

CHAPTER VI

THE GOVERNMENT'S AND POVERTY IN BIHAR (2000-2010)

Introduction

This chapter is on the nature and extent of poverty in the state of Bihar and the policies and programmes that have been adopted and were implemented for the alleviation of poverty in the state in the period 2000-2010. We proceed to look at it in the following manner; in the first section of the chapter we look at the extent and magnitude of the problem, the rural urban problem, the problem of regional and district variation, caste wise extent of poverty and more importantly the reasons behind the existence of such problem in the state. In the second section of this chapter which is more important we look at the programmes that are in operation or which the state government is implementing and how far these programmes had been successful in reducing the level of poverty or the impact of the programmes on poverty.

I

The Extent and Magnitude of the Problem

Bihar is the second largest State in India in terms of population and eleventh largest in terms of area but still it is one of the poorest States in the country. In the period 1998-1999 to 2008-2009 the annual growth rate of Bihar's per capita income was very low i.e. 3.77 percent. Hence in Bihar what we note is that low per capita income and high level of poverty ratio has badly affected the economic growth and human development of the state. The rural economy of Bihar is largely dependent on land and agricultural activities. For this reason agriculture is the main source of production and income in the State. About 80 percent of the population is engaged in Agricultural activities which is much higher than the national average and it has produced nearly 40 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (World Bank Report, 2005, p.2).

Let us come to the point regarding the poverty ratio in the state. The Planning Commission constituted various committees for poverty estimation including the Alagh Committee (1979), Lakdawala Committee (1990), Tendulkar Committee (2009), and the Rangarajan Committee (2012). Here it is not necessary for us to go through the recommendations of the various committees. As per the NSSO (National Sample Survey Organization) Surveys the incidence of poverty in the State of Bihar is very high. A report revealed by the Economic Survey, GOB, 2006-07 indicates that like Odisha, Bihar is one of the second highest poorest States among all the major states in India even though it is found that the incidence of rural poverty had come down from 64.4 percent in 1983 to 44.3 percent in 1999-2000. This is though a substantial drop of 20.1 percentage points still the state remains the poorest State among all the major States in India (GOB, Economic Survey, 2006-2007, p.124). During the same period the percentage of population below poverty line at the all India level has decreased from 45.6 percent in 1983 to 27.1 percent in 1999-2000. Though during the year 1983 to 1999, the rural poverty ratio had declined but paradoxically it is seen that between 1987-88 and 1993-94, the poverty ratio in rural areas in Bihar increased from 52.6 percent to 58.2 percent. Rural poverty in Bihar has declined from a level of 64.4 percent in 1983-84 to 42.1 percent in 2004-05. In the same way urban poverty in Bihar also has declined from 47.3 percent to 34.6 percent between 1983-84 and 2004-05. So it cannot be denied that the poverty ratio in Bihar has declined in the period 1983-84 and 2004-05. But still the poverty ratio in Bihar is quite higher than the corresponding ratios at the national level – rural (28.3 percent) and urban (25.7 percent) (GOB, Economic Survey, 2009-2010, p.181).

The Tendulkar Committee also submitted a report on poverty estimation. The previous method of poverty estimation was different from the new method. The old method estimated poverty on the basis of nutritional requirement or calorie consumption. The energy requirement as calculated by the Planning Commission NSSO Survey is 2,400 Kcal in rural areas per person per day and 2100 Kcal in urban areas per person per day. But the estimates provided by the Planning Commission through various rounds of the NSSO data had created a lot of debate on the methodological issues. For this reason the Tendulkar Committee was constituted.

Poverty estimation method used by Tendulkar Committee is based on monthly per capita expenditure. The new method of poverty estimation not only includes just food expenditure requirements but also education and health that are important basic needs (GOB, Economic Survey, 2009-10, p.182).It includes a range of Public good and Services Managing including Sanitation, Drinking Water, Immunization and Vaccination. It uses the mixed reference period. The poverty estimation that has been brought out by the Tendulkar Committee is very much higher than that of the Planning Commission NSSO survey.And the Planning Commission has accepted the estimates given by the Tendulkar Committee (Diwakar, 2011, p.29). According to the Tendulkar Committee, rural poverty in Bihar was 55.7 percent during 2004-05, compared to an all India average of 41.8 percent. And urban poverty was estimated to be 43.7 percent whereas the all India rate was 25.7 in the same year. In the same period the poverty ratio overall in Bihar was 54.4 percent compared to the National Average of 37.2 percent (GOB, Economic Survey, 2009-10, p.182).

Table: 6.1

NSSO – Survey on Poverty ratios in Bihar and India

GOB, Economic Survey, 2008-09, p.170	Sector	Years	Bihar–Poverty Ratios	India – Poverty Ratios
	Rural	1983	64.4	45.6
		1987-88	52.6	39.1
		1993-94	58.2	37.3
		1999-2000	44.3	27.1
		2004-05	42.1	28.3
	Urban	1983	47.3	40.8
		1987-88	48.7	38.2
		1993-94	34.5	32.4
		1999-2000	32.9	23.6
		2004-05	34.6	25.7
	Combined	1983	62.2	44.5
		1987-88	52.1	38.9
		1993-94	55.0	36.0
		1999-2000	42.6	26.1
2004-2005		41.4	27.5	

Table: 6.2**Poverty Lines and HCR of poverty in Bihar and India**

Region/ Year	POVERTY LINE		POVERTY HCR		
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Total
Bihar - 1993-94	236.1	266.9	62.3	44.7	60.5
India – 1993-94			50.1	31.8	45.3
Bihar – 2004-05	433.43	526.18	55.7	43.7	54.4
India – 2004-05	446.68	578.8	41.8	25.7	37.2

Source: Government of India (2009), Report of the Expert Group to Review the Methodology for Estimation of Poverty, Planning Commission, Tendulkar Committee Report, Annexure – A & B, p.17-18 (Diwakar, 2011, p. 29).

Table: 6.3**Poverty Ratio as per Tendulkar Committee Methodology**

Poverty Ratio as per Tendulkar Committee Methodology			
Bihar –2009-10	Rural	Urban	Total
2009-10	55.3	39.4	53.5
India –2009-10	Rural	Urban	Total
2009-10	33.8	20.9	29.8

Source: GOB, Economic Survey, 2012-13, p.223

The overall incidence of Poverty in Bihar as per the Tendulkar Methodology 2009-10 is 53.5% which is higher than the all India level of 29.8 per cent during the same year. Rural Poverty in the State has declined from 62.3% in 1993-94 to 55.7% in 2004-05 and it further declined to 55.3% in 2009-10. So, it is seen or found that the incidence of rural poverty has come down but only marginally.

Table: 6.4

Percentage and Number of Poor Estimated from Expert Group (Tendulkar)
MethodologyPoverty Ratio

Year	Bihar			All India		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
1993-94	62.3	44.7	60.5	50.1	31.8	45.3
2004-05	55.7	43.7	54.4	41.8	25.7	37.2
2009-10	55.3	39.4	53.5	33.8	20.9	29.8
2011-12	34.1	31.2	33.7	25.7	13.7	21.9

Source: Diwakar, 2011 & The Times of India, Jul 24, 2013.

There are other expert groups who have also worked on the estimation of poverty. They are Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and the UNDP Human Development Report. They estimated the intensity of Poverty in education, health outcomes and standard of living of the individual. From the estimate it is found that in India around 54.5 percent people live below the poverty line. Among all the States in India, Bihar is one of the poorest State with 81.4 percent MPI (Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index) and 77.3 Million poor (OPHI, 2010). The direct poverty estimation are based on the caloric consumption 2400 Kcal for rural areas and 60.1 percent in Urban areas are below the norms of Poverty Consumption levels. In 2004-05 about 79.5 percent households of Rural Bihar were taking below the 2400 Kcal consumption (Diwakar, 2011, p. 29).

