



## Fostering Equity: Bihar's Journey with Gender Budgeting

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### Abstract

To bring Gender equity the Government of India is continuously developing many policies and programmes specifically focused on Women's empowerment. However, women in our country still face various types of differentiation in many areas like economic opportunities, political participation, health and medical facilities and education. For fostering equity, it is important that while distributing public funds the government should see what is the portion going for the well-being of the women. Here comes the main role of Gender Budgeting, which ensures fair allocation of public funds, keeping in mind women's well-being through focused interventions. Gender Budgeting was introduced in India in 2005. In the financial year 2008-09, Bihar became one of the earliest states in the country to implement gender budgeting practices. From 2008-09 to 2023-24, Bihar has seen 8 Gender budgets and implemented many policies to reduce the gender gap. The main objective of this paper is to analyse the journey of Gender Budgeting in the state of Bihar and to see its impact on Women's empowerment. By analysing the secondary data taken mainly from the Economic Survey of Bihar, different gender budget statements and reports this paper examines Gender Budget allocations in Bihar over time and tries to suggest ways to utilise the allocated funds properly to foster gender equity.

**Keywords:** Gender Budget; Women Empowerment; Government Schemes; Women's Welfare.

### 1. Introduction

Gender equity is important for the development of any country. Males and Females should get equal opportunities and both should play their roles in the development process of the country. Women's empowerment is recognised as an important goal in Sustainable Goals 2030 and Goal 5 talks about women's empowerment and gender equity. During Beijing conferences held in 1995, it was declared that the countries should start using macroeconomic policies to narrow gender gaps [1]. When we talk about Macroeconomic policies the government Budget is an important part of it and it is a fact that the way the government allocates public expenditure and revenue, affects men and women. Therefore, putting a gender lens in the budget allocation will always be useful. A gender-responsive budget is not a different budget for women but a way to disaggregate expenditure and revenue as per their impacts on women and men (Budlender, D. et al, 2002)1. It is difficult to

conceive of any public policy that can be carried out without financial resources; it is equally difficult to conceive of any state action designed to create and facilitate an economic, social and political environment conducive to the enjoyment, exercise and realisation of women's rights that can be undertaken without funds from the national coffers. Therefore, all promises of gender equality and women's empowerment will remain elusive until and unless emboldened by financial commitments (Jhamb, B. et al, 2013)2. It was recognised that if gender budgeting is integrated into budget processes it will generate tangible improvements in policy outcomes and will become more useful (Stotsky, J. 2006)3. With this belief, since the mid-1980s, Gender-responsive budgeting has been applied by a few developing countries, though to very different extents and in diverse forms (Combaz, E. 2013)4. Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) creates a direct link between two different issues which are

not associated with each other – i.e. Budget and Gender Equality. GRB is an important mechanism to maintain a greater balance between economic and social goals. GRB is used to achieve Gender Equality and to close the Gender gap (Madhusudhanan, S.,2018)<sup>5</sup> [2]. The government of India adopted a more structured infrastructure and framework for implementing gender budgeting compared to other nations such as Australia and the UK. The Government consulted the women's Group while designing infrastructure and gave full support. However, the benefits of the policy and programs are not substantially reaching the deprived sections due to lacking in the execution and implementation stage. (Mallik, P. 2018)<sup>6</sup>.

## 2. Literature Review

Although Gender Budgeting is a new concept for our country, many scholars have written on it. A bunch of scholars have recognized the importance of Gender budgeting in bringing gender equality (Readdy, P.B. and Gangle. G.R., 2012; Stotasky, J. G. and Jaman A., 2016 Galizi, G., Meliou. E. and Steccolini. I., 2021)<sup>7,8,9</sup>. Many scholars have tried to conduct the impact analysis of Gender Budgeting in India [3]. They admitted that it helps governments decide how policies need to be adjusted and reprioritized to address gender gaps (Gagoi, B.N., 2020)<sup>10</sup>. It is also pointed out how lack of political will and leadership, inadequate financial resources, lack of proper accountability mechanism and women's participation in planning and budget preparation for women-specific schemes are affecting realization of GRB goals (Ghadai, S.K, and Mishra. S.N., 2019)<sup>11</sup>. Selvi D. (2014)<sup>12</sup> in his paper highlighted the status of women in India, with the magnitude of Gender Budgeting in India and also analysed different segments of gender budgeting through various ministries. Mishra Y. and Sinha N. (2012)<sup>13</sup> have attempted to analyse two main strategies, Gender Budget Statement and Gender Budgeting Cell adopted by the government of India. Chakraborty, L. (2021)<sup>14</sup> in an article discussed the gender budget in India against the backdrop of COVID-19 and found a gap between the budgeted and actual expenditure. The impact of

