

A Study of the Efforts of Poverty Alleviation in Muzaffarpur Districts

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Abstract

Muzaffarpur is largely rural and rooted predominantly in agriculture and other allied sectors. Majority of the people in the village is in the vicious circle of poverty. They are living below the poverty line. They are desperate groups of the rural sector of the district. There are several causes for poverty in Bihar particularly in Muzaffarpur. Muzaffarpur district is adversely affected by floods, drought, storms, hailstorm and cyclone in Summer.

Key Words: Agriculture, Dignity, Poverty, Village

Muzaffarpur is largely rural and rooted predominantly in agriculture and other allied sectors. Majority of the people in the village is in the vicious circle of poverty. They are living below the poverty line. They are desperate groups of the rural sector of the district. Amartya Sen said that poverty is not merely in sufficient income, but rather the absence of a wide range of capabilities, including security and ability to participate in economic and political system... (quoted by Tangivala, 2008)

Several attempts have been made by the thinkers and earlier researchers to define the term "poverty". In simplest form, poverty means the state of being poor. But the term poverty has multi-dimensions. Martin Rein pointed out that three broad concepts of poverty can be identified. Poverty can be defined as subsistence, inequality and externality. Subsistence is concerned to maintain health and working capacity. Under this context, V.M. Dandekar and Nil Kanth define poor people as "those who can afford a diet which yield them minimum nutrition requirements of 2250 calories per day. (quoted by Pangannavar, 2008). Inequality is concerned with the relative position of

the Income groups to each other. Externality is concerned with the social consequences of poverty for the rest of the society rather than in terms of the needs of the poor (Sadanandan and Bhasker, 1989). According to Prof. Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, "Poverty means capability deprivation" (Pangannavar 2008). The development economists define poverty as the deprivation of opportunities and choices that denies social, political, economic and human rights and claims the decent standard of living.

Human Development Report (1997) has given a new concept of poverty. According to Human Development Report, "poverty can mean more than a lack of what is necessary for material well being. It can also mean the denial of opportunities and choice most basic to human development, to lead a long healthy creative life and enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom dignity, self esteem and respect of others".

Vulnerability includes not only those who are already in poverty and are at the risk of falling into even deeper poverty when faced with shocks but also those vulnerable people who are not currently poor but are in such state that a sudden

shock could easily push them into poverty (Prasad, 2009).

Causes:-

There are several causes for poverty in Bihar particularly in Muzaffarpur. Prof. S.D. Naik pointed out that the long run British Colonial Rule, the progressive polarization of labour, low agricultural productivity and hand loan and village Industries detriment by British trade policy were the causes for poverty in the state during pre-independence period. (Panganna Van, 2008).

During the post-independence period, the incidence of poverty has become acute. The causes responsible include rapid growth of rural population, failure of land – reform, rural indebtedness, low wage rate, instable agricultural income and output, inflation and the adverse effects of non-agricultural strategies.

In Muzaffarpur district causes responsible for poverty can be grouped under economic, social, administrative and political causes.

The population of the district is growing fast. As per 2011 Census report, the total population of Muzaffarpur is 4.8 million as against 104.1 million of the state. The growing population has created not only the problems of food but also the problem of housing, and other facilities responsible for rise in the level of poverty in the district.

The problem of unemployment is acute in the district of Muzaffarpur. This is due to low work participation ratio. The work participation ratio in the Muzaffarpur district is 30.4 percent as compared to state's average of 33.7 percent (Census 2011). This also indicates that the number

of non working population in the district is high.

The rural people are often and often exposed to the natural calamities like flood, drought, earth quake, epidemic etc. which generally would reduce them to poverty 100 per cent of cropped area is affected by flood in the district as against 41.40 per cent in the state (Singh, 2013). Thus, Muzaffarpur is flood prone area of the state. About 85 percent of average rainfall is received during June-September which is the main rainy season in the district.

Muzaffarpur district is adversely affected by floods, drought, storms, hailstorm and cyclone in summer. Persistent cold wave condition in Winter Season also sometimes takes toll of both human and animal. Here, a sum of Rs. 67.09 crore was made available under different heads to all the districts to fight against calamities like fire, bloods, lighting and other calamities. The construction of emergency operation centres at district level was planned in each of the 38 districts of Bihar at unit cost of Rs. 10.00 lakh. In each of the 28 flood prone district of the state 10 Jawans of home guards and volunteers have been imparted the training of swimming and searching of the victims (Economic Survey 2014).