From the different reports it is found that the incidence of poverty has declined but still Rural Poverty in Bihar is very much higher than the all India Level. And also the number of rural poor persons did increase from 31 million in 1993-94 to 45 million in 2004-05 to 51 million in 2009-10 (Singh, Kumar, Jha & Meena 2012, p. 2).

Poverty in Regions and Districts

We have seen that in the State of Bihar, as a whole the extent of Poverty is very high. Prabhat P. Ghosh in his article entitled 'Poverty and Social Assessment: A District-Wise Study of Bihar' has argued that through the Bihar Rural Livelihood Promotion Society (BRLPS) the Government of Bihar is trying to provide rural livelihood opportunities in the rural areas with financial support from the World Bank. The high level of poverty not only exists in the districts of Bihar but also in different Regions of the State. But the severity of Poverty in the regions and districts is not uniform. What we notice is that there are some districts where agricultural productivity is very high and in those districts the incidence of Poverty is lower than other districts. Besides there are some other districts in Bihar where the situation of the local economy is very poor as a result in that districts the incidence of poverty is higher. In different districts the social condition of the people is also not equal (Ghosh, ADRI, 2007). There are some authors like K. M. Singh, Abhay Kumar, M. S. Mehta, A. K. Jha & Anjani Kumar who had made a comparative analysis of Rural Poverty among farm and agricultural labour households. They have found that the incidence of Poverty is very much higher among the agricultural labour households than the farm households. They also opine that during 1993-94 to 2009-10 the incidence of Poverty had declined in farm households than the agricultural labour household. This is caused due to increase in agricultural productivity particularly in increase of food grains productivity. But the wages of agricultural labourers were the same; it did not increase during that period. In spite of this, the incidence of Poverty had declined among agricultural labourers and it was higher than the farm households. It was due to the Government intervention of launching of MNREGA and large-scale employment opportunities in construction work. And it has helped to increase agricultural wages (from 66 in 2004-05 to 104 per day in 2009-10) (JCAR, 2012, p.3).

The authors have worked on the 4 (four) villages of the State of Bihar under the project entitled "Tracking change in rural Poverty in household and village economics in Eastern India". The 4 (four) villages are Arap, Baghakole, Inari and Sassari. The first two villages are located in Patna district which is the most developed district whereas the latter two villages are located in Darbhanga district which is less

developed in the ecologic situation, agricultural development and infrastructure facility. In Patna district the level of education is high than the Darbhanga District. The former 2 (two) villages are very close to national highway whereas the former villages are at a much distance from the national highway. The main source of income of developed villages are from farm sector which is very high than the less developed villages. There are a number of farmsector inputs which are available in Patna district such as per acre fertilizer consumption, seed replacement rate and number of pump set etc.

There are various factors which determine the Poverty level in the various districts of the state. These are: education, health, Land and Tenure, Asset, Residential facilities and migration etc. In the 'Dimensions of Rural Poverty in Bihar: A Village Level Study' the author had surveyed four villages of Patna and Darbhanga district. From their study it was found that in Sassari (73.4%) the poverty level was high than the Inari (55.5%), Baghakole (29.4%) and Arap (16.7%). Low incidence of Poverty existed in Arap village due to better road connectivity, larger size of land holdings, higher level of education etc. To make a village-wise comparison the authors has shown that socio-economic and infrastructure development leads to positive effect on alleviation of Poverty. The study also revealed that the severity of Poverty was the highest in Sassari village (18.1%) and also the incidence of Poverty was higher.

Dimensions of Poverty: Let us see the different dimensions of Poverty which describes the Poverty level in the districts in the state. Lack of economic opportunity is not only the reason of Poverty. One of the prominent economists Amartya Sen has pointed out that Poverty is the lack of capability to function effectively in society. Education is one of the important determinants of Poverty. Through education one may get remunerative service, work properly with skill, increase labour productivity. As a result Poverty can be reduced. In a family, if there are one or two or more earning members, then Poverty will become less. So the Government has provided training for skill development so that the proportion of earning members will increase. A survey conducted in Bihar which indicates that about two third of family members of BPL households are literate in both the district of Bihar. But education gap still exists in post-secondary level of APL and BPL families and existed in both the districts. So it

cannot be denied that the two most important tools i.e. literacy and education levels determines rural poverty in Bihar.

Health is another determinant of Poverty. The total expenditure on health in the state still remains low, which we discuss later in another chapter. From the Annual Health Survey, 2010–11 it is seen that the fertility rate in the state is very high than the national average. Not only that, maternal mortality still remains high. It is about 300 + deaths per 100,000 live births (Singh & Stern, 2013, p. xxviii). The death rate of females is over 50 percent higher than that of males. Most of the mortality belongs to the category of poor labourer from the agricultural sector out of which 20 percent are male and over 30 percent are female. It is to be noted that high mortality is seen among the scheduled caste children. Therefore it can be said that there is a need for the development of the health sector for the improvement in the situation of poverty.

Next let us come to Land and Tenure system which is closely associated with Poverty. It is one of the important assets in the rural areas. There is a clear difference in land holding among the poor non – poor households. The earning members among the non – poor households is very high than the poor households. Lack of land causes Poverty because it is highly correlated with lack of other productive assets. In Bihar most of the people do not have average size of land. In the article “Dimensions of Poverty in Bihar” the authors have discussed an average size of land holding of BPL households in Patna and Darbhanga District (Singh, Meena & Kumar, 2013, p. 5). In Patna district the average size of land holdings among the BPL households is 0.28 hectre whereas it is 0.24 hectre in Darbhanga district. But the APL families possess double of land holding in Patna District than the APL families of Darbhanga district per capita land and is also not equal among the BPL families in both the districts i.e. 520 m² in Patna District and 360 m² in Darbhanga district.

Table: 6.5

Per Capita Land and Tenural status of BPL Households in Bihar, India

Particulars	BPL - PATNA	HouseholdsDarbhanga
Average size land holding (ha)	0.28	0.24
Per capital land (ha)	0.052	0.036
% of leased in of operational Holding	9.7	0
% of leased out of own land	21.7	1.3

(Source: Singh, Meena& Kumar, 2013, p.5)

Poverty may be measured in terms of assets. The possessions of all assets except grain are extremely wide among the big peasants and landlords. It is very much worse among the non – agricultural class than the agricultural labourers (EPW, Oct, 14 – 21, 1995). The availability of assets is very much higher among the male headed households than the female headed households. In Patna district assets owned by BPL families is more than the BPL families in Darbhanga district. Agricultural production in Darbhanga district is very low. Transport and communication assets like bicycle, Scooter are available among the BPL families of Patna and Darbhanga district. There is not so much difference in the sphere of transport and communication assets held among both the BPL families of two districts namely Patna and Darbhanga (Singh, Meena& Kumar, 2013, p. 6). When the authors had surveyed the profile of poor households they have found that the consumption level of meat, egg and fish is higher in poor households (3.6 kg) than non – poor households (2.2 kg). But the consumption level of milk is much lower in poor households (54 kg) than non – poor households (114 kgs) whereas the consumption level of food grains, vegetables and fruits is very much higher on non–poor households than the poor households (Singh, Meena, Kumar& Jha, 2012, p. 5).

