans were from May 1934 onwards conditioned on extra security in the form of additional land. In effect, a so-called ordinary *raiya* house or holding was ineligible for a loan and the majority of rural house loan applications were rejected. Another explanation for the large number of rejected loan applications was, according to Brett, the 'mistaken impression' that loan-takers would in due time be exempted from repaying the loan. The loans came in two categories, with different interest rates according to the financial strengths of the 'classes', a differentiation that became another source of public discontent. The smaller type of loans ('A') of maximum 1,500 rupees were given on 'easy terms' with a rate of interest at 4 ½ per cent and repayable in 6 to 9 years.¹⁰⁴ These loans were a form of government relief, as George Schuster, the Finance Member of the Government of India, underlined by describing them as for the 'poorer class of borrowers' and given 'not strictly on a commercial basis'.¹⁰⁵ The smaller loans were clearly seen as favoured by lenient loan terms while the larger loans, meant for a financially stronger group who because of the earthquake had difficulties in raising money 'at reasonable rates', had to bear the default costs of both types of loans. Initially, these loans were available at an interest of 6 ¼ per cent repayable in 12 to 15 years, but after pressure from the loan-takers, the interest was lowered to 5 per cent within a year.¹⁰⁶ Later, the government refused to lower the interest rate further, with the argument that the 'really deserving cases' had been granted 'heavy remissions' and the loan terms were better than under the Agriculturalist Loans Act.¹⁰⁷ The major objection came from the large loan-takers whose higher rate of interest was meant to cover for loans that could not be recovered in both the categories, even though the smaller loan-takers were the ones expected to

default.¹⁰⁸ Although the rate of interest for the larger loans was comparatively low, the scheme's conditions were described as 'onerous' and amounting to 'a denial of relief' in a petition.¹⁰⁹ Despite criticism against the loan scheme and considering its prioritisation of urban applicability, the amounts and number of applications surpassed expectations and the initial sums allotted for larger loans had to be tripled when the revised budget increased the amount of both types of loans.¹¹⁰ Judging by the popularity of the loans, the local government assumed borrowers used the opportunity to borrow more than needed, perhaps to lend it out at higher interest rates since the market rate for loans, with a house as security and not only a plot, was expected to be about 14 per cent.¹¹¹

Charitable relief in the form of grants to the middle classes served, first of all, to reconstruct private property. The government and the VERF divided the middle classes into three sub-categories according to social, economic and professional status. In addition to relief towards the reconstruction of houses, the VERF gave grants of about 200,000 rupees to 1,900 cases as assistance for loss of income, unemployment, loss of businesses, severe expenses and loss of movable property.¹¹² According to the VERF's chart of disbursements, 'gratuitous relief' incorporated foremost house reconstruction of various kinds. The largest head was 'House-building grants' of about 2.7 million rupees and grants for house materials and semi-permanent shelters of almost 1 million rupees.¹¹³ Under the heading 'House building grants', 'Middle class' relief as a sub-category increased significantly, from 31,875 rupees by the end of July to 227,088 rupees by the end of October 1934.¹¹⁴ The middle classes made it into every relief category that pertained to the reconstruction of houses.

The government gave grants of 300 to 1,000 rupees to specifically one group of the middle classes described as those of 'poor circumstances' and 'too poor to rebuild their houses'.¹¹⁵ This group of the middle classes was defined as having owned property ruined in the earthquake and at the same time unable to take a loan. The grant amount was at first 300 rupees but the VERF committee decided to increase the amount after officers in the field had reported the sum as insufficient. By increasing the amount, the additional grant almost doubled the total allotment to this group (Table 5.3). The officers were encouraged to give the grant in larger amounts to a fewer number of applicants, but the instruction was apparently not being followed as most grants did not exceed 300 rupees. The average grant of this type amounted to 324 rupees, even after the VERF's Committee had again instructed the District Magistrates to give more in each grant. Above the category of the middle classes were persons of 'higher social status' as a separate category and appeared to have been composed of rich rural

people whom officers in the field had defined as a group in need based on their social status. These cases pertained to people in rural areas whose only safety to borrow against had been a house and now they stood without a chance of obtaining a house loan since rural plots without extra security did not qualify for a loan. According to Brett, their social status 'required that they should occupy houses of some pretensions' and they were given grants exceeding 1,000 rupees in order to obtain a 'reasonable amount of shelter'.¹¹⁶

The local government claimed to initially have had problems in reaching 'the lower middle classes', described as 'deserving' and 'those who really need relief' as opposed to the so-called professional beggars who collected blankets at relief centres.¹¹⁷ The 'lower' middle class were at the same time the most difficult for the government to differentiate from the labouring classes in terms of property, assets and financial standing since they were perceived as belonging to the middle classes primarily in terms of social standing. According to the government's definition, 'small shopkeepers and poor middle class families' were unable to labour based on social status, and thereby eligible for a grant of a maximum of 300 rupees. Social standing either 'embarrassed', as Brett put it, or hindered them in carrying out manual labour.¹¹⁸ A combination of socio-economic class and inability to 'labour' thereby became defining features for eligibility of this smallest of the grants. Though the grant was limited to 300 rupees for this diverse group of 'small householders' in urban, semi-urban areas, and sometimes in villages, as per official reports as well as instructions to the districts, the amount was usually expected to be considerably less.¹¹⁹ In the end, the recipients of the grant were those who had been denied house loans or who had applied for less than 100 rupees with 'doubtful' security.¹²⁰ This indicated that people of insufficient means, with a property of lesser value or who lacked the required paperwork, attempted to apply for loans.

The railway workers in Jamalpur provide a distinct example of how socio-economic class and profession impacted the ability to 'labour' and was used in order to qualify them for a grant. Their socio-economic class and the inability to undertake labour placed them in a relief category between labour and the middle classes. According to the railway authorities, the 'workers' fitted into the category of relief receivers with insufficient assets to take loans; at the same time, the repairs of their 'huts' had to be carried out by 'labour', in contrast to the agriculturalists 'who usually have to build their own houses every two or three years'.¹²¹ These men were viewed as 'workers', yet their socio-economic class set them apart and made them unfit for 'labour' by which the railway authorities argued that their requirements for grants differed from the labourers.

Relief societies, in general, followed the same criteria as the VEF and the government in creating categories of relief and prioritising the middle classes. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the BCRC had a committee managing middle-class relief and it was the only category of relief receivers given cash in aid, while goods such as clothes, blankets and huts for shelter were distributed across the social spectrum.¹²² The Marwari Relief Society prioritised and selected house-owners as recipients of its grants, just like the government equalling private property possessions with the middle classes for its grants. As discussed earlier in the section on definitions of house damages, the relief society's estimate of damaged houses was, like the BCRC's, considerably higher than the government's estimates. This may indicate that they used a much broader definition of a house, thereby including classes officially considered below the lower middle classes. In effect, the broader definition of a house served to expand the middle classes as a relief category.

The Marwari Relief Society from Calcutta became known for providing so-called middle class relief for families 'shy to accept doles in the open', who, instead of visiting the relief society's centre, received help through 'special arrangements'. Similar to the local government, the society described the middle classes as hesitant to accept charity in public. Reading the report against the grain, an idea forms of how poor persons and those without property tried to access financial aid, as 'professional beggars' and 'unreal cases' were suspected of trying to access relief funds meant for 'genuine sufferers'.¹²³ For the Marwari Relief Society, a 'complete change' of their previous practices had to be implemented in order to avoid being 'made dupe' by people who did not belong to the middle classes. Social networks and local familiarity played a role as it entrusted the society's workers and 'respectable persons from the locality' to make 'exhaustive investigations' in order to identify middle-class people.¹²⁴

Women from the upper strata of society engaged in the distribution of so-called middle-class relief, partly since it was an activity in private spaces, at people's houses, or temporary quarters one may assume, according to the Marwari Relief Society. Women of the upper middle classes or local elites took on the task as organisers of female relief workers. In Motihari, the wife of the town's magistrate presided over the Mahila Samiti which confined its relief work to the middle classes.¹²⁵ In Saran, too, three women 'occupying high positions in the society'—of which one was the wife of the Collector, and another the wife of the doctor in charge of coordinating the relief efforts—distributed relief to the middle classes.¹²⁶ Presumably, the female relief workers in this manner approached not only the middle classes but specifically women among the middle classes who to a limited extent occupied public spaces.

The middle classes did not only need shelter after their brick houses had been ruined but also food, which the Ramakrishna Mission restricted to the middle classes from May onwards, while people of all classes were given rice in rural areas.¹²⁷ The same month the association's work shifted to the construction of semi-permanent houses in urban areas, and arrangements were made at Monghyr, Muzaffarpur, Sitamarhi, Motihari and Laheria Sarai for building such houses for 'those who do not possess land of their own'.¹²⁸ This indicated that people who had lived in rented or leased houses faced hurdles in the reconstruction process, perhaps involving a long wait during the reconstruction period or being unable to pay an increased rent that was likely to come with a new building. In all, the Ramakrishna Mission had undertaken to construct 200 such houses and supplied material to repair houses for more than 50 middle-class families. By May 1934, the Ramakrishna Mission had spent 55,000 rupees on various items of relief, including the purchase of housing materials and construction of semi-permanent houses with roofs of corrugated iron or country tiles. The earthquake relief operation by the society received a substantial amount of 60,470 rupees, more than half of the collection, from the Mayor's Earthquake Relief Fund in Calcutta.¹²⁹ Out of the total collection of 116,828 rupees¹³⁰ for earthquake relief, 50 per cent was allocated for house constructions and repairs, underlining the relatively large share of financial resources given primarily to persons who had lost property or had difficulties to afford the higher rent of a new house. By September, the Ramakrishna Mission closed down relief centres in Bihar, but flood relief in the form of food distribution to 1,500 people in Monghyr continued into October.¹³¹

Self-Help and 'the Capacity to Labour'

Similar to how the urban middle classes emerged as a relief category based on holding property and social status, the needs of the rural and agricultural population as a relief category were defined by their ability to labour. Both these definitions were, however, chartered by the middle classes who portrayed and positioned themselves in the categories of relief by describing their needs as different from the poor and labouring classes. The two broad, and internally diverse, categories of relief receivers, the middle classes and the labouring population, experienced the disastrous consequences of the earthquake differently in terms of losses and on a time scale. For the urban population, the destruction of houses and deaths had happened in an instance. For the rural population, often equalled to the labouring population in terms of relief categories, damages

to agricultural land had a long-term effect on livelihoods. Having lost property was the defining feature of the middle classes as a relief category, while the ability to labour became the defining feature of the rural and agricultural population. In their capacity as labourers, sources refer to how they could resort to 'own labour' as a form of relief, not only to earn, but also to repair their own dwellings or rebuild better, that is, a house. Hence, 'labour' was portrayed as an asset in self-help for the poorer strata and a domain off-limits for the middle classes. The large 'divider' in allocating relief was not only property, but also the ability to labour.

