



Original Article

Gender Budget Expenditure and Women's Development in Bihar

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Abstract:

Gender budgeting has evolved into a major policy tool for promoting gender equality. Women do not enjoy equity with men politically, economically or socially. The government is trying to improve the status of women through gender budgeting. The present article examines the relationship between gender budget expenditure and women's development in Bihar. Using data from the Economic Survey of Bihar, the study examines the trends in gender-responsive budgeting across key departments from the period 2019-20 to 2022-23. The study highlights that there is a concentration of spending in few social sector departments, particularly education, rural development and social welfare. The government should focus on other sectors also such as industry, agriculture etc. to achieve better and more balanced result.

Keywords: *Gender Budgeting, Gender Equality, Women Development, Public Expenditure, Women Empowerment.*

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Introduction:

Gender equality remains a persistent challenge in our society. Women in Bihar historically faced challenges like unequal access to education, employment, health, mobility, decision-making etc. Gender budgeting seeks to overcome this problem by analyzing public policies and expenditure from a gender perspective. "Gender

Budgeting is a dissection of the Government budget to establish its gender differential impacts and to translate gender commitments into budgetary commitments" (Fadia, 2015, pg.695). The primary purpose is to ensure that every part of the government budget takes gender differences into account. Bihar introduced gender budgeting in 2008-09. It contains two parts- Part A consists of



schemes in which 100 percent of the allocation is for women., while Part B covers pro-women schemes having at least 30% of the allocation for women. The share of gender budget in state total budget was 10 percent in 2012-13 which has increased to 14 percent in 2024-25.

The objectives of the study are following:

1. To analyze the patterns in public expenditure on women's development in Bihar, with a particular focus on the period from 2019-20 to 2022-23.

2. To assess the major developments in the status of women.

In 2009-10, the number of departments reflecting budget allocation for women was twelve and it has increased to twenty-five in 2025-26. This reflects that state is moving toward comprehensive gender mainstreaming. Among these departments maximum allocations are provided to major four departments- Education department, Health department, Rural Development department and Social Welfare department.

Table 1: Overview of expenditure on women development
(Rs. Crore)

Department	2019-20		2020-21		2021-22		2022-23	
	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II
Social Welfare	765.16	3395.7	1049.29	3823.53	937.657	4455.32	1314.59	5296.03
Education	599.51	5317	772.84	5746.04	2760.764	7313.99	2611.42	10528.17
Health	740.26	1193.53	879.98	1031.18	1065.185	1197.08	935.23	1092.60
Rural Development	5911.5	1997.66	3195.5	2751.19	7367.561	3957.01	12859.47	3057.12
Industry	-	96.98	-	53.57	200.00	122.75	250.00	170.60
Agriculture	-	443.1	-	293.16	-	403.76	-	590.07
Art, Culture and Youth	-	9.31	-	3.89	-	6.72	-	13.99

Source- Economic Survey, Government of Bihar

The above table gives an overview of expenditure under category- I and category- II of gender budget of certain departments. Over the period from 2019-20 to 2022-23, the state has shown a clear commitment to increasing expenditure on women's development as there is a

significant increase in both Category I and Category II expenditure. This upward trend indicates that government is focusing on women empowerment and women development.

The Education Department appears to be the largest contributor, particularly in expenditure under



Category II. Its expenditure has increased from Rs. 5317 Crore in 2019-20 to Rs. 10528.17 Crore in 2022-23. In Category I also the expenditure has increased from Rs. 599.51 Crore to Rs. 2611.42 Crore in 2022-23. This trend highlights the state's emphasis on girls education as a critical tool for empowerment. According to The Gender Report Card 2019, education focused scheme such as Mukhyamantri Balika Cycle Yojana have played an important role in enabling girl student to travel to schools located far from their homes and contributed to girl educational continuation. However, retaining girls in secondary and higher education remains a challenge.

In Social Welfare Department, the expenditure has increased from Rs.765.16 Crore in 2019-20 to Rs. 1314.59 Crore in 2022-23 under Category I and the expenditure has increased from Rs.3395.7 Crore in 2019-20 to Rs.5296.03 Crore in 2022-23. Health is another area in which Bihar has recorded significant progress. The decline in maternal mortality indicates that investments in health infrastructure and maternal services can generate important gender-specific development outcomes.

There are several departments which shows low or negligible expenditure such as Industry, Agriculture, Art, Culture and Youth etc. In many cases, expenditure is either minimal or inconsistent, particularly in Category I. One of the major weaknesses identified by the Gender Report Card is women's participation in the economy. According to the report, Bihar has very low female labour force participation rate among women aged 15-59 years. It is approximately 4.4 percent. The female work population ratio was also very low.

According to the Bihar Gender Report Card 2019, three women are MPs, 12% are members of

Legislative Assembly, 5% are members of Legislative Council, 12% are Judges. It is visible from the data that women need to participate in policy making and decision-making.

Conclusion:

A substantial portion of the budget is concentrated in few departments, particularly Education, Rural Development, Health and Social Welfare. This indicates limited participation of other sectors. Gender budget has worked positively towards improving female education but its impact on other socio-economic indicators such as decision-making, employment etc. remains limited. The uneven distribution of funds and limited sectoral integration may restrict the holistic development of women. The expenditure should also focus on sectors capable of generating decent employment for women, such as manufacturing, services, agriculture-related enterprises etc.

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