The incidence of Poverty also depends on or reflected in the residential qualities of poor households in Bihar. The study also makes an analysis of housing. From the study it is found that in both the districts the majority of BPL households have no pucca house. They live in kutchha (made of soil) house. In Patna District one-fifth of the BPL households have toilet facilities in their house whereas only 6 percent of the households have toilet facilities in Darbhanga district. Electricity connection for

lighting is rare. Though the Government has provided free electricity connection inspite of this 59 percent BPL families of Patna district and only 6 percent of Darbhanga district could get electric connection in their dwelling house (Singh, Meena& Kumar, 2013, p. 7). The usage of domestic assets is very low. They use cooking utensils and only 15 percent of the households own a mosquito net, 25 percent a torch, 15 percent a bicycle and 10 percent a radio (EPW, October, 14 – 21, 1995).

The extent of migration is very much higher in Darbhanga district (about 70 percent) than Patna district (about 34 percent). In the Darbhanga district all the forward castes households and 78 percent of OBC category households have one or more migrants. In Patna district the scheduled caste households do not migrate from Patna district because there is an opportunity for them in the agricultural and non – farm employment in the village. In both the districts the incidence of migration is high. The male person has migrated from Patna district (29.31%) is comparatively low than Darbhanga district (50.7%). Most of the migrants are engaged in non – farm activities than farming. The migrants of developed district of Bihar are employed as monthly wage earners or non – farm workers. So it is seen that during the last seven years there has been a change in the migrant’s employment Pattern at the destination place (Singh, Meena& Kumar, 2013, p.9).

Table: 6.6

Caste category – wise Extent migration in BPL Households in Bihar, India

CASTE GROUP	PATNA	DARBHANGA
FORWARD	50	100
OBC	54	78
SC/ST	0	33
TOTAL	34	70

Caste Wise Extent of Poverty

According to the state Government, Poor households are those who are declared as BPL families. The state Government has conducted a survey on the BPL households in Bihar. From the survey it has been found that about 40% households in Patna district and 41% households in Darbhanga district belong to the BPL category. In Patna district 65% OBC households belong to the BPL category whereas in Darbhanga district it is 35%. And all the Scheduled caste households in Darbhanga district belong to BPL category and it is 92 % in Patna district. In both these districts the forward castes households also belong to BPL category. So it can be said that the existence of Poverty is very much prevalent in the marginalized/ vulnerable sections of the society (Singh, Meena& Kumar, 2013, p. 4).

Table: 6.7

Caste-wise Distribution of BPL Households in Bihar, India (%)

Source: Singh, Singh, Meera, Kumar, 2013, p.4

CASTE CATEGORIES	BPL Households	
	Patna	Darbhangha
Forward castes	17	32
OBC (other Backward Castes)	65	35
SC (Scheduled Caste)	92	100
Total	40	41

From the above discussion it can be argued that Poverty is not defined only in terms of inadequate income it has multi – dimensional features or characteristics. It is defined in terms of the possibility to have access to education, health, land, residential facilities, etc. From the analysis we note that Poverty in rural areas in the state of Bihar still remains alarming. During the regime of Nitish Kumar, Bihar’s growth performance has improved considerably but surprisingly during 2009 –10 the Poverty ratio in the state has not declined properly. The overall poverty ratio was 53.5% which was 80 % higher than the all India average (Singh & Stern, 2013, p.89). The incidence of rural Poverty is very much high, about 55.3% and the Urban Poverty is also high about 39.4%

which is higher than in any other poor states. To understand the magnitude of the poverty situation in Bihar, we have discussed about four villages of two districts in the state- they are Patna and Darbhanga. Most of the facilities are available in Patna district than Darbhanga district. From the above analysis it reveals that most of the Villages in the state still have no electricity connection, toilet, drinking water facilities, proper residence etc.

There are three most important agro economic and social factors which affects the Poverty situation in state. They are; education, number of earning members and family size. Education is the key factor which helps a man to lead a good life. In Bihar, there has been some improvement in the elementary education but there is no Progress in higher education sector. Though the enrolment in elementary education has increased but infrastructure facilities like classrooms, toilets for girls, drinking water, quality education, number of teachers is very poor. Large number of earning members in the family also reduces Poverty and Smaller size of family leads to fewer expenses and reduces Poverty. Most of the poor persons migrated outside the state for better employment opportunity and they are getting employment in non-farm sector and getting high wages. Hence it reduces Poverty slightly so it can be said that various Poverty alleviation programmes adopted by the state Government have not been very successful in the reduction of Poverty in Bihar. Some researchers argue that there is an urgent need to have a holistic approach for faster reduction in Poverty in Bihar (Singh, Singh, Meena & Kumar, 2013, p. 10).

Though during 2005 –2010 Bihar has witnessed several improvements in different spheres such as law and order, education, health, infrastructure but it still remains one of India's most backward states with the lowest score on the Human Development Index (HDI). There are many reasons for the backwardness of the state such as low levels of Urbanization and industrialization, high Poverty rates and inadequate infrastructure, especially power, water and sanitation (Singh & Stern, 2013, p. xxix).

Region Wise Poverty in Bihar

According to the NSS regions, Bihar is classified into two regions. One is Northern regions and another is Central region. The Northern region consists of 19 districts. They are Anaria, East Champaran, West Champaran, Darbhanga, Gopalganj, Katihar, Kisanjanj, Madhepura, Madhubani, Muzaffarpur, Purnia, Saharsa, Samastipur, Saran, Sheohar, Sitamarhi, Siwan, Supaul and Vaishali. And the Central region consists of 18 districts. They are Aurangabad, Banka, Begun sarai, Bhagalpur, Bhojpur, Buran, Gaya, Jamui, Jehanabad, Kaimur (Babura), Khagaria, Lakhsarai, Munger, Nalanda, Nawada, Patna, Roktas and Sheikhpura. If we analyze the Poverty ratio in a state there are mainly four sectors which come under the discussion of Poverty. They are Agriculture, education, services and health. They are intimately associated with Poverty. In the northern region, the performance or agriculture development is very low – due to shocks from drought and periodic monsoon flooding in the region. In the state there has been high level of inter district and inter – regional disparity due to north Bihar's low agricultural productivity, poor irrigation system and high vulnerability to floods. The central region of the state has a better agricultural production in comparison to the northern region. Not in all the districts of the Central region, but some districts which performed well in the agricultural sector they are Rohtas, Kaimur, Nawada, Gaya and Jehanabad. Relatively Jamui and Sheikhpura districts in the central region are very backward in the agricultural sector as well as in the social sector development. So it is seen that there is a high inter – district disparity than inter – region disparity.

In the education sector the northern region in the state is much backward than the Central region. The existence of inter – district disparity in the educational sectors is very high. The low rate of literacy is caused due to Poverty. And also lack of awareness of people towards education is one of the main reasons of Poverty. Not only that in the northern part of the state disparities in the education sector increased day by day. The northern region in Bihar is affected by high Poverty. The development of education is very low in the northern region because the region is highly dependent on agriculture, but the production is very low, which leads to uncertain income. As a result most of the people have migrated from this region for better opportunities.

They go outside the state leave their family behind and uncertainly of their income discourage them to send their children to school. Another reason for the lower performance in education sector in this region is the high dependence on Public Sector Schools where quality of education is very low(Kumari, 2014, p.59).

In the health sector there is also a wide inter district disparity. The health facilities in Patna district is relatively better than the districts in the northern region. In the rural areas of Bihar, the health facilities are very poor. In the northern region of the state most of the villages suffer from inadequate health facilities. The districts in the northern region are Purnia, Darbhanga, Supaul, Kishanganj, Anaria, Madhepura, W. Champaran, Sitamarhi, Sheohar, E. Champaran and Katihar which have poor health facilities. This is caused due to high Poverty and poor socio – economic condition of the people who cannot access health facilities. The government should take effective measures for providing health system by different means of variables like hospital in each block of the district and also by providing high technique medical instrument, service delivery system, hospitality and also other infrastructure relating to the health system at the cost of the government.