The division between the middle classes and the labouring classes, between houses and 'huts' and between rural and urban settings emerges in the novel *Dhoday Charitmanas* (1949–51) by the Bengali writer Satinath Bhaduri (1906–65).¹³² The social realist novel borrows freely from historical events in describing the politics of reconstruction in a rural area through the eyes of the protagonist Dhorai, a tribal Tatma from a village in the district Purnea. In the earthquake aftermath, Dhorai settles in a village among the Koeri, a low caste of sharecroppers and labourers, who are promised 'relief' that never arrives. After the village has been surveyed by government officials and INC volunteers, they hear for more than a year that relief is coming. In the end, they are told that the survey had found that the Koeri huts of mud walls and thatched roofs could be repaired easily by the Koeris themselves, while the brick houses of the high castes, the landlords, had suffered severely and would get most of the relief.¹³³

The fictional account by Bhaduri appears to have captured the experience of the rural poor with not only the government's relief programme but also the local elite's influence over the relief programme of the BCRC. A weekly communiqué by the local government announced to the public at the end of March 1934 that '[a]ctual experience has shown that in the humbler type of dwelling, when the materials have not been destroyed, the house can be repaired, usually be [*sic*] the man's own labour, for a comparatively small sum'.¹³⁴ The conclusion was reached after the district administration had made enquiries into the situation of the rural population and started rural relief by the end of February.¹³⁵ 'Dwellings' made by mud, bamboo and straw could be rebuilt by 'own labour' without financial aid. Two village accounts from Sursand and Jhapaha were described as typical of the situation in the affected areas by district officials in Muzaffarpur:

The poorer *raiya*t have not suffered much in respect of their houses or clothing, as they lived in mud wall houses or grass huts which are usually repairable. It is only the bigger cultivators who have suffered much damage in loss of houses and property.¹³⁶

Rather than providing financial aid, district officers were asked to encourage villagers to 'clean up' their villages and to 'dig out their wells' since 'the earthquake had left unaffected their capacity for labour'.¹³⁷ Explicit in such correspondence at district level was the message that villagers and agriculturalists were not supposed to expect compensation, whether as relief or by remuneration, for carrying out the task. The local government was steadfast in its position that no general help was to be expected since it was the 'duty' of villagers to carry out labour tasks: 'the *raiya*s are taking the attitude that it is not their duty to clear their wells or to clean up their lands and are waiting for Government to do this'.¹³⁸ In terms of building material, the rural population was expected to rebuild by using the old materials. The local government meant that a rural peasant house had suffered 'no more damage than it often suffers in the rains' and had 'his own labour and will not require any grant'. The argument that the cultivators could use 'own labour' and old construction material for rebuilding, implied that there was a need for financial aid to cover labour or building materials: only in some cases smaller sums were granted for buying materials, or for hiring labour, if the peasant suffered from physical impairments.¹³⁹

In contrast to the self-help suggested to the rural population, the middle classes in towns benefited from the government-imposed price control and subsidised rates. When the demand for bricks increased in the summer of 1934, the government stepped in to control prices and supplies of building materials. Noteworthy is the stark revaluation of subsidies for bricks that may be indicative of the demand for it, or the government's willingness to support house constructions: from the initial 1,000 rupees, it increased to 98,000 rupees.¹⁴⁰ In Bhagalpur, the district administration arranged building materials such as timber and corrugated iron sheets also for rural middle classes, while many were supposed to manage with re-using the material from wrecked houses.¹⁴¹ A common argument by house owners, as claimed by W. H. Meyrick, an estate manager and planter from Motihari,¹⁴² who advocated the interest of planters and zamindars, was that 'the man in the *tatti* [in this context meant a house made of bamboo paring reeds or grass] house has not been hit so much as the man who lived in a *pukka* [*pucca*] house'.¹⁴³ Not surprisingly, initial reports of destruction and financial relief for houses in Jhapaha was found to be necessary in the case of 'middle class people living in *pucca* houses' and stretched to cover 'well-to-do' *raiya*s living in mud houses.¹⁴⁴

Compared to the financial aid provided for the middle classes, advocates of middle class relief claimed that 'labourers' had benefitted from job opportunities in the wake of the earthquake. According to a speaker from Saran in the

Legislative Assembly, labour wages had increased from 3 to 8 *annas* per day, and it was difficult to find a coolie or labourer for that amount. In effect, the speaker argued that the earthquake had turned out to be 'a rich harvest' for the 'labour class' while the middle classes, 'the dumb-mute people ... who got some pride in them', were left in a 'pitiable' condition, since they could neither labour nor accept charitable relief according to his line of argument.¹⁴⁵ When Chandreshvar Prashad Narayan Sinha argued for relief to the middle classes in the Legislative Council, he compared their situation to that of the labourers, whom he considered 'better off than what they were before' as the earthquake had given rise to an increased demand for labour.¹⁴⁶ After the Assam earthquake in 1897, almost identical perceptions of the labourer as profiting on the disaster surfaced. Coolie wages and prices rose after the earthquake and the labourer, who was 'about to amass a small fortune at the expense of those who can ill afford it, has himself lost practically nothing, for the excellent reason that he has nothing to lose...'¹⁴⁷

The earthquake being considered an opportunity for labourers to earn, as an effect of their increased demand, became linked with financial aid to the middle classes. Those who had not lost what was defined as a house were perceived as benefitting from the increased demand for labour by those who had lost property and would be able to pay for reconstruction with a grant or a loan.¹⁴⁸ Similar logics were deployed by the European planters and sugar cane estate owners to argue for grants and loans in order to rebuild their factories: as long as the mills did not run, they could not employ labour, and the workers would also suffer from loss of income and lack of jobs, argued one speaker representing their interest in the central Legislative Assembly.¹⁴⁹ Another argument claimed that loans to bigger zamindars and planters automatically solved the question of charitable relief since the money was needed to keep staff employed and at the same time hire labour for the reconstruction.¹⁵⁰ Relief was argued for based on labour relations existent before the earthquake and reflected labourers' dependency on wealthier socio-economic groups.

While labourers may have been in demand as the increased salaries for labourers in Saran indicated, the loss of cultivation due to flooding and sand deposits released many labourers in the countryside. The hurry to initiate unemployment relief was partly motivated by the loss of work among the rural population since large tracts of agricultural land had been ruined, but with the *rabi* harvest in April the labourers could again take up work in the fields.¹⁵¹ Coupled with the low wages offered by the BCRC for clearing sand deposits and retrieving wells,¹⁵² as well as the large number of unskilled and skilled labour hired on the Darbhanga Raj's major reconstruction projects,¹⁵³ the overall profit

for labourers as an outcome of the increased demand appear unsubstantiated. The perception that the large and diffuse group referred to as the labouring classes had benefited from the earthquake in terms of raises in salary appears doubtful, except for possibly in the emergency phase, since it is questionable how often labour was rewarded by compensation in cash or kind, if rewarded at all.

Relief works as a form of aid also confirms an official view of labour as an asset of the rural population, while at the same time it contradicts the perception of financial profits made by the labourers. The government mainly employed women and children as workers whose wages were kept to a bare minimum according to its own policy,¹⁵⁴ perhaps an indication that men could get better-paid labour opportunities elsewhere. The same approach towards labour was voiced by the BCRC which had opened 'a sort of test work' in order to counter the scarcity of food in villages in Muzaffarpur and Champaran. The argument for employing people on the low wages of 4 to 6 pice (1–1 ½ anna) a day, depending on the age and capacity of the worker for cutting earth, repairing village roads and excavating water-channels and tanks, was the ability to labour according to the report. Doles were considered demoralising:¹⁵⁵ 'We made it one of our principles not to pauperise the people by giving doles of grain without getting some sort of work from the recipients except when they were old or infirm and incapable of work.'¹⁵⁶ Up to 15,000 day-labourers and peasants per day were engaged in the BCRC's employment relief on restoring roads and agricultural land, filling up sunken villages, removing debris and, in some cases, re-excavating silted tanks in Champaran. As many as 400,000 persons in Champaran undertook such work and shared about 17,000 rupees in reward for constructing roads, embankments and other labour-intensive tasks for an undisclosed number of days in the first six months of the aftermath.¹⁵⁷ The number of labourers may seem exaggerated, but the local government and the Bettiah Raj also employed large numbers on relief works and as coolies in Champaran and Muzaffarpur.¹⁵⁸

The relative loss of those who had only labour as an asset was, however, questioned by European volunteers from the SCI, an international volunteer pacifist organisation that in cooperation with the local government and the BCRC had formed the Joint Flood Committee (JFC) in November 1934.¹⁵⁹ Manual labour in international teams with local workers was an essential component in building solidarity and thereby promoting peace according to the philosophy of SCI and its founder, Pierre Cérésolle (1879–1945).¹⁶⁰ Cérésolle's idea was to use the method, until then only tried in Europe, to improve relations between the colonial government and Indians, specifically the INC.¹⁶¹ The cooperation focused on building three villages in the Muzaffarpur district for the resettlement

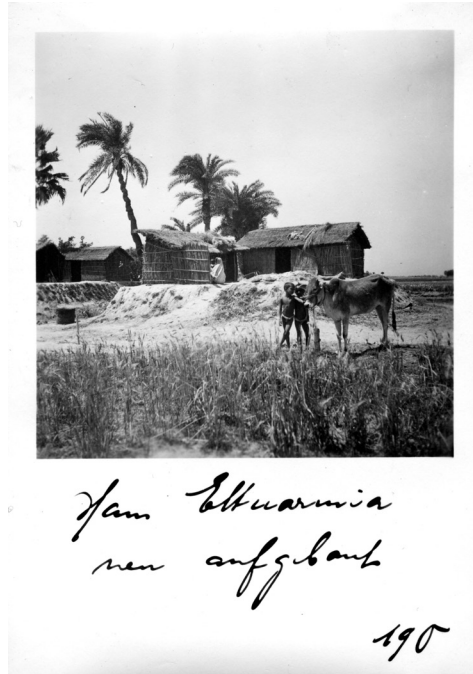


Image 5.1 Newly built thatched houses in rural Muzaffarpur.

Source: SCI International Archives, SCI India Photos: 'Zivildienst in Indien. 2. Teil' (Civil Service in India, Part 2'), 60501.2, January–June 1935.

of about one thousand families of peasants threatened by the floods of the river Bagmati after the earthquake.¹⁶² Compared to Europe, however, the low wages and poor living conditions of manual labourers in Bihar served as an eye-opener that resulted in a revision of the organisation's programme. A small group of Europeans participated as international volunteers and worked as 'leaders' and partly side by side with the Indian workers in digging and carrying soil.¹⁶³ Just like in Europe, where the SCI had previously organised similar work-based reconstruction camps in places struck by natural disasters or the First World War, Cérésolé's idea was to pay local people for labour in order to not take away work opportunities. According to the scheme in Bihar, the villagers worked in exchange for land and house material granted by the local government and the BCRC under the relief programme run by the JFC. The workers' contribution consisted 'exclusively in supplying labour at somewhat reduced rates',¹⁶⁴ while land and material were given based on the condition that the settlers built 'decent



Image 5.2 New mud house in rural Muzaffarpur.

Source: SCI International Archives, SCI India Photos: 'Zivildienst in Indien. 2. Teil' (Civil Service in India, Part 2'), 60501.2, January–June 1935.

and durable' houses with mud or bricks walls as opposed to the thatched huts they had lived in before: such *kuccha* constructions were prohibited since the settlements were framed as model villages (Images 5.1 and 5.2).¹⁶⁵

The method of rebuilding villages by engaging landless villagers as labourers in exchange for building materials and land, however, could not be realised.¹⁶⁶ The villagers depended on their labour for making a living, hence labour in exchange for construction materials was planned to provide the villagers with 'houses' or better huts, but the plan proved unsustainable since it did not enable them to feed themselves and their families.¹⁶⁷ As a solution to the untenable situation the JFC agreed to employ full-time workers on standard wages to keep their 'soul and body together'. According to the camp leader of the JFC, extreme poverty did not allow villagers to work on reduced wages as they had 'their daily work and earnings to keep alive'.¹⁶⁸ This was perhaps not surprising, since unskilled labour wages, in general, fell well below the nutritional norms in colonial India.¹⁶⁹

The committee's perception of the value of labour, voiced foremost by the SCI members, contradicted the general official categorisation of labourers as endowed with the asset to labour without much regard for its income-generating purpose. According to the SCI's impression of the labour conditions, the labourers suffered a loss of income when they supplied labour in exchange for building material. It should also be noted that the JFC intended to improve the housing conditions of the villagers by upgrading building materials from *kuccha* to *pucca*, an aspiration that undoubtedly required a labour effort that extended beyond using or reusing *kuccha* materials from destroyed houses.