the Gender budget in India is evaluated and discussed by many scholars but very few attempts are made to analyse the Gender Budget implications and impact in bringing gender equity [4].

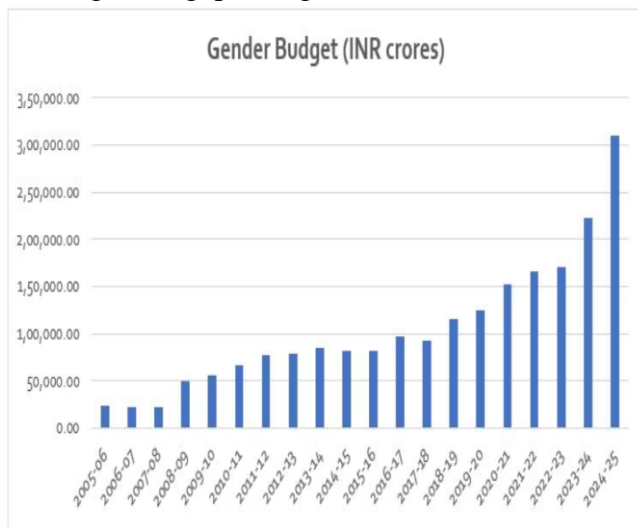
### 2.1. Gender Budgeting in India

According to the Global Gender Gap Index, 2020,15 our country India was ranked 112th of 153 countries. This data clearly shows although, the Government of India is working continuously on policies to reduce the gender gap, it still has not achieved the required position. The status of women has surely improved in education, health, and labour force participation, but still, challenges are there to fill the gender gap and bring equality [4]. The government of India has also integrated gender perspectives into fiscal policies and research allocations and recognised the importance of analysing budget allocation through a gendered lens. In India issuing of an annual gender budget statement with the Union Budget started in the year 2005 After gaining Independence the Government of India adopted planned development. In different Five-year plans welfare measures especially for women were designed and implemented, such as the Central Social Welfare Board (1953), Maternity Benefit Act 1961 etc. The Fifth Five-year plan came up with the Equal Remuneration Act 1976 and 27 major women-specific schemes were the important highlight of the 7th Five-year plan. The eighth plan shifted the focus from development to empowerment and tried to ensure that the benefit should reach women in Figure 1.



**Figure 1 Gender Budget in India**  
Source: Author's compilations

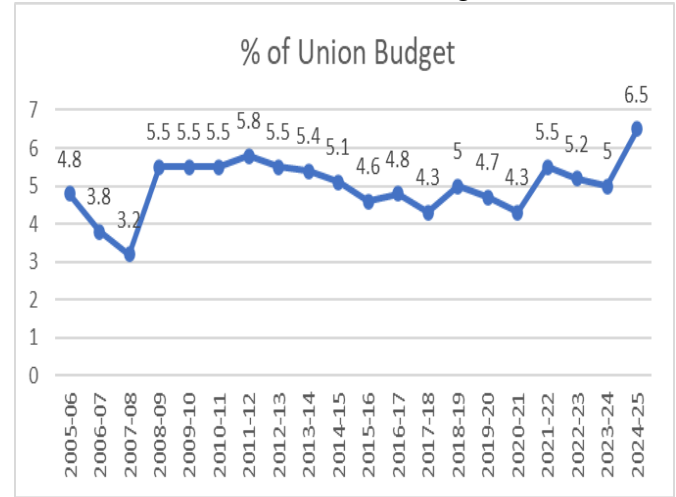
The Ninth and 10th Plans brought the gender perspective into the Budget planning with national policy for the Empowerment of women (2001). The Ninth Plan introduced the Women’s Component Plan (WCP) which says that 30 per cent of funds should be earmarked specifically for sectors dealing with women. Gender perspective became an operational strategy in the budget process. In Union-Budget 2005- 06 the Gender budget statement was first introduced in India [6]. For its better implementation first, a Charter on gender budget cells (GBCs) was issued and detailed guidelines to establish these cells in different states were also drafted and issued in the years 2012-13. Since its beginning till now the amount allocated to the Gender budget has increased. This financial year in 2024-25 the gender budget is the highest ever, which shows the commitment of the government to fill the gender gap in Figure 2.