From the discussion which we have carried above it can be said that central Bihar of the state is much developed and advanced in comparison to northern Bihar in terms of economic as well as social development in the period 2000–2001(Kumari, 2014). The northern districts have performed poorly in the overall sectional development. At the same time there are some districts which performed very well in terms of social sector development and their position was high in socially developed category during the period 2010-11 for example, Begunsarai, has done well in the health sector than the other districts. The number of hospitals and dispensaries having beds are higher than all the districts. The infant mortality rate is also low in this district. It has done well in the education sector also. In this district there is low pupil – teacher ratio, higher number of schools with safe drinking water facility, trained teacher in primary and upper primary schools. Among all the districts in the northern region Begunsarai marked the highest in female literacy rate and in overall literacy rate it was second best performer (66.23%) after Vaishali (68.56%) during 2010-11 (Kumari, 2014, p.62-63). In the central region the districts Banka and Jamui did not perform very well

in rural literacy. These districts have a very low percentage of school with drinking water facilities per lakh of population and the number was also low in the number of government primary school per lakh population(Kumari,2014, p.63). So from the analysis we note that there is not only the existence of inter district disparity, it also has inter – regional disparities in terms of economic and social development. As Poverty is related to agriculture, health and education, it has been found that the central region is more developed than the northern region in all the sectors. In Bihar, there exists wide regional disparity. This can be because of the fact that the Government expenditure on health and education is not distributed evenly across the regions. Government should be focused and should have taken necessary steps for the development of the backward districts of the state in economic and social development.

Causes of Poverty in Bihar

After having noticed that in Bihar poverty ratio is high let us look at the causes of poverty in Bihar. Bihar is one of the most populous state of the country and also the most backward state of India. The literacy rate in the state is very low. The state of Bihar has the lowest per capita income among all the states of India. During the 1990s, the GDP growth rate in the state has been very low it was just 2.69 percent per annum from 1991 – 92 to 1997 – 98 as against about 6 percent for all the major states of the country (Ahluwalia, 2000; EPW, 2005). The acute Poverty in the state is caused due to backwardness of both its agricultural and industrial sectors. The poor performance of agriculture is both institutional and technological. Both these factors are contributing as a powerful barrier to agrarian transformation. There are so many technological factors which are responsible for the poor performance of the state's agriculture sector such as poor development of infrastructure like irrigation facilities and power, non – availability of modern inputs, low volume of credit and poor extension services etc. (Sharma, 1995, p.2587). Besides in the industrial sector the state also continues to be backward.

Sharma in his article entitled 'Political Economy of Poverty in Bihar (1995)' has explained that the state's backwardness and poverty is very much prevalent in the rural sector i.e. 87 percent of the population of the Bihar lives in the rural areas as against 74.3 percent for India as a whole. It has been noticed that Bihar is the most rural state in the country followed by Assam. The author has pointed out that about 46 percent of the state's income comes from agriculture as against 34 percent for India. But floods in large parts of the state especially in north Bihar are a recurring phenomenon and it destroys crops and the quality of land and it also changes the conditions of life of the individual in a state. Though the Government has implemented different flood control measures, still it continues to be a major problem. In South Bihar the regions are described as drought prone with poor irrigation facilities. In large parts of north Bihar water logging is a chronic problem. So it can be said that the state of Bihar would have improved if flood is controlled and water is managed properly. There is another reason which is equally responsible for the economic backwardness and Poverty of Bihar and that is its high density of population. As a result there is landlessness and that is one of the acute reasons of Poverty in the state. In India, the average per capita operational holding in the state is 0.87 hectre (in 1985 – 86) as against 1.7 hectre for India as a whole and about 2.8 hectares for Punjab. In the state the density of population is so high but the population pressure on land is very low. There are several reasons for the backwardness and Poverty in the state such as low agricultural production, lack of political leadership, bureaucratic inefficiency, rampant corruption and almost total collapse of the administrative and law and order machinery etc. Criminal activities, kidnapping, tensions, violence all these leads to the withering away of the state.

Let us see the Poverty ratio in Bihar. According to 2006–07 Economic Survey of the Government of Bihar during the year 1983 the rural Poverty ratio was 64.4 percent. And during 1999 –2000 rural Poverty decreased to 44.3 percent. But paradoxically it is also found that rural poverty ratio in the state has increased from 52.6 percent during 1987 – 88 to 58.2 percent during 1993 – 94. So it is seen that the state had the highest incidence of Poverty in 1983 – 84, with more than half of its population below the Poverty line. But during 1987 –88 to 1993– 94 the state had

shown practically no sign of decline. In 1999 – 2000 however it was found that rural Poverty ratio had declined. It may be assumed that the state has witnessed several developments but still the Poverty ratio in the state is the highest among all the states in the country. Sharma felt that there are several reasons for the recent decrease in Poverty level in the state such as the moderate growth of its agricultural economy during both the eighties and nineties because of better weather conditions and the use of modern technologies. Second, Migration in the state has increased as a result the migrants have contributed to increased consumption expenditure as well as investment in cultivation. Third, the number of Poverty alleviation programmes is largely financed by the central government, i.e. IRDP, NREP and RLEGF etc (Sharma, EPW,1995). There are several reasons which are responsible for the high rate of Poverty in Bihar and these are:

Landlessness in Bihar: In Bihar, most of the poor people live in the rural sector. They have no resources for this reason; the marginal farmers, landless labourers etc. are dependent on the rich farmers or landowners.

The rural economy of the state is fully dependent on land and agricultural activities. But lack of land for cultivation is the acute reason for rural Poverty in Bihar. And the poor households especially those who live in the below Poverty line they belong to this category. Rural Poverty is very high in the state. Prabhat P. Ghosh in his article entitled 'Poverty and Social Assessment a District Wise Study of Bihar' (2007) talked about the percentage of landless and marginal farmer households. The landless rural households and marginal farmer households constitute about 50.2% and 21.8% in the state. In rural Bihar these two vulnerable groups constitute more than 70 percent of the households whereas it is 54 percent in India as a whole. The incidence of landlessness has increased during the 90's from 9 to 10 percent of the rural population. A research institute ADRI conducted a survey of twelve villages in 2007. The survey revealed that nearly 52 percent of the households are landless. As per the NSS survey it is seen that the number of marginal holdings has increased from 71 percent of total holdings in 1970s to almost 90 percent in 2003. The area has also increased from around 18 percent to 42 percent by the marginal holdings from 1970s to 2003. During the 90's, about 40% of the households in the small land holding

category have lost land. But the size of land holdings in the small category has increased over the period. Poverty is very much related to the ownership of land. It is quite natural that the non –poor own more land than the poor in Bihar. During 1999 – 2000 the percentage of rural poor is 75%. It is seen that the incidence of Poverty has increased for the landless from 51% to 56% during the 90's. So the condition of landless labourer's worsened in the nineties (ADRI, Current Agrarian Situation in Bihar, ADRI, 2008, p. 11).

If we notice about the rural landownership by social groups we find the existence of landlessness among the SCs/STs is very high. According to the NSSO (50th & 55th round) data landlessness among all the social groups has increased from 8.9% to 10.1% during the 1990's (ADRI, Current Agrarian Situation in Bihar, ADRI, 2008, p.12). But there are very few numbers of SC and ST household who possess land. The other groups such as poor peasants, the OBC households also are landless. In spite of these, it is found that very few OBC households have large landholdings of more than 4 hectares.