The poor living condition of the labourers was also noted by the European volunteers of the SCI. That the Europeans in the camp ate more per person than an Indian peasant family survived on made them question their own presence and their role as volunteers.¹⁷⁰ Based on one of the volunteer's diaries—that of the schoolmaster Frazer Hoyland from Dorset, sent home in January 1935—the Quaker journal *The Friend* published a series. Altogether four European and seven Indians volunteers lived in the camp and employed about 30 to 40 men to dig and transport earth.¹⁷¹ According to Hoyland, the local zamindars would pay three glasses of rice a day to a worker which was supposed to feed a family of father, mother and three or four children. To the foreign volunteers, the salaries paid to the rural labourers appeared grossly inadequate, to the extent that they opposed the local labour rates and increased the salary to 5 glasses of rice, despite protests from the zamindars.¹⁷² They were not only appalled by the labour conditions under the zamindars, but also seemed more surprised to note that 'even the local English planter' paid boys 1 *anna* per day for walking on their knees 8 to 9 hours per day in the fields, the same rate for unskilled female labour, when the official minimum wage was supposedly 3 *annas* per day.¹⁷³ According to these European eye-witness accounts and the administrative documents of the JFC, labourers and peasants did not earn enough to eat properly, with their earnings being below the minimum wage rather than reflecting an increase in salaries that the increased demand for labour supposedly had triggered. Regardless of their earnings, their employment in large numbers in reconstruction projects by the JFC, on BCRC's 'test works' and by the local government facilitated recovery at a regional level.

Administering Loans and Grants: Chaos and Collapse

The local government's distribution of grants and loans was marked by a gross miscalculation of the burden it would impose on its administration. The

confusion was a fact as the distribution of charitable aid from the VERF in the form of 'house building grants' started before the government announced the loan conditions under the Natural Calamities Loans Act by the middle of March.¹⁷⁴ The local government administration handled both types of monetary aid simultaneously, a factor that directly contributed to misunderstandings and complicated applications, as will be discussed in this section.

The distribution of *taccavi* and charitable relief in the form of grants to agriculturalists suffered the same confusion. The local government administration distributed charitable grants from the VERF to private persons: in rural areas, this was done by government officials under the Director of Agriculture and additional staff who partly were paid by funds from the VERF.¹⁷⁵ The fine line between the administration of local government funds for gratuitous relief and those of the VERF's collection existed on paper but was hard to discern in practice.¹⁷⁶ That the local government had underestimated the dimension of work involved in processing applications and to distribute relief became evident when the relief programme collapsed after the summer as a result of staff shortages and administrative chaos.

The *Final Report on the Survey of Lands Damaged* described a relatively unproblematic distribution of *taccavi* and grants, contradicting the experience of the administration and applicants who struggled with muddled guidelines and insufficient numbers of staff. By April reports from survey teams in the area questioned the low number of grant applications compared to the number of loan applications. Large landholders had been the first and most efficient to apply for loans. According to field reports, one reason for the fewer-than-expected number of applications may have been the definition of 'severe spoolation' being set too high; another reason could have been that the small landholders of less than an acre of land had not come forward since they had not understood the rules.¹⁷⁷ The time-consuming land survey was the primary reason for delays in the distribution of all types of grants and loans according to the Commissioner of Tirhut: 'The present difficulty is lack of staff. Almost every available officer is employed on sand *taccavi* either as enquiring officer or disbursing in order to get the work completed by the end of May.' In the subdivision of Madhubani, with 8,000 villages, the envisioned inspection of damaged fields in person was regarded as impossible by the Commissioner of Tirhut, even if only half of them had to be visited, at least four to five officers were needed.¹⁷⁸ Similarly in Darbhanga, the district officer claimed to need at least 40 officers for what he perceived to be a colossal task of distributing house-building grants in 3,000 villages, in addition to agricultural loans, and carrying out other regular tasks.¹⁷⁹ Surveying agricultural land before

the rains arrived was given priority because of the impact sand was feared to have on waterlogging and in aggravating floods if not removed in time. But the number of staff was insufficient for the task, and few members of staff remained to process house loans and house grants.

Contrary to the district administration, the provincial administration in Patna did not find fault with the administrative set-up, but thought the delays depended on *raiya*t's being 'chary' of taking loans and appearing 'suspicious'.¹⁸⁰ The *raiya*t's attitude, according to Brett, was to rather 'sit and wait' for the monsoon to carry away the sand than accepting loans and grants in order to start the work.¹⁸¹ Towards the end of April, the district officers had not yet submitted distribution reports for agricultural relief, and progress reports supplied by the Commissioner of Tirhut showed insignificant results compared to the expectations.¹⁸² When the Commissioner of Tirhut plainly listed the reasons for the delayed distribution by the end of April, the provincial administration in Patna appeared taken aback by the district administration's workload. In spite of repeated warnings from the Tirhut Division about the failures in distribution, the governor considered it 'absurd for the Muzaffarpur officials to leave us entirely in the dark about the problems in the distribution of *takavi* and grants',¹⁸³ thereby finding the problem partly rooted in a lack of communication by the division and district administration. The slow process of administrative communication was in fact ignored by the Additional Commissioner in Tirhut, appointed to deal with the extra work after the earthquake, who went ahead distributing grants and agricultural loans without the government's approval. He had authorised eight officers with the powers of Collector in order to 'enable loans to be distributed in reasonable time'.¹⁸⁴ The apparent understaffed administration had resorted to breaking protocol in order to distribute relief. The local government had to 'make legal' the distribution of grants and loans by extending the power of the Collector to the loan-distributing officers as an ad hoc measure.¹⁸⁵ According to the rules, the police was trusted to distribute grants up to 25 rupees, while sub-inspectors, sub-deputy collectors were trusted to distribute grants up to 40 rupees; and finally, sub-divisional officers or collectors distributed any larger amounts, up to a maximum of 300 rupees.¹⁸⁶ The power of the Collector had thereby been necessary to distribute grants of larger amounts. In this way most of the grants from the VERF had by May 1934 been distributed or allocated to people who had lost houses or needed temporary quarters. Rural relief to the poor from the VERF amounted to 166,350 rupees of 'petty' grants for repairs of houses and wells. At the end of 1934 so-called general grants of 'max 300 rupees' for almost 2.8 million rupees had been distributed, and urban and rural

middle-class persons had received middle-class grants of 300 to 1,000 rupees for the amount of almost 1.5 million rupees (see Table 5.3).

In June, after the rains commenced, the Commissioner in Tirhut had tried to stop further distributions since the administrators thought only 2 to 10 per cent of the *taccavi* had been used for clearing sand: the *raiyats* had used the rest on 'domestic expenses, often marriages and social ceremonies, and trusted nature to dissipate the deposits'.¹⁸⁷ Yet, Brett had by May when the land survey was in progress, estimated to spend 1.2 million rupees on sand-clearance grants, and half of it in Muzaffarpur district.¹⁸⁸ It turned out, according to the Commissioner of Tirhut, that the sand's negative effects had been exaggerated by everyone, including himself: only in a small area sand deposits of 2 feet were considered a grave problem. The other argument against distributing a second instalment was the workload it imposed on the administration by 'duplicating the laborious and complicated work of the past four months'.¹⁸⁹ The problem entailed with the distribution of *taccavi* was solved by the cancellation of a second installation in September 1934. The relief programme had misjudged the need for relief and lacked adequate administrative capacities to follow it through. Even if the need for financial assistance to remove sand was, according to the government's appreciation, less than expected, it found that the rural population had made good use of the aid. In retrospect, Brett, like the Commissioner of Tirhut, saw the positive side of loans and grants. Even if the major parts of the grants for clearing sand had been used for another purpose, he thought the money of incalculable value as it enabled the receivers to 'repair their houses, pay their rent and resume the normal course of their lives'. According to the local government, the grant had helped people out of a sense of despair, reversing 'a general state of despondency which induced the peasants to sit idle and refuse to pay rent and taxes'.¹⁹⁰ By extension, however, the loans and grants had not only benefited the relief receivers in the reconstruction of houses and reclamation of land, but the financial aid had also served the needs of the local government and the landlords who could continue to collect rents and taxes. The outcome of the disaster was in this way highly unequal for those who wielded power and, in addition shared interests of rent and revenue collections, the government and the landlords, compared to the peasants.

The loan scheme for rebuilding private property in towns under the Natural Calamities Loans Act went wrong in the same way it had done for the *taccavi* and grants for rural areas. In writing the report at the end of 1934, Brett recognised that the loan application process had failed in particular in Darbhanga and Muzaffarpur, while the scheme was deemed successful in Patna with 761 loans

distributed in six months. As Brett concluded, by the end of 1934, people liberally applied for grants of maximum 300 rupees in both rural and urban areas. Also in towns, 'for which the Act was originally intended' according to Brett, the number of applications requested more than the requirements in the government's estimates, as a result 'only' 15 per cent of the applications were granted.¹⁹¹ Although Brett's final report posthumously notes the failure of the relief programme to follow through, the administrative issues were discovered early in the process.

In comparison to the success of the scheme in Patna, 17,787 out of 31,602 loan applications in Darbhanga had been rejected by September 1934. At that point, the administration confessed to being overburdened by the number of applications as 'nothing was being done except to weed out cases capable of rejection'.¹⁹² The great number of applications for grants and house loans in both rural and urban areas in the whole earthquake area required substantial efforts by the district administration. According to Brett, many of the 24,226 applications for a house grant in urban areas, and of the 202,539 applications for house grants in rural areas were invalid and only served to burden the administration. Similar to rural aid, people appeared to have been misinformed about the rules or lacked the required paperwork.¹⁹³ The district administration in Muzaffarpur made 'painfully slow' progress under the sheer volume of loan and grant applications: half of the more than 800 urban middle-class building grants had been approved, half of them had been rejected and more than 10,000 loan and grant applications were still pending in September. By the end of September, 8,148 loan applications from rural areas and 853 cases in urban areas in Muzaffarpur were dealt with at a snail's pace of two cases a week. In the rural areas merely two out of the 8,148 loan applications had been sanctioned. Only districts such as Saran with a low number of applications for rural house loans managed to dispose of a fair number of the applications.¹⁹⁴ Up to 31 August 1934, house loans ranging from 100 rupees to 12,000 rupees had been distributed up to a total of 856,000 rupees in Patna, Saran, Monghyr and Bhagalpur, and 500,000 rupees in other affected districts.¹⁹⁵