**Figure 2 Gender Budget in India (INR Crores)**  
Source: Basic Data, Expenditure Budgets, Union Budget Documents (Various Years), Govt of India

It is also important to see how much allocation of the Union Budget is specifically oriented towards gender-specific schemes. The allocation to gender budget as a proportion of the Union Budget ranges from 3 to 6% with some fall in 2007-08. During the Corona period, it was 5.5%, which started declining just after this phase. However, a good amount of

increase is observed and it has reached 6.5% for 2024-25 from 5% in 2023-24 in Figure 3.



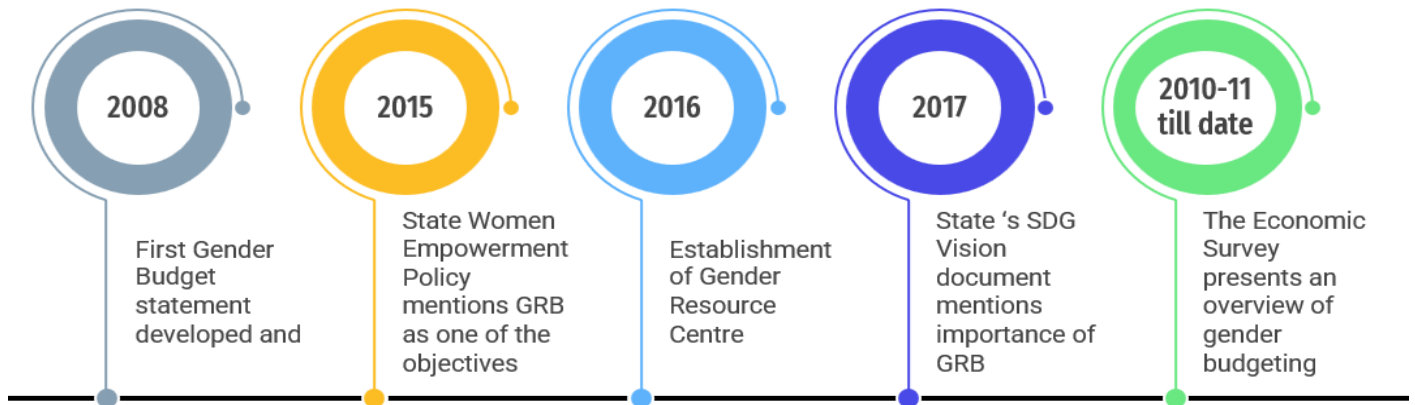
**Figure 3 Gender Budget Allocation as a Proportion of the Union Budget in India**  
Source: Basic Data, Expenditure Budgets, Union Budget Documents (Various Years), Govt of India

## 2.2. Gender Budgeting in Bihar

According to Census 2011, Women are 48 per cent of the state's total population. Therefore, women's empowerment is a key to the development of the state. To utilise women's power optimally the government of Bihar has already started many schemes and become the pioneer state in preparing the Gender budget since 2008-09 [7]. After its adoption, the Government of Bihar allocates resources and formulates women-specific plans to solve their problems and gradually bring gender equity. Gender budgeting puts a gendered lens while assessing the spending of the prior year, the adjusted projection for the current year, and the planned allocation for the following year. The main goal of Gender Budgeting is Gender equality by integrating women's concerns into public policies. After 2008 the major milestone year was 2015 when the state women empowerment policy also recognizes the importance of Gender-responsive Budgeting. In the year 2016, the Gender Resource Centre is established under the WCD to facilitate gender budgeting initiatives in Bihar. It conducts research and provides technical support to Gender Budgeting. It also monitors and evaluates the

implementation of GRB in the state [8]. The government of Bihar included women's empowerment and gender equity in its Seven

Development Goals and the overview of gender budgeting is presented every year in the Economic Survey of Bihar in Figure 4.