In Bihar, it is seen that during the 1950's there was land transfer from the twice born castes to the backward castes due to Zamindari abolition. The large landholdings of upper castes had been abolished and there was a creation of land changing hands from the upper castes to the other backward castes especially the Yadavs, Kurmis and Koeris. These upper middle castes had improved their economic condition after independence. They were the main beneficiaries of the so –called green revolution in Bihar. These three castes were traditionally engaged in cultivation and they have managed to produce more from cultivation than the upper castes. They had captured a large portion of the institutional credit. For this reason it has affected the pattern of land distribution in the country side. As a result the main losers of land were upper castes landlords and big peasants and the gainer have been the backward castes especially Yadavs, Kurmis and Koeris. So after independence there have been significant changes in the agrarian and rural class structure in Bihar. But there were no change in the fortunes of the backwards castes, the agricultural labourer's and the poor peasants. The traditional landowners sell their excess land to new groups and most of the land buyers are from the backward castes. The land selling is more than

twice than that of purchasers. Besides it is also seen that for the Schedules Castes, the percentage of buying land (4.48%) is more than households selling land (1.99%). So it is clear from this discussion that there was the creation of a paradoxical situation. The scheduled castes are mainly agricultural labourers. And majority of them are landless. They are working in cultivation and are casual non - farm labour (ADRI, Current Agrarian situation in Bihar, ADRI, 2008, p.16). For this reason during the 1990's, the employment scenario in the non -farm sector has increased marginally.

Low Rate of Agriculture Growth: It is another reason for the prevalence of poverty on a large scale. In Bihar, 90% of the population in rural areas is dependent on agriculture. But during the 90's the growth in the agricultural sector came down. The growth of agriculture had declined due to shocks from both drought and periodic monsoon flooding. Low level of technology is another constraint for the low productivity in agriculture. And landlessness is also the cause for the low performance of agriculture. There are structural constraints for the weak performance of agriculture. This is particularly due to the pattern of ownership and control over land. There are two acute reasons for the extreme backwardness of agriculture and they are institutional and technological though the structural and institutional factors are more responsible for agrarian transformation. There are so many technological factors such as poor development of infrastructure like irrigation and power, lack of modern inputs, low volume of credit and poor extension services which had contributed to the poor performance of the agricultural sector. In Bihar, flood is one of the acute causes of the backwardness of agriculture. The recurring phenomenon of flood destroys a large number of crops, and the quality of land, and threatens the conditions of life and livestock due to large scale displacement. The state Government has taken different flood control measures in spite of these, recurrence of floods affects very adversely on the land also on the population in the state. It is to be noted that after independence the state witnessed a moderate rate of agricultural production. During 1952-53 to 1964-65 the growth of agricultural production was 2.97 percent per annum which was much better than many other states. During the same period the growth of food grains production was better than the national average. It was 3.05 percent in Bihar against 2.50 percent for India as a whole. But during 1969 -

70 and 1983 –84 the annual growth of agricultural production became very less it was 0.42 percent per annum. Besides during the year of mid 1980's agricultural production had slightly improved. So it can be said that very low growth rate in agricultural production is one of the main reasons behind the persistence of Poverty on a large scale particularly in the areas.

Migration: Bihar is one of the states in our country where large scale migration takes place. And it is increasing day by day. There are some key factors which are responsible for heavy out migration from the state. They are lack of infrastructure, institutional barriers and poor governance in the state. And all this has led to under development in the state. The state of Bihar is considered as the pocket of chronic Poverty. In Bihar agriculture still remains the main occupation of the majority of labourers. They are dependent on agriculture for employment and income. But the population pressure has been increasing day by day and it has adversely affected the land – man ratio. For this reason the people of living areas faced different difficulties for finding job and better opportunities. As a result they have migrated to urban and industrial centres or other states for gainful employment and better facilities. Apart from these, flood is a recurring phenomenon in the state and due to natural calamities, they migrate to other states in search of livelihood. R. R. Mishra in his article entitled, 'Migrants from Rural Bihar: SocioEconomic Profile' has pointed out that feudal exploitation and acute Poverty in villages are the main factors of migration. Agricultural labourers have migrated to agriculturally advanced states like Punjab, Haryana, etc. and industrially advanced states like Gujarat, Maharashtra etc. It is to be noted that most of the people are migrating from landless labour families. The percentage of migrant workers is very much higher among the Scheduled Castes and the number of Scheduled Castes has more than doubled from 6.07% in 1981 –82 to 14.01 % in 1999 –2000. Almost 90% migrants are mostly seasonal because majority of them belonged to Scheduled Caste groups with low socio– economic status and had poor access to educational institutions. They worked as agricultural labourers and they had no opportunity of regular employment in their native place and they preferred to go to their destination during the peak time of the respective seasons. They come back home to participate in agricultural operations. Land is still the key

assets for the people of rural areas in the state but due to changes in the landholding status which are seen to go hand – In – hand the poor people had been badly affected and it has also changed the employment scenario. As a result Poverty has increased and they have migrated to and are migrating to other places for better livelihood. It especially affected the landless labourers a lot. Most of the illiterate migrants are seasonal but a large portion of the literate peoples are permanent migrants and it is seen that the percentage of permanent migrants has increased due to literate persons. The percentage of inter-censal migrants among male out migrants was higher (around 46 percent) than female out migrants (around 38 percent). The author Nandan Kumar and R. B. Bhagat in their article entitled ‘Out- migrants from Bihar, Causes and Consequences’ have showed different reasons of migration. According to the Census the reasons of migration are to be divided into six broad categories. These categories are work or employment, business, education, marriage, moved with household, movement after birth (associated with the Custom of Hindu family). And the NSSO classifies the reasons of migrants into 18 categories most of the out – migration takes place in search of better employment. Around 34.3 percent of male out – migration is caused when they get an offer of employment or better employment at the place of destination. According to NSSO data most of the female out – migration is caused due to either the migration of parent or earning member of the family or marriage (Kumar & Bhagat, 2012, p.140). It is seen that Out-Migration of employment is coming not only from poor and socially backward households but also from the members of relatively affluent households for better employment and education opportunities. And this is mainly because of Poverty in the state.

Education: Education plays an important role in the determination of Poverty. If the people are more educated then the unemployment rate as well as poverty will be reduced. In Bihar, the literacy rate is very low and there exists also a considerable gap between male and female literacy and still it remains the same particularly from 1951 to 2011 (Kumari, JSED, July–Dec, 2014). Those who are illiterate they are engaged in agricultural labour and low wage employment. According to the 2001 Census literacy was very low about 47.5% compared to the national level of 65%. In 2001 male and female literacy was 60.3 and 33.6 percent respectively. There was a

wider gap between male and female literacy ratio. It was 26.7 percent. The 2011 census shows that the literacy rate in the state was 63.8% which was very much higher than the 2001 census. The male and female literacy rate was 73.2 percent and 53.3 percent respectively. Though the literacy rate in the state has increased still there exists a gap of 20.1 percent which is higher than the national average. In the primary education the enrolment ratio has increased but the reality is that the classrooms are abysmally poor. Hence it was a big challenge for the JD (U) government for the increase of enrolment. Because it is the base for the future stock of human capital and it also reduces Poverty. During 2007 – 08 the 38.6 percent females and 59.2 males i.e. altogether 49.4 percent population were literate (64th round NSSO). From 2002–03 to 2007-08 the enrolment rate in primary education increased by 69.9 percent. Enrolment among the girls is higher than the boys. The drop out ratio has also come down from 61.06% in 2001–02 to 46.1% in 2006–07 (Diwakar, 2011, p.22).

