

# Gender Budgeting: An Initiative to Achieve Gender Equality

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## *ABSTRACT*

The status of women is an important indicator of any civilized society. A nation cannot flourish without development of women and gender equality. Their socio-economic status plays an important role in the overall development of a nation. The present status of women can be described as a combination of progress and ongoing challenges. The state should make efforts to empower women and provide them with equal opportunities in all sphere of life. Gender budget is a powerful initiative that can improve the social and economic status of women and girls. It is a kind of affirmative action to reduce the gender gap in the development process. It is important to take gender concerns into account while designing and implementing population and development programmes. The present article gives an overview of women's share in state's total budget. The article also analyses some initiatives taken by the government of Bihar to improve the socio-economic status of women. Government is making many efforts to empower women and achieve the goal of gender equality.

**Keywords: Socio-economic, Gender equality, Women Empowerment, Gender budgeting**

## **Introduction**

There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing'

**-Swami Vivekananda**

It is well said by Swami Vivekananda that men and women equally contribute to the society. Both are equally important for the welfare of a society or nation. He has compared the world with the bird and its wings as men and women. The bird needs it's both wings to fly in the sky. For the welfare of the society both men and women should have equal status. The Constitution of India guarantees to all Indian women equality[ Article 14 of Constitution of India], no discrimination by the state, equality of opportunity and also empowers the state to make special provisions in favour of women and children. In spite of all these provisions women still face discrimination in every aspect of their life.

Women in Bihar are nearly half of the population but they lag behind men on many social indicators

like education, health, decision making, economic opportunities etc. According to 2011 census the population of male in Bihar is 52 percent and female is 48 percent. The sex ratio is 918. In Bihar the male literacy rate is 71.2% and female literacy rate is 51.5%[ According to 2011 census.]. The female work participation rate is 19.1% and that of male is 46.5%.[ According to 2011 census.] Only 12% (29 in numbers) female are member of Legislative Assembly and four female are members of Legislative Council.[ Bihar Gender Report Card 2019] On the basis of given data we can clearly see that how women are being deprived by men. They cannot avail their basic right of education; they don't have the equal status in the society. To fill this gender gap Bihar was one of the early starter among Indian states to introduce Gender Budget. 'Gender Budgeting is a dissection of the Government budget to establish its gender differential impacts and to translate gender commitments into budgetary commitments' (Public Administration: Administrative Theories and

Concepts, pg.695). Gender Budgeting is an important tool to change the existing gender inequalities pattern and lead the state to achieve the goal of gender equality. It is a kind of affirmative action to reduce the gender gap in the development process. It is important to empower women and provide them with equal opportunities in all sphere of life.

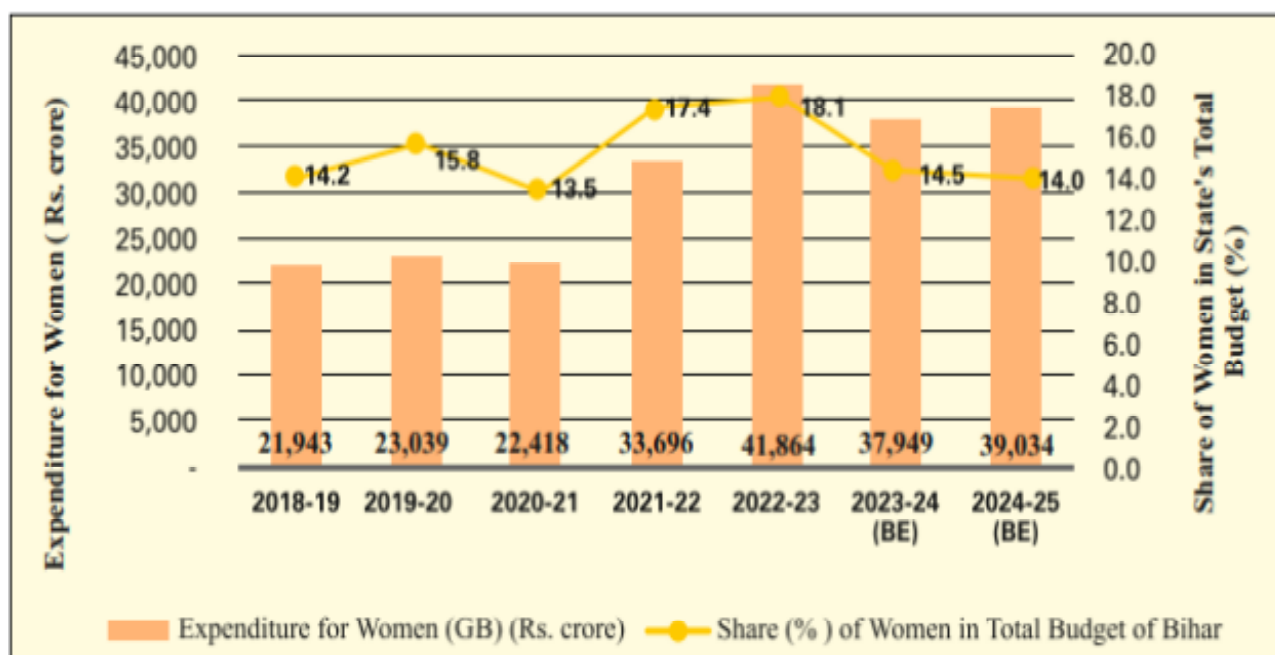
Bihar published its first gender budget statement in 2008-09. It constitutes two parts- Part A reflects women specific schemes having 100% allocation for women, and Part B reflects pro-women schemes, where at least 30% of the allocation is for women. It is an initiative for the all-round development of its women and girls. The share of women in state's total budget is 14% for the year 2024-25. It is low as compared to the previous year budgets. According to the previous year budget data a large portion of gender budget has been going to schemes under category II, that are deemed to benefit at least 30%