Assured availability of water for drinking, agriculture and industries are the key factors to determine the future economic scenario of the state particularly Muzaffarpur district. In Muzaffarpur district, a major part of the rural population has no easy access to portable water. In 2012-13 as many as 31.9 thousand hand pumps have been installed under the National Rural Drinking Water Programme. A major achievement is also recorded in the construction of individual

household Latrine. Besides, the number of sanitary complexes has also increased during this year. In Muzaffarpur district, 108 Hand pumps have been constructed during 2012-13. The coverage of habitations for water supply was 104 as against 10960 in the state during 2012-13 (Economic Survey 2014).

The decentralization of health services and inter-sectoral convergence in Bihar has led to improved health status in the state particularly in Muzaffarpur. Better infrastructures of human resources for health services have also led to improvement in delivery of health services. Majority of the people in the state depend on public health services. There are two aspects of health services – preventive and curative health care. The preventive aspects of health include hygiene environment, sanitation, access to safe drinking water and the curative health care includes availability of health facilities that ensure successful healing. To improve health status in the state, more emphasis has been given on health infrastructure and the state government has taken a number of steps to improve the functioning of the public institutions. The average number of patients visiting government hospitals per month was 3077 in 2007 which has increased to 9863 in 2012. At present there are 36 district hospitals, 71 referral hospitals, 63 sub division hospital and 11,559 health centres of different hospitals. Study shows that health institutions in Bihar serve about 8.9 thousand people on an average. In Muzaffarpur district, there are 1 district hospital, 1 referral hospital, 16 P.H.C., 480 H.S.C., 78 APHC, the population per health institution in the district is 8296. (Govt. of Bihar, Economic Survey, 2014).

The Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) was launched in 1975. The objective of the scheme is to the holistic development of children below 6 years of age and proper nutrition and health education of pregnant and lactating mothers. The target group of ICDS include children, expectant mothers and nursing mothers through Anganwadi Centres. Presently 599 ICDS projects are operational in Bihar covering all development blocks in 38 districts. A total of 91,677 Anganwadi Centres are working under those 544 projects 92.62 per cent of released fund has been spent in 2012-13. Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana has been formulated by the Central Government for pregnant and lactating mother under this scheme, a cash incentive of Rs. 6000 is provided directly to the age-group 19 years and above for the first two live births, subject to the women fulfilling specific conditions relating to maternal, child health and nutrition. In Muzaffarpur district Rs. 4,379.88 lakhs has been disbursed to health societies. (Govt. of Bihar, Economic Survey, 2014).

Education is a powerful instrument for inclusive development of a society. In the Twelfth Plan, emphasis has been given on access, equity, quality and governance. To achieve the objective, the government has implemented the Mid-day Meal Scheme. This is an important step for promoting higher enrolment of the children in the age group 6-14 years and their retention in the school. The scheme also has substantial implications for the nutrition status of the children and social equity. At present, it is covering all primary schools. In Muzaffarpur the total enrolment was 6.11 lakhs as against 142.82 lakhs in Bihar during 2012-13. The no. of children availing MDM per day was 3.41 lakhs than

83.25 lakhs in Bihar during the same year. And the coverage of the scheme was 55.8 per cent as against 58.3 per cent during 2012-13.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is a flagship programme of the Central government to ensure the universalization of elementary education for the children in the age group of 6-14. It is jointly funded by the Central and State Government with a share of 65.35 respectively. In Bihar, it is being implemented through the Bihar Education Project Council. The Bihar Education Project is also responsible for National Programme for education of girls at Elementary Level. Emphasis has been given on educationally Backward Blocks. The government has also set up residential school “Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya” at primary level for girls

belonging to the SC, ST, OBC and minority community.

The higher education sector in Bihar comprises College and University education both for general and technical streams. In Muzaffarpur, there are 30 colleges (12 affiliated and 18 constituent colleges) as against 628 in the state during 2010-11.

Conclusion:

Thus, various steps have been taken by the Government for the alleviation of poverty in the state particularly in the district. These steps have failed to raise the standard of living of those living below the poverty line. Here, Self-Help groups play an important role for improving the economic status of the weaker section in Bihar particularly in Muzaffarpur district.

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