There are a number of initiatives that has been taken by the JD(U)–BJP Government in terms of improving infrastructure, adult educational programmes and mid-day meal schemes to encourage education. Some of the schemes were the Mukhya Mantri Balika Pashak Yojana, Mukhya Mantri Balika Cycle Yojana etc. In spite of these it is found that there is poor quality of education and irregularity of teachers in government schools. It is due to this most of the people prefers to enrol their children in private schools. The reason behind low literacy is Poverty and lack of awareness of people towards education. Most of the districts have low literacy rates (Kumari, 2014). The main problem which the state faces i.e. is inequalities in educational opportunities. The illiterate people cannot access better employment opportunities through which they can earn more. So employment oriented education and access to all remain the challenges.

Poor Health Facilities

There is a very close relationship between poverty and health. Poor health is caused due to poverty and poverty is one of the crucial factors/ impediments in ill health. People having low income cannot have access to quality health care services and also

get sufficient quantities of quality food and health care. So, a strong health system of any state or a country can improve the health status of a whole population especially among the poor who have ill health and cannot have access to health care services which goes beyond their out-of-pocket spending. The performance of the health sector in the state is not so satisfactory. The expenditure in the health sector still remains low. The infant mortality rate and maternal mortality continues to be high. The health facility in the state is very low. For that reason many villagers are compelled to go outside for better treatment. Lack of medicine, lack of infrastructure, lack of public health institutions are the reasons for the poor health scenario in the state. There is a high maternal mortality rate (MMR) because of lack of antenatal care (ANC) and post natal care (PNC) and high incidence of unsafe deliveries. Only 10% of the woman accesses the antenatal care in the state against the national average of 32%. Many people do not find it possible to go to the hospitals because of Poverty.

Corruption, Poor Governance and Mal –Administration

The state of Bihar has experienced several kinds of corruption at all levels and also social disorder. Besides law and order situation was also weak. Increase in Wealth is not the only means to remove Poverty. Wealth is not distributed among all the sections of the society it is concentrated in the hands of a few politician, bureaucrats, contractors, suppliers and middle class who have exploited it in their own interest. Planning commission observed that in Bihar from top to bottom corruption has taken place. For this reason the improvement in the state has remained stagnant and has not produced a desired result. From top to the bottom level corruption is everywhere in the state. Corruption exists among the bureaucrats, public representatives and so on. The growth rate in the state was much low (2.9%) than the national level (6.1%). There are so many Poverty alleviation programmers such as Jawahar Rojgar Yojana, Indira Awas, Trysem etc. but these are not being properly implemented in the rural areas. For the growth of food production the central funds are not being utilized though the state has fertile land. A large part of the funds which actually remains unutilized are manipulated by the leaders and it is shown in paper that the work has been completed. The utilization certificates are not properly sent, leading to non –

disbursement of more funds. Bihar, fodder scam was the biggest scam. Not only that funds are siphoned off from the health and education department through malpractice. The law and order situation were also bad. Crime rates increased day by day. The acute crisis in the political leadership caused poor security situation. It was threatened. Crime was on the peak because it was supported by politicians. So it hampered development.

Over Population and Apathy towards Family Planning

The population of Bihar has increased and as per the 2011 census it has a population of 104 million. There is absolutely no family planning in Bihar. Policies regarding family planning were at the minimum and no corrective measures were taken in this regard. The MTP (Medical Termination of Pregnancies) Act also did not produce desired results. If the expansion or enlargement of population is not checked, no amount of development is sustainable in Bihar. A door to door survey is needed for the poor and illiterate people who cannot access family planning devices. So the Government and the NGOs should take effective steps in this regard. The Foreign funding agencies also has come for combating population through the NGOs. Hence it can be stated that if the mentality of people is changed, then many of the problems such as over population, poor health, illiteracy and above all the situation in the Poverty front can be improved. If it does not change then many of the problems such as over population, poor health, illiteracy and above all poverty will remain a serious concern.

II

POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES IN BIHAR

After having discussed the nature and extent of poverty in Bihar and the reasons behind poverty situation in this section, let us turn to the poverty alleviation programmes in the state with a focus on what the state governments have done in the period 2000 to 2010 which is our study period. Considering the seriousness of the poverty situation several programmes were and are being implemented in the state. At the end of the 1990's there were some programmes such as Old Age Pension Scheme, NREP, Public Distribution System, SGSY etc. related to poverty alleviation which existed in the State.

Old Age Pension Scheme

The scheme came into being in 1995. It is a centrally sponsored scheme. The objective of this scheme is to provide social security to the old age population living below the poverty line. The programme covers the old persons (above the age of 65) who are poor and have no sources of income from family members or any other sources. A large percentage of people however were unaware of this programme. In the State Advisors Report, April, 2005, it has been stated that the Government of Bihar has a State security scheme, the monthly ownership of the beneficiaries being Rs.100/- only (GOB, State Advisor's Report, 2005, p.34). According to the State scheme, it covers the widows, disabled and individuals who live in urban areas and whose income per annum is less than Rs.5,500/- only and those living in rural areas with an earning of less than Rs.5,000/- only per annum. They are generally people who have been deprived of all the basic necessities. The actual number of beneficiaries covered by the State is almost equal to the targeted number of beneficiaries by the centre for the year 2003-04 is 4.93 lakh. But according to the Central Government the number of beneficiaries of the Scheme in Bihar should be 9.12 lakh (GOB, State Advisor's Report, 2005, p.34).

From the period 2001-02 to 2003-04, there was no change in the number of beneficiaries. During 2001-02 the number of beneficiaries of the scheme was 493,696 which remained the same during 2003-04. It has been found that Rs.86.15 crore should have been spent by the Central Government but the actual amount of allocation by the Central Government in the financial year 2003-2004 was Rs.46.05 crore which was very much less from the required amount and the rest of the amount was allocated by the State Government. From the State Advisors Report, April, 2005, it has been observed that the targeted number of beneficiaries had been raised by the State Government from 3,82,463 to 4,20,709 which was implemented from 01.09.2004. And for this purpose the State Government allocated about Rs.45.89 crore for the year 2004-05 (GOB, State Advisor's Report, 2005, p.35).

For this scheme funds are set aside in the State budget and it is further authorized by an empowered committee. The committee consists of Director (Labour Department) of the State, Secretary of State for labour, the Finance Commissioner, The Development Commissioner and the Planning Secretary. Then the funds are approved by the State Cabinet. And after the inspection from the Finance department, Government order is issued. The State, then releases allotment order and money is taken away by the treasury at the districts and it is delivered to the final beneficiaries.

From a survey conducted by State Advisor (2005) revealed that in Bikram and Palliganj Blocks of Patna district, funds are delivered to the beneficiaries on 6 (six) monthly basis as against the monthly norm. There are some flaws which were marked during the distribution process and these were:

- a. It is very hard/difficult for the old and sick people to travel long distances to obtain the amount from the Block office;
- b. If the beneficiaries fail to collect his previous instalment/ payment he was not given the missed allotment unless or until he got a letter of application signed by the Sub-Divisional Officer;

As per the State Advisor's Survey, it was also found that some beneficiaries had given some recommendations such as their money should be paid through the nearest Post Office so that they can easily collect their money and the village Mukhiya should

not be given the responsibility of distribution because the villagers do not believe them.

The Economic Survey 2011-12 reveals that the JD(U) government in Bihar has reduced the age limit for old age pensioners from 65 to 60 and also increased the pension amount from Rs. 200 to 500 per month for those who are 80 years and above (GOB, Economic Survey, 2011-12, p.246). Though it can be said that the working of the Old Age Pension Scheme was quite better than the other schemes but there has also shown corruption in the disbursal of pension and it has found that one-fourth of the eligible households received pensions. So the government is required to scale it up in terms of both coverage and fund allocation (Singh & Stern, 2013, p.64).