Darbhanga repeatedly revealed the weaknesses of the scheme. The erratic administration of loans and grants was to a large extent caused by a misinformed, overburdened or defective district administration. For instance, the Darbhanga District Officer's estimates of 200,000 rupees for house-building grants at the end of February never reached Brett¹⁹⁶ and, as a result, the district's funds were exhausted before the mistake was discovered.¹⁹⁷ Early on, Brett foresaw a 'defective' administration of grants in Darbhanga which he thought would

cause a 'serious delay' in distribution but such warning signals were not taken seriously.¹⁹⁸ Officers in charge in Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga wrongly rejected loan applications from towns, based on a misconception that it was necessary to demand security other than the house itself, even though this rule clearly only applied for granting house loans in rural areas. The district officials appeared badly informed about regulations, and partly created some of the chaos by delaying reports, underestimating sums required and accepting invalid applications. In retrospect, Brett complained that the officer in charge of Muzaffarpur district had neither acquainted himself with the specific regulations nor instructed the subordinates on the subject.¹⁹⁹

Applications for middle class grants in rural areas in Darbhanga increased significantly after the rule of extra security for a house loan was announced. The increase in applications for grants was interpreted as a sign of a distribution that was too wide and spurred Brett to immediately visit Darbhanga to review the situation. According to him, the grants appeared to have been distributed to 'classes' below the middle classes, and in the villages 'irrespective of whether the owner of the house can repair it with his own labour'.²⁰⁰ The initial estimate of 200,000 rupees for house-building grants in Darbhanga doubled to more than 400,000 rupees remitted by the end of April, and the estimate for grants was revised to the substantially higher figure of 650,000 rupees.²⁰¹ The total sum requested for rural house-building grants in Darbhanga by June amounted to 750,000 rupees, more than any other area at that point in time.²⁰² The increase in grants also reflected the district administration's idea of a larger need for relief in rural areas than what the administration in Patna claimed. For instance, the Commissioner of Tirhut and Brett both disagreed with the high estimates provided by a sub-district officer for rural house grants in Darbhanga, but the persistence and support of the District Officer resulted in a grant of an unusually high figure. Even though the Commissioner remained defiant that the figures were 'too high', he considered it 'better to err on the side of generosity', cautioning the Sub-district Officer against what was considered a too wide distribution in rural areas.²⁰³ Brett had asked district officers to revise the amounts for distribution already in March since the officers had 'far too liberal ideas' in distributing grants; they had included schools and other types of community buildings and were consequently reprimanded to apply the grants only to private houses. In order to limit disbursements, sub-inspectors were entrusted to give out grants of maximum 5 rupees per case in order to speed up the distribution of small grants in Darbhanga.²⁰⁴ The amounts distributed differed greatly between Darbhanga and the other districts: for instance, 7 rupees was the average rural

grant distributed to 66,000 people in Champaran, and 32 rupees the average urban grant handed out to 3,000 urban households in the same district, while in Muzaffarpur district, rural grants were on an average 32 rupees and limited to 100 rupees per grant in urban settings, totalling 400,000 rupees.²⁰⁵

There were, however, shortcuts to obtain grants. According to the newspaper *Ittihad*, the persons who had derived the largest benefit from the grants were those who could approach the officials in charge and those with access to distributors of the fund. Among the *amlas* (police officers) of the lower rungs, bribes were reportedly rampant and grants distributed according to communal belonging. Issues in distribution and corruption, the newspaper explained with mismanagement caused by the relief committees and a collector who did not personally look into cases.²⁰⁶ The Relief Commissioner himself recognised that the distribution of aid by government officials, police staff and relief committees was fraught with corruption and mismanagement, as he repeatedly reprimanded and investigated senior officers in the districts. For instance, in Darbhanga, the District Officer let unauthorised persons hand out house building grants in urban areas in order to speed up distribution, which Brett put a stop to.²⁰⁷ Despite the administration's diverging perceptions of rural and urban needs for house-building grants, the distribution of grants in rural areas, in the end, was more than the amounts given to urban areas, partly a result of the change of rules which restricted loans to primarily urban houses. When Brett was asked to present the figures of urban and rural relief, respectively, by the end of July 1934, he grudgingly informed his superior that "Tirhut "returns" are sui generis".²⁰⁸ In particular, the Darbhanga district administration remained a problem to Brett by ignoring his repeated requests for reports of disbursements.²⁰⁹ The distribution of grants seemed to have gone out of control for the reason of the time- and staff-consuming land surveys and the massive amount of house-loan applications that the grants were in theory expected to help to bring down. The district administration proved insufficient for the task and distributed more grants in rural areas rather than in urban settings, contrary to what the Relief Commissioner had instructed.

The house-building loans under the Natural Calamities Loans Act were seen as necessary in order to enable rebuilding, but considering the huge round of applications, garbled application guidelines and the insufficient administrative workforce, house loans seem to have caused considerable damage in terms of taxing the administration to its utmost and incurring additional expenses for the local government in terms of extra staff and travelling. As on 31 January 1936, the local government had distributed loans in accordance with Bihar and Orissa

Table 5.3 Grants and loans distributed until 31 December 1934

	House Loans (Bihar & Orissa Natural Calamities Loans Act)			General Grant of 'Max 300 Rupees'			Grant to Middle-Class Families (300–1,000 Rs)	Additional Grant to Middle-Class Families (300–1,000 Rs)
	At 4 ½ per cent 2,205 loans, most of them 300–500 Rs	At 6 ½ per cent 821 loans	Total	Urban	Rural	Total		
Patna	316,000	335,000	651,000	237,000	87,000	324,000	75,000	–
Monghyr	163,000	120,000	283,000	210,000	22,000	232,000	100,000	200,000
Saran	99,000	98,000	197,000	55,000	130,000	185,000	50,000	40,000
Bhagalpur	70,000	78,000	148,000	72,000	138,000	210,000	50,000	–
Champaran	79,000	127,000	206,000	99,000	469,000	568,000	50,000	75,000
Purnea	16,000	42,000	58,000	7,000	1,000	8,000	5,000	–
Gaya	26,000	35,000	61,000	11,000	11,000	22,000	–	–
Muzaffarpur	66,000	34,000	100,000	251,000	237,000	488,000	300,000	200,000
Darbhanga	91,000	46,000	137,000	138,000	578,000	716,000	100,000	185,000
Shahabad	11,000	17,000	28,000	8,000	12,000	20,000	10,000	–
Total	937,000	932,000	1,869,000	1,088,000	1,685,000	2,773,000	790,000	700,000

Source: Compiled with figures provided in Brett, *A Report on the Bihar Earthquake*: 61, 63, 64.

Note: Units in rupees. Empty box means that data on the amount is missing. As per 31 January 1936, the local government had distributed loans according to the Bihar and Orissa Natural Calamities Loans Act ('House Loans') for 2,700 976 rupees. 'Grant of Loans on Account of Earthquake' (Question no. 223), 28 March 1936, *BOLCP* 34 (22):1419.

Natural Natural Calamities Loans Act amounting to about 2.7 million rupees, a petty sum next to the amount extended in grants by the end of 1934 (Table 5.3).²¹⁰ When members of the Legislative Assembly of Bihar and Orissa argued for a loan scheme a month after the earthquake, they claimed that out of the 60 per cent of the middle and upper classes living in *pucca* houses and bungalows who had lost their houses, 25 per cent needed grants for rebuilding, while 75 per cent were able to take loans.²¹¹ In the end, grants made up a larger share than loans as a form of relief. Against the backdrop of the complications surrounding the house loans, the government's recourse to gradually turn to charity and grants also for rebuilding houses seem to reflect a loan scheme insufficiently planned, with little grasp of administrative capacities at hand.

Conclusion: The Social Construction of Needs

This chapter has examined the foundations for how categories of relief emerged in the earthquake's aftermath. Socio-economic status, rural or urban spaces and damages to property were variables used to define categories of relief. While earthquake relief relied on previous experiences from famine relief in both urban and rural areas among the middle classes, labourers and agriculturalists, urban material damages to houses cast categories in a new light.

Middle class relief after the earthquake catered to victims of the earthquake whose property was damaged or ruined, or/and whose social status inhibited them from accepting relief in public spaces or, to a lesser extent, to those who regardless of social status were physically unable to labour. In this way, both social and financial class influenced middle class relief. The middle classes as a category of relief receivers was a diverse group which benefitted from fundraising and government schemes launched in the aftermath, as well as from house-building initiatives and charitable relief. The two main sources of relief to compensate for the loss of property were the loan scheme under the Bihar and Orissa Natural Disasters Loans Act and grants. Middle class grants and house-building grants distributed by government officials were sourced from the VERF. A large portion of funds went towards grants for the relief category of the middle classes, and the same category was the target of house reconstruction grants from relief associations. Similar to how middle classes had been treated as a separate category in famine relief, they were in the earthquake's aftermath distinguished from the so-called labouring classes based on needs. Their needs were portrayed as more than the labourers' and agriculturalists' needs, based on the loss of property

which made them eligible for higher grants and the subsidised government loan scheme.

The relief scheme for the rural population below the middle classes in the hierarchical categorization of relief was foremost based on measures implemented in times of so-called agricultural distress, which meant unemployment relief, *taccavi* or agricultural loans, charitable grants and remission of revenue to agriculturalists. A significant difference which separated the rural population from the middle classes in the scheme for relief was its ability to labour and status as inhabitants of huts rather than houses. Compared to the relief category of the middle classes, they supplied labour to rebuild their huts of immaterial value. According to this form of relief policy, labourers were considered to be helped by both an increased demand for labour and by so-called unemployment relief in the form of minimum salaried wage labour in removing sand and rebuilding infrastructure. The category of middle-class persons was instead given unemployment grants in compensation for the disruption of income that the earthquake meant.

The afore-described logic in relief measures for the labouring rural population suggests a perception of their needs as constant regardless of the type of 'natural' disaster inflicted upon them, that is, agricultural distress, famine, flood or earthquake had the same effects and prompted the same needs in rural settings. To some extent, rural relief measures expressed an idea of the disaster not yet having reached the rural population. As such, they had not lost property and could benefit from increased labour demand. The measures taken to extend agricultural grants and loans were described as preventive, bearing in mind future decreased soil productivity and the sand's potential aggravating effect on floods. In this respect, rather than the needs of the rural population, the financial implications of the environmental effects of the earthquake were taken into consideration. Relief was not meant to ameliorate the situation of a peasant but the restoration of business as usual—that is, ensuring the collection of revenue. A foreseeable revenue loss motivated *taccavi* according to the survey of the Revenue Department.

If previous disasters such as famines and floods had first hit the rural population, and subsequently the urban population, the earthquake was treated primarily as an urban disaster during the first two weeks of the aftermath. Yet the earthquake had an instant and prolonged impact on both rural and urban settlements. This was a major difference from earlier disaster experiences. For the district administration, the ambition to manage two different types of loan and grants schemes for houses and for agricultural damages meant an organisational disaster. The work of simultaneously assessing damages and needs for relief and organising the distribution of funds was further complicated by the involvement

of both the new Reconstruction Department and the Revenue Department. Adding to the administrative chaos, these two departments struggled to extract information from the districts in order to have funds released from the VERF. The administration's dependence upon the relief fund slowed down the processing of grants. Though the *taccavi* loans were far from a novelty to the administration, the land survey on damages and shortage of staff complicated the task, partly due to the need to process house loans and grants according to another set of rules, which was new to the administration. The distribution of relief burdened the administration until it was on the brink of collapse and, as a result, relief was delayed and rules were amended to hasten the process. Apart from the problems that the failures in distributing grants and loans created for those in need, perhaps the relief programme's most significant weakness was the stress categorisation of victims and relief put on the administration. In the end, the management of relief added another layer of disaster to the aftermath.