**Figure 4 Progress of Gender Budgeting in Bihar**

Source: Basic Data, Gender Budget 2024-25, Finance Department, Government of Bihar

The Gender Budget statement includes two categories - Category A and Category B in Table 1.

**Table 1 Share of Women in the Total Budget**

CATEGORY A	100% expenditure on women and girls	Schemes and programmes whose entire allocation is for the welfare of women and girls
CATEGORY B	30% and above but less than 100% expenditure on women	Schemes and programmes in which some component is for women and girls and is between 30% and 99%

Source: Gender Budget 2024-25, Finance Department, Government of Bihar

### 2.3. Objectives of the Study

- To explore and analyses the year-wise fund allocation for women in the Bihar government Budget through the analysis of the Gender Budget Statements

- To give suggestions for effective use of the Gender Responsive Budget in Bihar

### 2.4. Research Methodology

This is Analytical research. The present paper is primarily based on secondary sources, such as books, journal articles, Govt budget reports, economic surveys of Bihar, NFHS reports, newspapers etc [9]. For the analysis of data, MS Excel software is used. For comparative analysis, descriptive statistics are used. Bar charts, line charts, etc are also used for graphical presentation.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. Share of Women in the Total Budget of Bihar

The Share of women in the total Budget of the state shows the approach of the Government towards gender equity. If we look at the data of the last ten years ie from 2014-15 to 2024-25 an overall increasing trend with some fluctuations is observed in the share (%) outlay for women in the state budget of Bihar [10-11]. There was a significant fall in 2015-16 and 2020-21. 2022-23 recorded the highest share (%) outlay for women in the total budget. 2023-24 and 2024-25 showed a downward trend in budget expenditure in Table 2 & Figure 5&6.

### 3.2. Allocation of Fund Category Wise

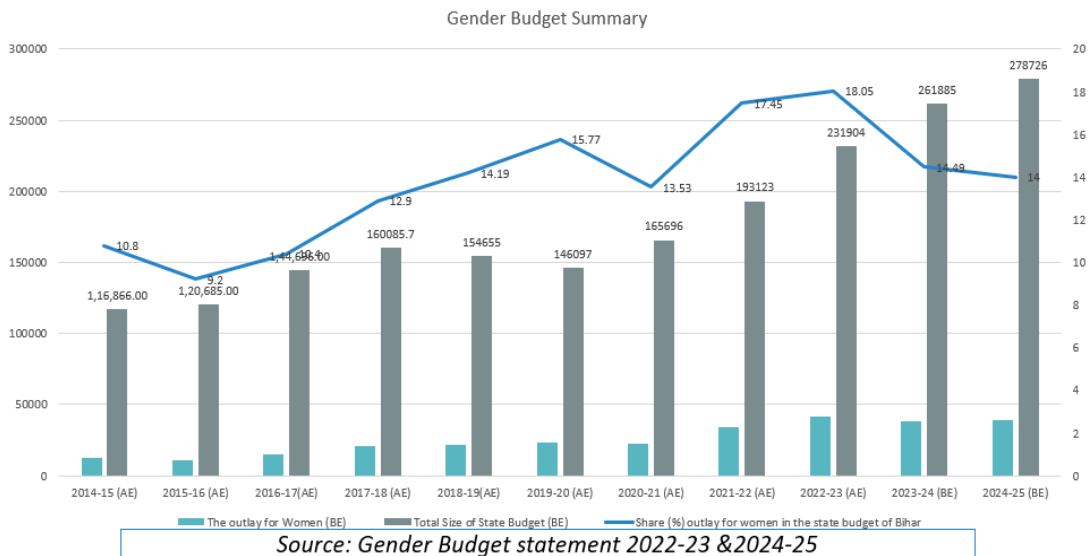
The Gender Budget discusses two types of fund allocation- Category I and Category II [12-13]. The data shows that fund allocations are more in

category II schemes, which require at least 30 per cent allocation [14-15]. If we want to bring gender equity the allocation in Category I should also be increased in Table 3&4 [16-17].