women. The fund allocation for the category I schemes is low, where 100% allocation is for women.

#### Source: Bihar Gender Budget 2024-25

From the above figure it can be said that in all the years the allocation for women in the total budget was less than 18%. Only in the year 2022-23 it was 18.1%. The status of women in Bihar is not satisfactory even after adopting gender budgeting since 2008-09. According to NFHS 2019-20 female literacy rate in Bihar is 55%. [ Bihar Gender Budget 2024-25] The female labour force participation rate was 23.9% in the year 2022-23 and that of male is 77.6%. [ Economic Survey of Bihar 2023-24] The status of women is improving and more efforts are needed in this direction. Gender budgeting has the potential to improve the status of women.

Following are some of the efforts made by the government to improve the status of women in the state.



#### Source : Bihar gender Budget 2024-25

Mukhyamantri Balika Cycle Yojana- This scheme was started in 2007. Under this scheme girl's students studying in class-IX are provided with Rs 3000 per girl to purchase a bicycle. It will encourage them to continue their education and reduce dropout rates.

Mukhyamantri Nari Shakti Yojana- This Yojana was launched in 2007-08. The programmes offers

helpline, short stay homes, socio-psychological support and legal aid to victims of domestic violence. It focuses on empowering women through skill development, training and capacity-building initiatives. It aims to empower women economically, socially and culturally. In 2022-23, Rs. 21.45 crore has been released for this scheme.

Civil Seva Protsahan Yojana- The government provides a lump sum amount of Rs 50,000 and Rs 1,00,000 to such women candidate who have passed the preliminary examination of the Civil Services Competitive Examination conducted by BPSC and UPSC to motivate them to prepare for the mains examination. This scheme will motivate women to be the part of bureaucracy. The Women and Child Development Corporation has so far benefited 1405 women candidate for BPSC and 80 for UPSC.[ Economic Survey of Bihar 2023-24.]

Mukhyamantri Kanya Utthan Yojana- This scheme aims to prevent child marriage, female feticide, encourage immunization and encourage the girls of the state to pursue higher education. Under this scheme, girls are provided incentives at various stages of life from birth to graduation. Through this scheme, the girls will become self-reliant. In 2023-24, a total of 2,87,613 girls have been benefited by the scheme[ Data taken from Bihar Gender Budget 2024-25.]. According to NFHS 2019-20 female literacy rate in Bihar is 55%. The government provides incentive to unmarried girl students who pass intermediate and graduation to continue further studies and it will also stop child marriage.

Lakshmbai Social Security Pension Scheme- Under this scheme, widows belonging to BPL families in the age group 18 years or above are given a pension of Rs.400 per month. As the beneficiary reaches 80 years of age, this pension amount is increased to Rs 500 per month.

Aarakshit Rojgar Mahilaon ka Adhikar- Under the initiative, the state government is providing 35% horizontal reservation for women in all direct recruitment in all state government services. There is facility of 50% reservation for women in primary school teacher's vacancies and 35% reservation in recruitment of constabulary and sub-inspector rank of police in the state. Due to this affirmative action at present 24.3% of the police force are women in Bihar.

In Panchayati Raj institutions and Urban Local Bodies also 50% reservation is for women. Without political representation, gender equality can't be achieved. Political empowerment makes women

confident and aware of their rights. Their participation is very important for inclusive development. As per Bihar Gender Report Card 2019 there are 52 % (70,400 in number) women in Panchayati Raj. Women leaders can bring a different perspective to policy making and decision making processes.

### Conclusion:

The government is making many efforts to improve the status of women in the state. Some significant changes have been made towards gender equality and women empowerment. It is important to take gender concerns into account while designing and implementing development programmes. Gender budgeting has the potential to improve the status of women. The government should fairly invest on schemes that address gender concerns. The fund allocations are low in category I schemes as compared to category II schemes. The government should allocate more fund for the category I schemes, where 100% allocation is for women. It is important to assess how effectively the service of the government and its schemes are meeting the requirements of women and how much of the expenditure of the state is reaching the women. Gender Budget is an important instrument that can fill the gap of status between the men and women and can escort women-led development.

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