Notes

1. Sharma, *Famine, Philanthropy and the Colonial State*, 182, 190–91.
2. Bhatta, *Natural Calamities in Orissa*, 214.
3. Sharma, *Famine, Philanthropy and the Colonial State*, 181.
4. Ahuja, 'State Formation and "Famine Policy" in Early Colonial South India', 379.
5. *Ibid.*, 354.
6. Brennan, 'Government Famine Relief in Bengal, 1943', 542.
7. Within the labour hierarchy, the cotton-mill worker and the field labourer are at two ends. The daily wage rate of agricultural labour was in general 70–80 per cent of the nearest comparable labour markets in industries and mines. Roy, *Rethinking Economic Change in India*, 86–87.
8. The 'peasantry' is problematic to differentiate or to position in relation to an internal hierarchy, ranging from working classes to large capitalist landholders. The agriculturalists referred to as 'labourers' appear to have belonged among the poorest, landless peasants and, to a limited degree, among groups who resided on leased land. Rothermund, *India in the Great Depression: 1929–1939*, 110.
9. For an example of 'winners' and 'losers' in terms of benefitting from the reconstruction phase, see Sanderson and Sharma, 'Winners and Losers from the 2001 Gujarat Earthquake'.
10. 'Extract from D.O. letter no 690 dated 1st February 1934', The Commissioner, Bhagalpur Division, to the Chief Sec. to Government, B&O, File: 'Opinion of the

- Director of Geological Survey of India regarding possibility of severe shock in Bihar', BSA RE 495/1934.
11. Arupjyoti Saikia, 'Jute in the Brahmaputra Valley: the Making of Flood Control in the Twentieth-Century Assam', *Modern Asian Studies* 49, no. 5 (2015): 1405–41.
 12. R. P. Agarwal and R. Bhoj 'Evolution of Kosi River Fan, India: Structural Implications and Geomorphic Significance', *International Journal of Remote Sensing* 13, no. 10 (1992): 1891–901. On earthquakes in relation to historical flood management, see Singh, 'The Colonial State, Zamindars and the Politics of Flood Control', 248.
 13. The Commissioner's first report contained observations from an aeroplane survey made from 8:40 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. on 21 or 22 January 1934: D.O. J-297, 'Notes of reconnaissance by aeroplane from Muzaffarpur to Bettiah and back via Raxaul and Sitamarhi' (6 pp.), J. E. Scott to P. C. Tallents, Muzaffarpur, 21–22 January 1934. The second report was compiled after a survey 'by car and on foot' about two weeks later: D.O. J-822, 'By car along main Darbhanga road to Keotra (22 miles); then through Katra and Runisedpur to Sitamarhi; 5 miles along the Sursand road and back; returned by car and on foot by direct road Sitamarhi–Muzaffarpur', J. E. Scott to J. T. Whitty, 7 February 1934, BSA RE 23/1934.
 14. Unpublished government report by the Director of Industries, S. Lal [alt. Lall] and Director of Agriculture, D. R. Sethi, submitted 26 January 1934 (21 pp.), in D.O. 223, P. C. Tallents to J. E. Scott, Patna, 9 February 1934. BSA File: 'Staff-allotments of grants required for Relief Engineers of Town Engineers', BSA RE 76/1934.
 15. D.O. J-822, J. E. Scott to J. T. Whitty, 7 February 1934, BSA RE 23/1934.
 16. D.O. J-297, 'Notes of reconnaissance by aeroplane...', J. E. Scott to P. C. Tallents, Muzaffarpur, 21–22 January 1934, BSA RE 23/1934.
 17. D.O. J-822, J. E. Scott to J. T. Whitty, 7 February 1934, BSA RE 23/1934.
 18. Report by the Director of Industries S. Lal [or Lall] and Director of Agriculture, D. R. Sethi, 26 January 1934, in D.O. 223, P. C. Tallents to J. E. Scott, Patna, 9 February 1934, BSA RE 76/1934.
 19. Notes by J. W. Houlton, 29 January 1934, File: 'Loans under Agriculturalist's Loan Act and Land Improvement Loans Act to Persons Affected by the Earthquake', Revenue Dept, L. R. Branch, December 1934, BSA R-LR IIIA/19/1934.
 20. The 1871 Land Improvement Act was a colonial law specifically intended to grant and recover *taccavi* loans from peasants. Hall-Matthews, *Peasants, Famine and the State in Colonial Western India*, 114–15. *Taccavi* loans at 6 per cent interest were, until the end of the nineteenth century, the only direct government assistance to agricultural development. It already existed in Mughal times and was continued

by the British from the end of the eighteenth century. The object of the loans was to enable the peasants to improve their holdings or to restart cultivation after a calamity. They were, however, unpopular as the ordinary cultivator often preferred to deal with a local known moneylender rather than with the physically distant, unfamiliar and known to be inflexible administration of the government. The total amounts of these loans were generally small (in the example of Champaran by Pouchepadass) and they mostly went to the more influential and well-to-do agriculturalists. Pouchepadass, *Land, Power and Market*, 542–43.

21. Appendix 1, in Brett, *A Report on the Bihar Earthquake*, 93.
22. The funds was meant for 'utilization on occasions of distress caused by drought, flood or other natural calamities in the said province'. 'The Bihar Famine Relief Fund Act, 1936 (Bihar Act V of 1936), in *Manual of Bihar Local Laws: 1790–1991* [Civil, Criminal, Revenue, Labour & Taxation Laws], ed. S. K. Pandey, vol. 3 [C-E], Containing: Bihar Acts, Rules, Orders & Notifications issued by State Government with Up-to-date Amendments with Latest Case-laws (Allahabad: National Law Agency, 1985).
23. D.O. 533, 'Weekly Bulletin, 9 March 1934 RD', W. B. Brett to M.G. Hallett (Home Dept.), Patna 9 March 1934, NAI H. Pol. 34/1B/1934.
24. 'Presentation of the Budget for 1935–36', 13 February 1935, *BOLCP* 32, no. 4, 271.
25. 'The Bihar Famine Relief Fund Bill, 1936 (no. 17 of 1936)', 18 November 1936, 37–38 in *Bihar Legislative Council Proceedings (BLCP)* 36, no. 1, Official Report. (Patna: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1937).
26. Dunn et al., 'The Bihar–Nepal Earthquake of 1934', 33, cf. 33–37.
27. Caldwell noted that he 'had no measuring instrument and very limited time', making the reservation that his observations 'must be taken as merely very general impressions'. Though such shortcomings obviously hampered the survey, his observations and details are unparalleled. Other surveys and observations were either done in a greater haste and are thus more superficial and less methodological, or at a later stage after human beings and the weather had impacted the land. K. S. Caldwell, *Note on Sand Deposit*, 17 March 1934, 5 pp., printed at the B&O Government Press, 28 March 1934, submitted to the Govt of B&O and GOI, Home Dept., New Delhi; NAI HP 34/1B/1934. Caldwell's note is also mentioned in 20th Communiqué: Bulletin for the week ending the 21st March 1934 (same file as above).
28. Caldwell, *Note on Sand Deposit*, 3, 5.
29. William H. K. Lee, Hiroo Kanamori, Paul Jennings and Carl Kisslinger, *International Handbook of Earthquake and Engineering Seismology*, Vol. 81B in the International Geophysics Series (Amsterdam: Academic Press, 2003), 1379.

30. Nasu commented on seismic damages and possibilities of giving recommendations on earthquake-safe buildings. Nasu, 'No. 30, The Great Indian Earthquake of January 15, 1934', 417, 418n2. Nasu wrote an article in Japanese on 'seismic damages' which has not been consulted due to linguistic limitations. Shinji [an alternative reading of the Japanese characters for 'Nobuji'] Nasu, 'Seismic Damages caused by the Great Indian Earthquake of Jan. 15, 1934' (in Japanese), *Journal of Architecture and Building Science* 48, no. 591 (11 May 1934): 1182–293. My initial confusion regarding the name of the author could be cleared thanks to Amelia Bonea's knowledge of Japanese.
31. Gergory Clancey, 'The Meiji Earthquake: Nature, Nation, and the Ambiguities of Catastrophe', *Modern Asian Studies* 40, no. 4 (2006): 909–51, 931.
32. Nasu, 'No. 30, The Great Indian Earthquake of January 15, 1934', 418n2, 419–20.
33. A. M. P. Cliff, *Bālū kaise hatēgi? Bhūkamp ke kāraṅ khetom mem jo bālū jamā ho gayā hai uske miṭne ke kucch upāy* (How to Remove the Sand? Some Remedies for Removing the Sand in the Fields Caused by the Earthquake), published on behalf of Muzaffarpur District Board, by R. P. Roy Sharma, 70 Dharmatala Street [Calcutta]: Rashtrabandhu Press, [1934], 8 pp.
34. Brett, *A Report on the Bihar Earthquake*, 37–38, 40.
35. The survey was carried out from 10 March to 28 May 1934 by the Revenue Department, *Final Report on the Survey of Lands Damaged by Earthquake in North Bihar in 1934* (Bihar and Orissa, Patna: Department of Land Records and Surveys. Superintendent, Government Printing, 1934).
36. Telegram from GOI to Sec. of State for India, New Delhi, 11 February 1934. In 'Earthquakes. Earthquake in Bihar, Bengal etc. 1934. Financial Assistance to Provinces', Collection 109: Earthquakes Collection, IOR/L/F/7/913.
37. Telegram from India Office to the GOI, London, 14 February 1934, 'Earthquakes. Earthquake in Bihar, Bengal etc. 1934. Financial Assistance to Provinces', Collection 109: Earthquakes Collection, IOR/L/F/7/913. However, it should be noted that the financial responsibilities of the GOI or the Govt of B&O changed over time as funding and economic policies changed with budget proposals. 'Table of Expenditure' in Wasi, *Bihar and Orissa in 1936–37*, 20–24.
38. Memo, J. T. Whitty to P. C. Tallents, 3 February 1934, forwarded from P. C. Tallents to all District Officers of Patna, Tirhut and Bhagalpur Divisions', 4 February 1934, BSA RE 501/1934.
39. *Rabi*, winter crop. In Bihar, the *rabi* crops were mostly rice but also included wheat, barley and pulses. David Ludden, *An Agrarian History of South Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 23.