**Table 2 Share of Women in the Total Budget of Bihar (in Crores)**

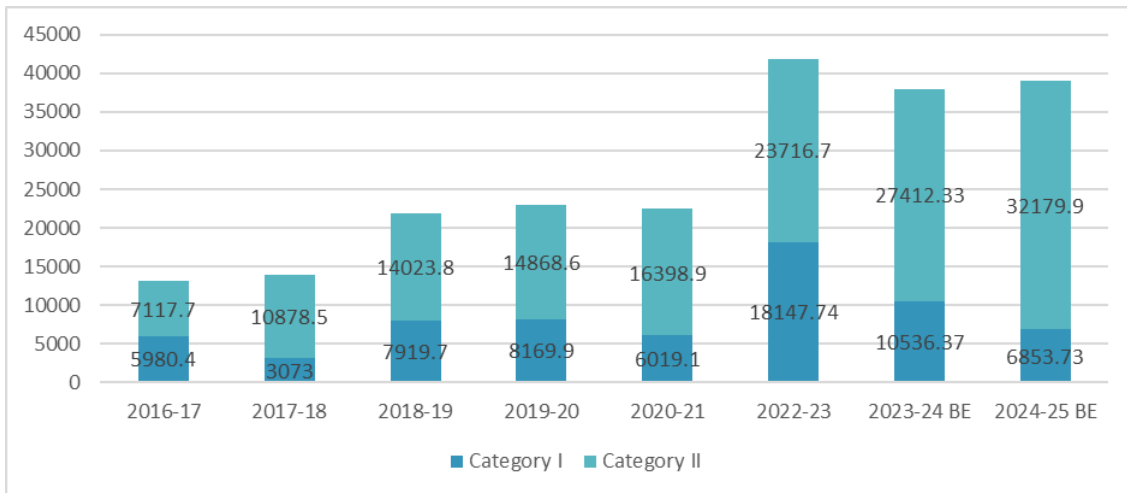
Details	2014-15 (AE)	2015-16 (AE)	2016-17(AE)	2017-18 (AE)	2018-19(AE)	2019-20 (AE)	2020-21 (AE)	2021-22 (AE)	2022-23 (AE)	2023-24 (BE)	2024-25 (BE)
The outlay for Women (BE)	12578.3	11,127.00	15,077.00	20,615.40	21,943.00	23039	22418	33696	41864	37949	39034
Total Size of State Budget (BE)	1,16,866.00	1,20,685.00	1,44,696.00	160085.7	154655	146097	165696	193123	231904	261885	278726
Share (%) outlay for women in the state budget of Bihar	10.8	9.2	10.4	12.9	14.19	15.77	13.53	17.45	18.05	14.49	14

Source: Gender Budget statement 2022-23&2024-25



**Figure 5 Share of Women in The Total Budget of Bihar**  
Source: Gender Budget statement 2022-23&2024-25





**Figure 6** Category-Wise Fund Allocation for Women's Development Schemes (in Crores)  
Source: Gender Budget Statement, Govt. Of Bihar, 2022-23&2024-25

### 3.3. Department-Wise Allocations for Women (Category-I, GRB 2024-25)

**Table 3** Department-Wise Allocations for Women- Category-I (In Lakh)

Departments	2022-23 (Gender Budget Actual)	2023-24 (Gender Budget BE)	2023-24 (Gender Budget RE)	2024-25 (BE)	2024-25 (Gender Budget BE)
BC & EBC Welfare Department	1602.46	6047.80	6065.80	5941.56	5941.56
Health Department	93523.25	133714.02	149714.02	199356.88	10856.88
Education Department	261141.87	79277.30	212323.30	75554.11	75554.11
Home Department	36.21	1419.72	1419.72	715.00	715.00
Industry Department	25000.00	25000.00	15463.00	25000.00	25000.00
Labour Resources Department	1485.29	2250.00	2384.00	2853.46	2853.46
Minority Welfare Department	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00
Revenue & Land Reform Department	38.50	1900.00	1900.00	2000.00	2000.00
Rural Development Department	1285947.06	691714.00	592083.57	455350.00	455350.00
Science, Technology & Technical Education Department	14340.68	17169.60	108.43	107.34	107.34
Social Welfare Department	131458.72	94944.65	130999.95	106795.49	106795.49
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1814774.04</b>	<b>1053637.09</b>	<b>1112661.79</b>	<b>873873.84</b>	<b>685373.84</b>