40. D.O. 123-A, Muzaffarpur District Office to P. C. Tallents, Muzaffarpur, 8 February 1934, BSA RE 501/1934.
41. D.O. 1539, S. L. Marwood (Champaran District office, Motihari), to P. C. Tallents, 8 February 1934, BSA RE 501/1934.
42. D.O. 533 R.D., 'Weekly Bulletin, 9 March 1934', W. B. Brett to M. G. Hallett (Home Dept.), Patna, 9 March 1934 (received 12 March 1934), NAI H. Pol. 34/1B/1934.
43. The survey was supervised by the 'Special officer, Land Damage Survey', Babu Nila Lohita Bhattacharya, Sub-Deputy Collector, who joined at Muzaffarpur on 10 February 1934. With two Head Inspectors from Chota Nagpur Settlement, he began an experimental survey of five villages around Musari, five miles from Muzaffarpur. *Final Report on the Survey of Lands Damaged*, 1–2.
44. The Board of Revenue suggested that the survey should mark the extent of sanding in the fields based on maps prepared 40 years earlier (around 1894), which the officer in charge found to be still fairly accurate, as well as on information obtained locally from tenants, *khesras* and maps from the last settlement. By night, the surveyor would use chalk and mark with red on a map the areas (a) with 'some sand, but less than 6 inches', (b) 'more than 6 inches' and (c) 'more than one foot'. The officer in charge concluded, from the experimental survey, that a surveyor could not cover more than 150 acres a day, and as the area to survey was more than 4,000 square miles and the number of surveyors were set to about 120, meant that it would have been impossible to complete the survey before the rains started in 1934. Therefore a 'speedier method' was approved by the Board of Revenue on 26 February 1934. *Final Report on the Survey of Lands Damaged*, 2.
45. D.O. 674 R. D., W. B. Brett to J. E. Scott, Commissioner, Tirhut Division, Patna 17 March 1934, BSA RE 43 IV/1934. *Final Report on the Survey of Lands Damaged*, 3.
46. *Khesra/khasra*: Official village field book containing the list of plots and showing their areas, crops and details of occupancy.
47. *Khatiyani*: Land register containing the full description of each holding (plots, areas, boundaries, details of ownership and tenancy, rents and dues). Pouchepadass, *Land, Power and Market*, 22.
48. *Zirat*: private land of a zamindar.
49. *Final Report on the Survey of Lands Damaged*, 3.
50. *Zarpeshgidar*: Holder of a zarpeshgi lease, that is, holder of a mortgage with possession.
51. According to the report. *Final Report on the Survey of Lands Damaged*, 3.
52. *Ibid*.
53. Appendix I, in Brett, *A Report on the Bihar Earthquake*, 93–94.

54. Ibid. See telegrams from GOI to Sec. of State for India, New Delhi, 11 February 1934; from India Office to the GOI, London, 14 February 1934, 'Earthquakes. Earthquake in Bihar, Bengal etc. 1934. Financial Assistance to Provinces', Collection 109: Earthquakes Collection, IOR/L/F/7/913.
55. Brett, *A Report on the Bihar Earthquake*, 15.
56. Telegram from GOI to Sec. of State for India, New Delhi 11 February 1934. 'Earthquakes. Earthquake in Bihar, Bengal etc. 1934. Financial Assistance to Provinces', Collection 109: Earthquakes Collection, IOR/L/F/7/913.
57. Wilcock, *Bihar and Orissa in 1933–34*, 22.
58. Ibid.
59. D.O. 1539, S. L. Marwood to P. C. Tallents, Champaran District office, 8 February 1934, Motihari, BSA RE 501/1934.
60. Wilcock, *Bihar and Orissa in 1933–34*, 17, 22. 'Relief Measures—Official Account', *The Nation*, 25 April 1934.
61. 'Sugar–Cane Bill' in the Council of State Debates 1, 26 April 1934, 919–20. Both *gur* and *khandsari* sugar belongs to so-called non-centrifugal sugar produced in India. J. H. Galloway, 'Sugar', in *The Cambridge World History of Food*, vol. I, ed. Kenneth F. Kiple, Kriemhild Coneé Ornelas, 437–49 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
62. The cost of the mills and pans was 200,000 rupees. Wilcock, *Bihar and Orissa in 1933–34*, 22.
63. 'Relief for Middle Class People', *ABP*, 23 March 1934.
64. 'Relief by Calcutta Marwari Relief Society', *ABP*, 25 March 1934; 'Poor Middle Class Men! Need for Relief', *ABP*, 23 February 1934. 'Effect of Earthquake on Society: Labourers Finds Work', *ABP*, 29 March 1934.
65. Niraja Gopal Jayal, *Citizenship and Its Discontents: An Indian History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 46.
66. Ibid., 44–45.
67. Indian Franchise Committee, *Volume I: Report of the Indian Franchise Committee*, 2nd ed. (Calcutta: GOI Central Publication Branch, 1932), 66–67.
68. For the case of Bihar, see *ibid.* The expansion of franchise in this period is discussed in Tomlinson, *The Indian National Congress and the Raj, 1929–1942*, 70–73.
69. Speaker Chandreshvar Prashad Narayan Sinha, Muzaffarpur District, 15 February 1934, *BOLCP* 30, no. 2, 138–39.
70. Memo 2623-26/S.B, 'Extract from D.I.G.'s report, II-Agitation, Kisan Sabha and Agrarian Agitation', 21 March 1934, BSA PS 33 VI/1934.
71. Sanjay Joshi, 'Introduction', in *The Middle Class in Colonial India*, ed. Sanjay Joshi, xv–lvi (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), xix.

72. Sanjay Joshi, 'The Spectre of Comparisons: Studying the Middle Class of Colonial India', in *Elite and Everyman: The Cultural Politics of the Indian Middle Classes*, ed. Amita Baviskar and Raka Ray, 83–107 (New Delhi: Routledge, 2011), 91.
73. Partha Chatterjee, 'The Subalternity of a Nationalist Elite', in *The Middle Class in Colonial India*, ed. Sanjay Joshi, 94–117 (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 95.
74. Pouchepadass, *Land, Power and Market*, 332–34.
75. Anand A. Yang, *The Limited Raj: Agrarian Relations in Colonial India, Saran District, 1793–1920* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1989), ch. 5, 90ff.
76. Saghirul Haq, Saran District, 15 February 1934, *BOLCP* 30, no. 2, 157.
77. Maulavi Shaikh Muhammad Shafi, Darbhanga District, 15 February 1934, *BOLCP* 30, no. 2, 162.
78. Speaker Chandreshvar Prashad Narayan Sinha, Muzaffarpur District, 15 February 1934, *BOLCP* 30, no. 2, 133–34.
79. A Mrs Hogan obtained her livelihood by letting out her bungalow to boarders. It had been completely destroyed and she had asked for 12,000 rupees to build a new house. Miss Curtiss valued the loss to 47,000 rupees, including the cost of the destroyed furniture. 'Some Political and Other Aspects of Earthquake Relief in Bihar', M. G. Hallett, 31 March 1934 (Unofficial report of a 'short visit' to Bihar of two days in Patna, two days in Monghyr and two days in Muzaffarpur, 18 unnumbered pages out of which one appear to be missing), NAI HP 34/1/1934.
80. Brett, *A Report on the Bihar Earthquake*, 57.
81. Dunn et al., 'The Bihar–Nepal Earthquake of 1934', 167–71.
82. Brett, *A Report on the Bihar Earthquake*, 56.
83. Dunn et al., 'The Bihar–Nepal Earthquake of 1934', 30, 167.
84. Brett, *A Report on the Bihar Earthquake*, 56–57, 65.
85. See the chapter on isoseismals, in Dunn et al., 'The Bihar–Nepal Earthquake of 1934', 201–73.
86. 'The Reconstruction Problem; Mr. Mookerjea's Suggestions in Bihar Council', *ABP* 23 February 1934.
87. Marwari Relief Society, *Report of the Behar Earthquake Relief Work*, 9. BCRC, *Report for the Period Ending 30th June 1934*, 22.
88. Table I, BCRC, *Devastated Bihar*, 65.
89. Marwari Relief Society, *Report of the Behar Earthquake Relief Work*, 9. BCRC, *Report for the Period Ending 30th June 1934, Proceedings*, 22.
90. Census data (1931) recorded: Muzaffarpur: urban population 82,241, number of occupied houses 16,739; Darbhanga: urban population 104,823, number of

- occupied houses 21,184; Monghyr: urban population 126,008, number of occupied houses 24,674. From Appendix E: 'Census Report of India 1931', in BCRC, *Devastated Bihar*, 65.
91. Honorary Sec. Kanoria, Marwari Relief Society, to Sec. Behar Govt, Calcutta 29 January 1934, RE 65/1934.
 92. BCRC, *Report for the Period Ending 30th June 1934*, 22.
 93. Marwari Relief Society, *Report of the Behar Earthquake Relief Work*, 9.
 94. Indian Franchise Committee, *Volume I: Report of the Indian Franchise Committee*, 69.
 95. BCRC, *Devastated Bihar*, 51.
 96. Table 'Approximate Figures of Damage Done by the Earthquake on 15th January, 1934, in the Districts of North Bihar and Monghyr', in BCRC, *Report for the Period Ending 30th June 1934*, 93.
 97. Gaya Prasad Singh, elected member of the Central Legislative Assembly from Muzaffarpur-cum-Champaran, and Syed Abdul Aziz, Minister of Education in Bihar, were key persons in the proposal. 15 February 1934, *BOLCP* 30, no. 2, 154. 'The Bihar and Orissa Natural Calamities Loans Rules, 1934', *Manual of Bihar Local Laws: 1790–1991* [Civil, Criminal, Revenue, Labour & Taxation Laws], vol. 12, ed. S. K. Pandey (Allahabad: S. B. Malik for, National Law Agency, 1991): 91–108, 91. Reproduced from *The Bihar and Orissa Natural Calamities Loans Act, 1934. Bihar and Orissa Act I of 1934* (Patna: Superintendent, Government Printing, Bihar and Orissa, 1934).
 98. Brett, *A Report on the Bihar Earthquake*, 58.
 99. *RPER*, 8.
 100. Speaker Birendra Nath Chakravartti, 15 February 1934, *BOLCP* 30, no. 2, 172.
 101. Bettiah estate promised 500,000 rupees in 'house-building loan' to private persons in Motihari, Bettiah and bazaar areas in rural towns, which was about 80 per cent of the damaged area according to the district administration in Champaran. For rural areas, the estate had allocated 200,000 in *taccavi* loans. As a result of the relief extended by the Bettiah estate, the district administration in Champaran estimated that the local government would only need to distribute *taccavi* of 300,000 rupees in the Sadar subdivision which was the hardest hit. D.O. 1943/E-31, Marwood to P. C. Tallents, Motihari, 15 February 1934, RE KW 20/1934.
 102. 'Long term loans' at 2 per cent per year of the total sum of 313,145 rupees were distributed to tenants of the Raj. The Darbhanga Raj sanctioned loans in 10 circles (an administrative unit) and the amount granted in one circle varied from 833 rupees to 73,365 rupees. Appendix 3, in Sinha, *The Bihar Earthquake*, 107. Forty thousand rupees was distributed to tenants outside the estate. *Ibid.*, 25.

103. Comments to the weekly reports from Tirhut Division, Brett to H.E., Patna/Ranchi 30 April 1934, BSA RE 13/1934.
104. The loan amount was unlimited per se; however, there were certain clauses in place with regard to the claims. Most significantly, the loan could not exceed the value of the original house, nor could it exceed the cost of repairing the house. If a loan exceeded 1,000 rupees, the limit was 50 per cent of the value of the house, and for lesser amounts loans were given for up to 75 per cent of the value of the reconstructed house. The smaller class of loans ('A') were free of interest for the first year, which in practice lowered the total rate of interest to less than 4 per cent. Brett, *A Report on the Bihar Earthquake*, 9, 59–60.
105. 'Loans to 'Quake Sufferers, Bihar Government Demanding High Rates of Interest, Interpellations in the Assembly' (New Delhi, 17 March 1934), *ABP*, 22 March 1934.
106. Resolution: 'Reduction of Rates of Interest on 'A' and 'B' Class Loans Advanced under the Natural Calamities Loans Act, 1934', 7 February 1939, in Bihar Legislative Council Debates (*BLCD*) 4, no. 4. Official Report. (Patna: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1940), 173.
107. Cf. 'Question no. 149', 9 August 1938, *BLCD* 3, no. 41. Official Report. (Patna: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1939); 7 February 1939, *BLCD* 4, no. 4, 173.
108. 'Short Notice Question', Reg. no. 741 (7 March 1934), NAI H. Pol. 3/2/1934. Also in 'Loans to 'Quake Sufferers, Bihar Government Demanding High Rates of Interest, Interpellations in the Assembly' (New Delhi, 17 March 1934), *ABP*, 22 March 1934.
109. 'Week ending 31 March' (Monghyr) DIG to McDowell, Inspector General, CID, BSA PS 33 III/1934.
110. App. No. 37, 'Supplementary Demand under the Head "Loans and Advances by the Provincial Government"', 28 March 1936, *BOLCP* 34, no. 22, lvi.
111. D.O. 3656, W. B. Brett to Rajendra Prasad, 17 September 1934, NAI H. Pol. 22/21/1936. Brett, *A Report on the Bihar Earthquake*, 59.
112. *Ibid.*, 66. In the category 'Professional grants', yet again vaguely defined, Brett mentioned specifically 'legal practitioners and their employees', the maximum grant was set to 300 rupees, in distribution the average was approximately 100–120 rupees. 'Progress of Work: Statements by Districts', summary by W. B. Brett to J. T. Whitty, Patna/Ranchi 28 September 1934, BSA RE 13/1934.
113. The exact amount was 930,255 rupees. House-building grants of 2,720,635 rupees were divided into 'Urban' 1,072,737 rupees; 'Rural' 1,420,859; 'Middle-class' 227,088 rupees. Appendix 3, in Brett, *A Report on the Bihar Earthquake*.

114. 'His Excellency the Viceroy's Earthquake Relief Fund, Bihar and Orissa Branch, Balance Sheet, 31 July 1934', NAI HP 1/41/34; Appendix 3, in Brett, *A Report on the Bihar Earthquake*.
115. *RPER*, 9–10.
116. Brett, *A Report on the Bihar Earthquake*, 63–65.
117. Second-half of January, P&J (S) Dept., 'Fortnightly Report' in B&O Local Government's Reports, Patna 1934. IOR/L/P/J/12/743.
118. 'Grant of free grants from the V.E.R.F. for house-building', No. 540/49 R.D., W. B. Brett to the District Magistrates of Monghyr, Purnea, Muzaffarpur, Saran, Champaran, Darbhanga, Patna, Gaya, Bhagalpur, Arrah, 9 March 1934, File: 'Grants sanctioned from the VER fund (Darbhanga district)', BSA RE 43 V/1934.
119. *Ibid.*; *RPER*, 8; Brett, *A Report on the Bihar Earthquake*, 61–63. 'No. 348-V.R. Viceroy's Earthquake Relief Fund, Bihar and Orissa Branch', H. C. Prior, Honorary Sec. VERF, to the District Officer Bhagalpur, Patna, 2 March 1934, BSA RE 43 V/1934.
120. 'Tirhut Weekly Report', W. B. Brett to J. T. Whitty, 2 August 1934, BSA RE 13/1934.
121. Confidential D.O. A.C. 56/R, A. V. Venables (Agent, East Indian Railway, Calcutta) to R.E. Russell, Sec. Revenue and Commerce Dept, Govt of B&O, 18 May 1935; Confidential D.O. 2136-C, Russell, to A. V. Venables, Ranchi, 4 June 1935, BSA PS 11 IV/1935.
122. BCRC, *Report for the Period Ending 30th June 1934*, vi.
123. Marwari Relief Society, *Report*, 10.
124. *Ibid.*, 10–11.
125. 'Flying Visit to Motihari Town; Ladies Astir' (26 March 1934), *ABP*, 28 March 1934.
126. Speaker Birendra Nath Chakravartti, 15 February 1934, *BOLCP* 30, no. 2, 172.
127. Fifty tons of rice was distributed in Champaran. *Prabuddha Bharata*, no. 5 (May, 1934): 260.
128. *Ibid.*
129. The Ramakrishna Mission, *The Eighth General Report of the Ramakrishna Mission (1934–35)* (Kolkata: Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, reprint [no date; photocopy March 2010]). The lesser amount of 50,000 rupees is provided in *Prabuddha Bharata*, no. 5 (May, 1934), 260.
130. A total amount of 116,828 rupees had been collected by September, including a contribution by the Mayor of Calcutta's fund, out of which 114,028 rupees had been disbursed. *Prabuddha Bharata*, no. 9 (September 1934), 260, 430.

131. *Prabuddha Bharata*, no. 10 (October, 1934), 520. 'Quake Relief', in The Ramakrishna Mission, *The Eighth General Report of the Ramakrishna Mission (1934–35)*.
132. Satinath Bhaduri, *Dhoday Charitmanas*, original in Bengali, Hindi translation by Madhukar Gangadhar (2nd ed., the original novel was published as part one and two in 1949 and 1951; Allahabad: Lokbharati Prakashan, 1981). Satinath Bhaduri was a leading functionary in the Congress organisation in Purnea district. The novel depicts several political events through the eyes of a number of community members in rural parts of north Bihar. Partha Chatterjee, 'The Nation in Heterogenous Time', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 38, no. 4 (December, 2001): 406–40, 406–407. Shirshendu Chakrabarti, 'The Matrix of History: A Study of Satinath Bhaduri's Dhorai Charit Manas (1949–51)', *Journal of Arts and Ideas* 9 (October–December 1984): 49–56, 49–51.
133. Chatterjee, 'The Nation in Heterogenous Time', 412.
134. '20th Communiqué: Bulletin for the Week Ending the 21st March 1934', NAI HP 34/1B/1934.
135. No. 1755-60. P. C. Tallents to District Officer of Saran, Chamapran, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Monghyr and Bhagalpur Patna, 21 February 1934, File: 'Grants from the Viceroy's Earthquake Relief Fund for House Building Purposes', BSA RE 43/1934.
136. D.O. 123-A, Muzaffarpur District Office to P. C. Tallents, Muzaffarpur, 8 February 1934, BSA RE 501/1934.
137. D.C. 38/41, J. E. Scott, Muzaffarpur, to all District Officers, 19 February 1934, BSA PS 33 IV/1934.
138. D.O. 323 P.C., P. C. Tallents to District Commissioner J. E. Scott, 18 February 1934, BSA PS 33 VI/1934.
139. No. 540/49 R.D., 'Grant of Free Grants from the V.E.R.F. for House-building', W. B. Brett to the District Magistrates of Monghyr, Purnea, Muzaffarpur, Saran, Champaran, Darbhanga, Patna, Gaya, Bhagalpur, Arrah, 9 March 1934, BSA RE 43 V/1934.
140. Appendix 30, 'Supplementary Demand under the Head "Miscellaneous"', 28 March 1936, *BOLCP* 34, no. 22, xlv.
141. D.O. 1192, District Officer, Magistrate's Office, Bhagalpur to P. C. Tallents, 5 February 1934, BSA RE 501/1934.
142. W. H. Meyrick (or Meyerick), planter and resident of Motihari, was Secretary of Bihar Planters Association and in 'close touch' with the local administration regarding the distribution of sugar cane after the earthquake. 'Progress Report for the Week Ending 1 March 1934', District Officer S. L. Marwood to J. E. Scott, Commissioner of Tirhut, Motihari 2 March 1934, BSA RE 13/1934. According

- to Meyrick himself, he managed an estate of 70 square miles covering four *thanas* in south Champaran. W. H. Meyrick, 15 February 1934, *BOLCP* 30, no. 2 (Superintendent, Government Printing: Patna, 1934), 149.
143. W. H. Meyrick, Champaran District, 15 February 1934, *BOLCP* 30, no. 2, 149.
 144. 'Extract from a Report from Mr Gill of Jhapaha Factory', spokesman for the local Relief Committee of Jhapaha (5 February 1934), in D.O. 123-A, Muzaffarpur District Office to P. C. Tallents, Muzaffarpur, 8 February 1934, BSA RE 501/1934.
 145. Speaker Birendra Nath Chakravarti, 15 February 1934, *BOLCP* 30, no. 2, 172.
 146. Speaker Chandreshvar Prashad Narayan Sinha, of Muzaffarpur District, 15 February 1934, *BOLCP* 30, no. 2, 138.
 147. 'The Earthquake in Bengal and Assam', a letter reprinted in *The Englishman*, in Roy, 'State, Society and the Market', n49 and cf. 276–77.
 148. D.O. 123-A, Muzaffarpur District Office to P. C. Tallents, Muzaffarpur, 8 February 1934, File: 'Earthquake Relief in Affected/Rural Areas', BSA RE 501/1934.
 149. Mr E. Studd (Bengal: European), GOI, *Legislative Assembly Debates* I, 1934, 819.
 150. Speaker Chandreshvar Prashad Narayan Sinha, Muzaffarpur District, 15 February 1934, *BOLCP* 30, no. 2, 138.
 151. See 'Proceedings from the Second General Meeting' in BCRC, *Report for the Period Ending 30th June 1934*, iii.
 152. Andrews, *The Indian Earthquake*, 85.
 153. In Darbhanga, 20,000–25,000 men of the 'skilled and unskilled labour class' were employed by the Raj in the peak reconstruction period. 'Notes on Reconstruction of Raj Buildings', in Sinha, *The Bihar Earthquake and the Darbhanga Raj*, 106.
 154. 'Tirhut Weekly Report', Brett to J. T. Whitty, Patna 2 August 1934, BSA RE 13/1934.
 155. Appendix 'Proceedings of the Second General Meeting of the Bihar Central Relief Committee' (3 August 1934), in BCRC, *Report for the Period Ending 30th June 1934*, iii.
 156. BCRC, *Report for the Period Ending 30th June 1934*, 13.
 157. In Muzaffarpur, relief to the unemployed amounted to 19,000 rupees for the same period, and in Darbhanga 2,430 rupees; unfortunately, data is missing for the other towns and districts. *Ibid.*, 52–53, and 'Proceedings from the Second General Meeting', iii.
 158. 'Tirhut Weekly Report', W. B. Brett to J. T. Whitty, Patna, 2 August 1934, BSA RE 13/1934.
 159. 'Bihar Central Relief Committee: Proceedings of the Managing Committee' (2 pp.), meeting held on the 11 January 1935, 2 p.m., at Sadaqat Ashram, Patna,

- BCUL PC 1006: 1. Brett's report ignored the SCI's central role and referred to the scheme as jointly financed by VERF and BCRC. Brett, *A Report on the Bihar Earthquake*, 35.
160. The life of Cérésolle and the initial years of the SCI are outlined in Hélène Monastier, *Pierre Ceresole: Ein Kämpfer für den Frieden* (Vienna: Sensen-Verlag, 1950).
161. Eleonor Marcussen, 'Cooperation and Pacifism in a Colonial Context: Service Civil International and Work Camps in Bihar, 1934–1937', in *HerStory: Historical Scholarship between South Asia and Europe: Festschrift in Honour of Gita Dharampal-Frick*, ed. Rafael Klöber and Manju Ludwig, 83–101 (Heidelberg; Berlin: CrossAsia-eBooks, 2018).
162. Villages in Sonathi and Minapur *thana* in the Muzaffarpur district were transferred. 'Memorandum of Discussion held on 26th November 1934', BCUL PC 998: 2. 'Memo No. R 5554-55', J. E. Scott, Commissioner, Tirth Division, 8 December 1934 (Discussion held on 7 December 1934) Commissioner's Office, Muzaffarpur, copy sent to P. Cérésolle, Muzaffarpur, Central Relief Camp, for information. BCUL PC 999. In 1936, 1870 families intended to move, almost double the number of the initial 1,000 families. 'Report on the Work of the Committee for the Removal on New Sites of the Flooded Villages in Muzaffarpur District', by P. Cérésolle (12 pp.), 30 January 1936, BVCF SCI 20342.
163. 'Report on activities of the Joint Committee upto October, 1935 for Sonathi Scheme' (19 pp.), by Phanindra Mohan Dutta, camp leader of Sonathi, 10, 18, BCUL PC 1007. Similar description in 'Notes on Indian Film' (5 pp.), explanatory notes and background to 'Indian Film 1934–37', 2, enclosed with 'Introduction to Indian Film 1934–37' (5 pp.). Recorded by the SCI 14 months after the earthquake, BVCF SCI 30401.
164. Cérésolle, 'Report on the Work of the Committee', 12. BVCF SCI 20342.
165. The roofs were thatched or covered by tiles bought from Dam Chuak colony, which was standing empty in Muzaffarpur in the aftermath of the earthquake. The tiles were sufficient to cover the roofs of 150 houses. The thatched roofs were made of straw and bamboo. 'Report on Activities of the Joint Committee upto October, 1935 for Sonathi Scheme' (19 pp.), by [Phanindra Mohan Dutta, camp leader of Sonathi], 10, 18, BCUL PC 1007.
166. The labour cost supplied by the villagers corresponded to 4–5 rupees, or 25 per cent of the cost of the walls (material, including transport by cart and boat), which was approximately 18 rupees. In Shantipur 60 per cent of the houses were built with walls of mud (14 rupees) and 40 per cent of bricks (18 rupees). 'Detailed Estimate for the Construction of Shantipur, Jamalabad, Minapur, Turki Kharao, Karanpur, Kalahia' (s.l., n.d.), BCUL PC 1050.