Source: Gender Budget Statement 2024-25



Category I comprises all the schemes having 100% allotment for women. As per the Gender Budget statement 2024-25, major allocation in this category comes from a few departments such as the Education Department, Rural Development Department and Social Welfare departments. During the Fiscal year 2022-23, the Rural Development Department had a significant budget of 1285947.06 units, utilising 691714.00 units in actual expenditures. In the year 2024-25 in budgetary allocation, the Rural Development Department witnessed a decrease in budget from 455350.00 units to 455350.00 units. BC and EBC department, home department and minority department allocations in category-I schemes are less. the data showcases fluctuations in budgetary allocations and actual expenditures across various departments over the specified fiscal years, indicating shifts in financial priorities and resource utilization strategies.

### 3.4. Department-Wise Allocations for Women (Category-II, GBS 2024-25)

The allocation of budget for women-related expenditures, particularly within the Class-B category, where 30% of the budget is allocated for women is more than the 100% allocation schemes. The major departments allocating budget in Category II schemes are The Education Department has the highest Gender Budget BE for 2024-25, with an allocation of Rs. 1,224,945.73 lakh. The Health Department also has a significant allocation for the same fiscal year, with a Gender Budget BE of Rs. 1,771,78.66 lakh. The social welfare department and Rural development also allocated a good amount for gender-related expenditure [18]. The sports department has allocated a relatively small amount for Gender-specific schemes in Table 4.

**Table 4 Selected Department-Wise Allocations for Women- Category-II, GBS 2024-25 (In Lakh)**

Departments	2022-23 (Gender Budget Actual)	2023-24 (Gender Budget BE)	2023-24 (Gender Budget RE)	2024-25 (Total BE)	024-25 (Gender Budget BE)
Agriculture Department	59007.41	3458.30	99424.13	284020.07	85204.81
BC & EBC Welfare Department	6050.28	8877.10	78776.67	58773.01	78898.60
Health Department	109259.97	141284.48	194736.08	394920.74	177178.66
Education Department	1052817.17	1177986.53	567117.77	3030750.75	1224945.73
SC & ST Welfare Department	54806.84	4 61315.60	67956.81	169819.52	75374.88
Social Welfare Department	529603.29	450163.44	434067.98	607604.29	353995.45
Sports Department	0.00	0.00	0.00	17579.77	6152.92

Source: Gender Budget Statement 2024-25



### Conclusion & Suggestions

The latest Gender Budget Summary shows that the total fund allocation for women in the budget has increased with some fluctuations in a few years, from a dip in 2015-16, 2020-21 and 2023-24. Most gender budget allocations are made to the general welfare schemes that assume 30 per cent of spending on girls. Consistently, a select few departments, namely Rural Development, Education, Social Welfare, and Health have been the primary contributors to the gender budget in Bihar. The other departments should also bring the gender aspect into their allocation. One major concern is that the GBS does not report corresponding output results against gender budget allocations, so seeing the amount of spending out of the budget amount is difficult. Non-availability of gender statistics, like sex-disaggregated data, further constraints tracking what reaches women and girls. A few of the Gender-specific concerns like access to employment, safety in public spaces, gender-sensitive infrastructure development, and protection against crimes targeting women still require attention in the budgets and expenditure of the Bihar government. GRC (Gender Resource Centre) plays an important role in GRB its roles and responsibilities should be institutionalised and its technical infrastructure should be strengthened. However, the mere allocation of money through the budget is not enough. To reduce the gender gap, and for women's empowerment, greater emphasis should be given to creating awareness among the masses in general and women in particular so that they may be aware of their valuable rights. Already the Government of Bihar have taken different initiatives in Budget allocation to improve the condition of women and reduce gender gaps to ensure gender equality. Now, the main work is to implement these initiatives and use the gender budget statements to search for the areas where more allocation is required to bring Gender equity.

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