167. 'Memorandum of meeting held at Commissioner's Residence 28 March 1935' (2 pp.), by J. E. Scott, Muzaffarpur, 29 March 1935. BVCF, SCI 20342. 'Return of Expenditure of Joint Committee Scheme from March 1935 to February 1936', Muzaffarpur, BCUL, PC 1049.
168. 'Report on activities of the Joint Committee upto October, 1935 for Sonathi Scheme' (19 pp.), BCUL, PC 1007.
169. Roy, *Rethinking Economic Change*, 87.
170. 'Earthquake Relief Service in India: Frazer Hoyland on His Work and Experiences', *The Friend*, 8 February 1935: 115–16. Recounted in a publication by his brother: John S. Hoyland, *Digging for a New England: The Co-operative Farm for Unemployed Men* (London: Alden Press, 1936), 105–6. Frazer Hoyland, 'From an Indian Diary', *The Friend*, 15 March 1935: 230–31.
171. The Indian volunteers mentioned by name were 'Biren' and 'Bannerjee' [Bannerjee], the latter described as an ex-army officer who served in Salonica during the war. 'Notes on Indian Film', 5. BVCF SCI 30401.
172. In addition to Ceresole, Joe Wilkinson, 25 years old, from the British branch of the SCI, the International Voluntary Society for Peace (I.V.S.P.), Paul H. Schenker, a Swiss SCI camp leader, and Hoyland (see previous footnote). *The Friend*, 30 November 1934. Hoyland, in *The Friend*, 8 February 1935.
173. 'Introduction to Indian Film 1934–37' (5 pp.), 2, BVCF SCI 30401.
174. No. 540/49 R.D., 'Grant of Free Grants from the V.E.R.F. for House-building', W. B. Brett to the District Magistrates of Monghyr, Purnea, Muzaffarpur, Saran, Champaran, Darbhanga, Patna, Gaya, Bhagalpur, Arrah, 9 March 1934, BSA RE 43 V/1934.
175. D.O. 223, P.C. Tallents to the Commissioner, Tirhut Division, Political Dept, Patna, 9 February 1934, BSA RE 76/1934.
176. 'Progress Report for the Week Ending 1 March 1934. District officer S. L. Marwood to J. E. Scott, Commissioner of Tirhut, Motihari, 2 March 1934, BSA RE 13/1934.
177. D.O. No. R 1523, J. E. Scott, to all District Officers (Tirhut, except Saran), Laheria Sarai (Camp) 23/25 April 1934. File: 'Progress Report on the Distribution of *Takavi* Loans and Free Grants in North Bihar due to Earthquake', BSA R-LR IIIA/32/1934.
178. One village in Tirhut was on average 1 square mile according to the Census. Margin notes by J. W. Houlton, added to, 'House Building Grants', (memo) by J. E. Scott, received by Revenue Dept, 23 April 1934, BSA R-LR IIIA/32/1934.
179. D.O. 4438 RF, T. A. Freston to W. B. Brett, Laherisarai 9 April 1934, BSA RE 43 V/1934.

180. Notes by J. D. S[ifton], 27 April 1934, in Memo by W. B. Brett to Revenue Sec., Ranchi 24 April 1934; Notes by J. D. S[ifton], 5 May 1934, to 'House Building Grants' (memo) by J. E. Scott, 23 April 1934, to Revenue Dept, BSA R-LR IIIA/32/1934.
181. Memo by W. B. Brett to Revenue Sec., Ranchi, 24 April 1934, BSA R-LR IIIA/32/1934.
182. Only 1,689 rupees had been given as free grants, and loans of 139,000 rupees had been approved but not distributed. Memo by W. B. Brett to Revenue Sec., Ranchi, 24 April 1934, *ibid.*
183. Notes and orders by J. D. S. [Sifton], 26 April 1934, *ibid.*
184. R1685, Rai Bahadur C.C. Mukherji O.B.E., Additional Commissioner of the Tirhut Division, to W. B. Brett, Muzaffarpur, 10 May 1934, File: 'Investment of Certain Officers Engaged in Distributing Sand Clearance Loans in North Bihar with Powers of a Collector under the Agriculturalist's Loans Act, 1884', BSA R-LR IIIA/35/1934.
185. 'Powers of Officers for Disbursement of Loans', J. E. Scott to the Sec. to Govt of B&O, Revenue Dept., Muzaffarpur, 22 May 1934; 'Vesting Officers Engaged in Sand Clearance Loans Work with Powers of a Collector', J. E. Scott to Sec. to Govt of B&O, Revenue Dept., Muzaffarpur, 5 August 1934, BSA R-LR IIIA/35/1934.
186. D.O. 674 R.D., W. B. Brett to J. E. Scott, Patna, 17 March 1934, BSA RE 43 IV/1934.
187. J. E. Scott to Revenue Dept, Govt of B&O, Ranchi, Muzaffarpur, 21 June 1934, File: 'Loans under Agriculturalist Loan Act and Land Improvement Loans Act to Persons Affected by the Earthquake', BSA R-LR IIIA/19/1934.
188. Notes by W. B. Brett to J. D. Sifton, 6 May 1934, BSA R-L II 7/13/1935.
189. Only 4 per cent was covered by more than 2 feet of sand. J. E. Scott to Revenue Dept, Govt of B&O, Ranchi, Muzaffarpur, 21 June 1934, BSA R-LR IIIA/19/1934.
190. Brett, *A Report on the Bihar Earthquake*, 39–40.
191. *Ibid.*, 60, 62.
192. 'Progress of Work: Statements by Districts', summary sent by W. B. Brett to H. E. (J. T. Whitty), Patna/Ranchi, 28 September 1934, BSA RE 13/1934.
193. The grant application forms contained information about occupation, income, house tax receipt from December 1933 in case of urban houses, and *chaukidari* tax in rural areas, and the amount applied for (in Hindi; blank and undated): 'Muzaffarpur zile ke dehāto meṃ makān marammat karne yā banvāne ke liye khairāt madad kī darkhāst kā fārm' (Application Form for a Grant Towards

- the Repair or Construction of a House in Rural Muzaffarpur District) and 'Muzaffarpur meṃ makān marammat karne yā banvāne ke liye khairāt madad kī dārkhāst kā fārm' (Application Form for a Grant Towards the Repair or Construction of a House in Muzaffarpur [Town]), BSA RE 43 IV/1934.
194. 'Progress of Work: Statements by Districts', summary sent by W. B. Brett to H. E. (J. T. Whitty), Patna/Ranchi, 28 September 1934, BSA RE 13/1934.
 195. 'Q. 94', 10 September 1934, *BOLCP* 31, no. 10, 421.
 196. D.O. 851 R.D., W. B. Brett to T. A. Freston, 27 March 1934, BSA RE 43 V/1934.
 197. T. A. Freston to W. B. Brett, Laherisarai, 9 April 1934. The same issue mentioned in 540/49 R.D., 'Grant of Free Grants from the V.E.R.F. for House-building', W. B. Brett to the District Magistrates of Monghyr, Purnea, Muzaffarpur, Saran, Champaran, Darbhanga, Patna, Gaya, Bhagalpur, Arrah, 9 March 1934; and '1290-99 R.D.', Brett to the District Magistrates of the before-mentioned districts, Patna, 25 April 1934, BSA RE 43 V/1934.
 198. 'Memo to His Excellency', W. B. Brett, Patna, 16 March 1934, BSA RE KW 20/1934. Also in 'Extract from file E.-20 of 1934' [to H. C. Prior], BSA RE 43 V/1934.
 199. R.D.O. 5472, Comments by W. B. Brett, in notes attached to Tirhut fortnightly report, W. B. Brett to J. T. Whitty, 14 December 1934, BSA RE 13/1934.
 200. W. B. Brett to H. C. Prior, 23 June 1934, BSA RE 43 V/1934.
 201. D.O. 4438 RE, T. A. Freston to W. B. Brett, Laherisarai, 9 April 1934, BSA RE 43 V/1934.
 202. W. B. Brett to H. C. Prior, 21 June 1934, BSA RE 43 V/1934.
 203. Sub-district Officer W. G. Archer, see W. G. Archer, 'The Bihar Earthquake', [s.l.] February 1934, Mss Eur F236/1, Papers of William G. Archer and Mildred Archer. Scott approved of 300,000 rupees for house building grants in rural areas, and 100,000 in urban areas, as compared to 16,000 to max 50,000 in the other districts. D.O. 1519R, Scott to Brett, (Camp) Laheria Sarai, 23/25 April 1934, RE 43 V/1934.
 204. D.O. R 988, J. E. Scott to W. B. Brett, Muzaffarpur, 27 March 1934, BSA RE 43 V/1934.
 205. 'Progress of Work: Statements by Districts', summary sent by W. B. Brett to H. E. [J. T. Whitty], Patna/Ranchi, 28 September 1934, BSA RE 13/1934.
 206. Similar complaints were also raised in the same newspaper on 12 August and 19 August 1934. Extract from *Ittibad* (Patna), 16 August 1934, 'Report on Newspapers in Bihar and Orissa', No. 9, September 1934, NAI HP 1/41/1934.
 207. Notes by Brett to Whitty, 13 July 1934, 'Tirhut Weekly Report', Brett to Whitty, 10 August 1934, BSA RE 13/1934.
 208. W. B. Brett to H. C. Prior, 22 July 1934, BSA RE 43/1934.

209. W. B. Brett to T. A. Freston, 10 August 1934, and again 12 September 1934, BSA RE 43 V/1934.
210. The amount was 2,700,976 rupees (1,948,000 rupees in 1934–35, and 752,976 rupees in 1935–36). Appendix No. 37, 'Supplementary Demand under the Head "Loans and Advances by the Provincial Government"', 28 March 1936, *BOLCP* 34, no. 22, lvi.
211. 15 February 1934, *BOLCP* 30, no. 2, 154.