Targeted Public Distribution Scheme (TPDS)

The programme was launched on June 1, 1997. Its objective is to ensure the availability of food to the poor households. The programme is for BPL households for this reason, special cards are given to people living below the Poverty line and the 4 (four) essential commodities such as wheat, rice, sugar and Kerosene oil are distributed to them at subsidized prices through PDS shops which are run by licensed dealers. The 3 (three) schemes are carried out by the PDS. They are BPL, Antyodaya and Annapurna. The main purpose of BPL scheme is to provide BPL families with 35 kgs. of foodgrains i.e. 25 kgs of rice and 10 kgs of wheat per month. From the Government economic survey 2008-09 it is found that around 39,93,973 BPL households were being provided with 35 kgs of food grains per month (GOB, Economic Survey, 2008-09, p.180). From the state Advisor's Report, it has been observed that 73,94,486 families were identified as under the BPL category for the financial year 2004-05 (State Advisor's Report, 2005, p.18).

The functioning of PDS depends upon the amount of food grains lifted and its allocation as a percentage lifting of food grains, such as rice, wheat for the BPL was not equal in the State. During the year 2004-05, the lifting of wheat stands at 47.8%, whereas rice is 8.8%. The percentage of allocation remained static for the past 3 (three) years. Though the off take of wheat was better but there was no improvement

in the off take of rice. Since 2007-08 the PDS allocation in the State was totally controlled by the Central Government. From 2001-02 to 2004-05 there was no increase of lifting and allotment of rice and wheat for BPL. But from 2007-08 onwards the lifting percentage of rice and wheat for BPL has increased. The off take of wheat has been improved. But this does not mean it reaches the final beneficiary. From a field survey which was conducted in Lalganj Sahara village of Palliganj Block, it is found that the dealer had collected 21 quintal of BPL wheat from the SFC Godown but sold the entire stock in the market (State Advisor's Report, April 2005, p.19). So it is seen that there are some flaws in the BPL policies. The reason behind the poor off take of BPL rice is the differences in the market prices and BPL prices. And the second reason is the poor quality of rice. Though the price of medium quality of rice is very much closer to BPL price which was available in the market in spite of these the poor people cannot purchase it. From a Survey (2005) on TPDS (Targeted Public Distribution System) held in Palliganj Block in Patna District, it is found that the beneficiaries were not interested to buy rice because of poor quality. This is the only reason for poor lifting of rice from FCI Godown according to the SFC officials.

The second scheme named Antyodaya Anna Yojana was launched on December, 2000. It tried to make the Target Public Distribution Scheme more focused and targeted. The scheme came into effect from October 2, 2001. Its main aim is to provide BPL families with 35 kgs of food grains per month; 21 kgs of rice at the rate of Rs.2/- per kg and 14 kgs of wheat at the rate of Rs.3/-. Cards are used by those beneficiaries who receive grain from the PDS shop at a very subsidized price. Supreme Court had given orders on the uses of Antyodaya Cards during 2003. The Antyodaya Cards are being distributed among the listed groups:

- i) Widows and other single women with no regular support;
- ii) A number of helpless old persons (aged 60 or above) for their survival;
- iii) Primitive tribes etc.

During 2004-05, the offtake of food grains such as wheat and rice has improved. But some flaws were found in the policies. The PDS dealers are not giving the total quantity (35 kgs) to the beneficiaries but only 30 kgs. And most of the

beneficiaries are illiterate and less conscious about the price and the quantity of food grain entered on their card(State Advisors Report, April 2005, p.24). There are other problems faced by the dealers i.e. the transportation costs, which they receive is inadequate. In the Bikram Block the dealers complained that the Godown Manager cuts 2-3 kgs per lifting per dealer.

It is to be noted here that the lifting as a percentage of allocations for Antyodaya had increased to a higher level in 2005-06 but from 2006-07 to 2008-09 it declined for both rice and wheat (GOB, Economic Survey, 2009-10, p.194).The third scheme i.e. Annapurna which is included in Public Distribution System was launched in the State in April, 2001. Its main objectives is to provide homeless senior citizens who are above 65 years of age with free food grains (10 kgs of food grains i.e. 6 kgs wheat and 4 kgs rice) on a monthly basis. The senior citizens are not covered in State or Central Social Security Pension Scheme.

It was ordered by the Supreme Court dated November, 28, 2001 that the State/ Union Territories should identify the beneficiaries and distribute the grain latest by 1st January, 2002. The total requirement of wheat and rice for the State was 11437.28 Quintals and 76,247.52 Quintals respectively.

Under Annapurna, the grain is to be distributed among the homeless Senior Citizens through the PDS dealers under the supervision of the Block Development Officer (BDO).

The lifting of food grains depends on the population in every district in the state. The number of PDS shops per lakh of population varies from District to District. There are wide differences in both inter- District and intra District in lifting of food grains such as rice and wheat. There are some districts which have more than 60 PDS shops like Saran, East Champaran. And some Districts had more than 50 PDS Shops per lakh of population they are Bhojpur, Munger, Banka, Bhagalpur, Muzaffarpur, Gaya and Arwal. In Lakhsarai there are only 32 (thirty-two) shops per lakh of population. And it is found that in other 10 (ten) Districts there are less than 40 (forty) Shops per lakh of population. In Madhubani, the number of beneficiaries per thousand of population is highest and less in Lakhsarai, Sheikhpura (GOB, Economic Survey, 2008-09, p.182). There are 4 (four) low lifting Districts such as Saran, Purnia, Araria and

Banka where there are less than 10 percent lifting in both wheat and rice under the BPL scheme. And the lifting percentage is much more same under the Antyodaya and Annapurna Scheme. From the Economic Survey, it is noticed that under the BPL Scheme there are low levels of lifting for both BPL wheat and rice in different districts such as Madhubani where there is a large number of beneficiaries per thousand of population and similarly in Lakhsarai where there is a low number of beneficiaries per thousand of population.

It is true that the lifting of food grains as a percentage of allotment is an important tool to measure the functioning of the PDS. The off take of rice was found to be highest in Patna of 98.43 percent followed by Saharsa, East Champaran, Khagaria, Boxer, Siwan, Kaimur, Jehanabad, Bhojpur and Arwal. But it was less in Madhubani, Supaul, Banka and Araria. In the same way lifting of wheat is higher than 90 percent in Katihar, Jehanabad, East Champaran, Bhojpur, Jamui, Gopalganj, Arwal, Siwan, Saharsa and Patna and it was less than 50 percent in Banka, Purnia, Araria, Supaul, Madhubani etc. PDS is a very important source for the food security for the poor, disabled, senior citizens etc. So, Government should have taken important steps for more effective and uniform patterns not only for lifting also for the improvement in distribution and coverage (GOB, Economic Survey, 2009-10,p.194).

SwarnajayantiGramSwarojgarYojana (SGSY)

The scheme named ‘Swarnajoyanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana’ which was launched as a single self employment programme was affected from 1st April, 1999. It is a centrally sponsored scheme and the funds for the Swarnajoyanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana are shared on the basis of 75:25 ratio between the Central and State Governments. There were many programmes such as Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Development of Women and Children in Rural Area (DWCRA), Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment, Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans (SITRA), Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY) and Million Well Scheme (MWS) but the programmes were not sufficient to remove the Poverty level in all the states. As a result, these programmes were merged into a single scheme called ‘Swarnajoyanti Gram SwarojgarYojana’.Its

main aim is to bring the assisted poor families i.e. Swarojgaristo sustained level of income over a period of time, so that their income level will be increased in three years by providing them income generating assets through a mix Bank Credit and Government Subsidy (GOI, Ministry of Rural Development & GOB, Economic Survey, 2008-09,p.223). The important characteristic of Swarnajoyanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana is the Social mobilization of the poor in rural areas.

The Swarnajoyanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana scheme provides self employment among communities through self help groups, vis-à-vis the individual self employment schemes. It also provides for marketing of the goods produced by the SwarnajoyantiGramSwarojgar Yojana Swarojgaris. It mainly helps the vulnerable sections of the society among the rural poor.

During the year 2007-08, a number of (Self Help Groups) SHGs were formed i.e. 14,036 under the Swarnajoyanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana scheme which was much higher than the previous year (8,024). Under Swarnajoyanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana there were 17,809 SHGs established in 2009-10 upto October. During 2007-08 the number of women SHGs were 8,120. During 2008-09 upto March there were 20,407 number of SHGs formed. It has been also observed that during 2009-10 there were total 1,58,061 persons assisted through SHGs under SGSY (GOB, Economic Survey, 2010-11, p.243). Among the SHG members, most of the members of SHGs were women. During the year 2007-08, among the newly formed SHGs there were 8,120 women SHGs and in 2009-10, 10,213 were women SHGs (GOB, Economic Survey, 2009-10, p.183). As per the Economic Survey Fund utilization for this scheme was not uniform. In 2007, at the State level 52 percent of the funds meant for Swarnajoyanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana has been utilized, whereas in 2008 (upto the month of December), the utilization decreased, it was 47 percent and upto October, 2009, the funds utilization for this scheme was very less, it was just 26.6 percent.

Through the formation of SHGs and their training, economic assistance for the improvement of economic activities had increased but there was no significant results found in the individual Swarojgarison the same components of the scheme(GOB, Economic Survey, 2009-10, p.183). From a survey, it was found that there was an inter-district variation in the execution of Swarnajoyanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana both in

terms of financial utilization and physical achievements. The high utilization of funds was seen in Patna District (71.6%). There are a number of variations in the sphere of SHGs. In Muzaffarpur, there were highest numbers of SHGs (2149) (GOB, Economic Survey, 2008-09, p.174). According to the Economic Survey 2009-10 Darbhanga has witnessed a higher number of SHGs. The Swarojgari members were provided funds under Swarnajoyanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana. The numbers of Swarojgari members of the SHGs were 85,355 in 2007-08 and 71,733 in 2009-10 and the individual Swarojgaris were 18,205 in 2007-08 and 510 in 2009-10 (GOB, Economic Survey, 2009-10). The Swarojgari members of SHGs and individual Swarojgaris were given training under the programme. The women Swarojgari members of SHGs were also provided training and economic assistance under the programme. So it is seen that all the Swarojgari members of SHGs including Women, Scheduled Castes and also the individual Swarojgaris were given training and economic assistance under the programme through Self Help Groups. Through this programme it has been found that women have become self-employed and have empowered themselves. In spite of these it has been observed that the impact of the SGSY, an important self-employment programme is very limited (Singh & Stern, 2013, p.63).

Indira Awas Yojana (IAY)

Indira Awas Yojana is a Central Scheme. It was launched during 1985-86 as a sub-scheme of RLEGP, Indira Awas Yojana. For the implementation of Indira Awas Yojana 6% of the total funds were allocated during 1989. The main aim of this programme is to provide financial assistance for the upgradation of dwelling units of members of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes, freed bonded labourers, minorities in the below poverty line category and other below poverty line non-Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes rural households. The programme is funded on the cost sharing basis between the Government of India and the State Government in the ratio of 75:25. Though, in the case of North Eastern States and Sikkim, funding will be shared between the centre and these States in the ratio 90:10. About 60% of the total Indira Awas Yojana funds and physical targets will be utilized for the construction of dwelling units of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes BPL households and the 40% of the funds will be

utilized for non-Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes BPL rural households. The funds and physical targets are also utilized for the BPL minorities in each State and 3% of the funds are utilized for the physically and mentally retarded persons within the given category. During 2009-10 i.e. up to October, 2009, 35 percent of the houses has been completed by the State Government and 60.43 percent fund was utilized. And in 2009-10 54 percent of the houses for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes which was below the 60 percent and 14.3 percent of the houses were completed for the minorities which was very much close to the reservation quota of 15 percent. There were wide variations in different districts in the implementation of Indira Awas Yojana. If we compare the data of Indira Awas Yojana physical and financial overview 2007-08 with the data of Indira Awas Yojana physical and financial overview 2009-10 (upto October, 2009), we find there is a reverse picture of the Indira Awas Yojana programme, such as during 2007-08, there were some districts such as Muzaffarpur, Saharsa, Lakhsarai and Jamui, the programme had achieved its physical targets, not only that it also exceeded its targets and average 85 to 93 percent fund utilized for that purpose. But during 2009-10 in these Districts i.e. Muzaffarpur, Saharsa, Lakhsarai and Jamui, the programme could not achieve its physical targets but the fund utilization for fulfilling this programme was better. There are some districts – Araria, Kaimur and Madhubani in which the fund utilization was less than 40 percent but the physical achievements range from 15.6% to 33.5%(GOB, Economic Survey, 2009-10, p.192). So, from various reports it is found that some Districts had achieved its physical targets some had not, in the same way the fund utilization in some Districts were more but there was no improvement in the implementation of the programme. Not only that, in some districts the fund was not properly utilized for the completion of the houses. So it is seen that there is a year-wise inconsistency in the implementation of the programme.

National Rural EmploymentGuarrantee Scheme (NREGS): It is a guaranteed employment generated Scheme. It provides employment opportunities to the downtrodden people of the State. Under the programme any applicant has the right to 100 days of employment. During 2009-10 job cards were provided to 118.5 lakh house-holds in relation to 102.9 lakh house-holds in 2008-09 under this scheme. Till

2010-11 near about 130.44 lakh house-holds were issued job cards. Among them 46.8 lakh (36 percent) were given employment. But 100 days of employment was provided to only 5.6 percent of house-holds during 2010-11 which was slightly better in 2009-10 it was 7 percent house-holds (GOB, Economic Survey, 2011-12, p.226). The fund utilization of this scheme during 2009-10 was 76 percent which increased to 83% percent during 2010-11. But there are inter district disparities in the implementation of this programme. During 2010-11 the number of percentages of employment (1597 lakh) generated across the state was also increased compared to 1137 lakh in 2009-10. During 2009-10, Patna produced the highest level of 39.93 lakh person days of employment with a fund utilization of 94% percent (Government of Bihar, Economic Survey, 2009-10, p.189) although during 2010-11 the highest number of job cards was issued in Samastipur (6.84 percent). There are some districts in Bihar, such as Sheohar (82.0), West Champaran (72.06%) had demanded employment and it was higher than the other districts such as Gopalganj, Saran, Siwan and Madhubani (less than 20 percent). And in regard to the 100 days of employment to the house-holds Begunsarai has proved itself in a higher position than other districts during 2010-11. Nearly 19% percent of house-holds are being provided with 100 days of employment. The number of women participation under this scheme was highest in Sheohar (40.4% percent) whereas women participation rate was lower in Saran (9.5% percent) and Gopalganj (4% percent). The highest number of person days of employment was created in Muzaffarpur district (139.24 lakh) and Sheikhpura (5.76 lakh) had shown the lowest level of person days of employment in 2010-11. There were several districts such as Sitamarhi, Saharan, Nawada which succeeded in utilizing more than 90 percent of the funds in 2010-11 while Samastipur had proved itself as a worst performing district in terms of fund utilization of the scheme. Under this scheme a large number of projects has been completed which are related to rural connectivity and water conservation works. But there are some flaws in the policies. A survey conducted by the Institute of Human Development (IHD) it has been found that the NREGA has failed to fulfil the aspirations of the poor people. It is seen that the percentage of households covered under the programme are very less and number of days worked are also extremely low- only 14 days per month for males and a corresponding 11 days for females. Not only that work was not provided in a regular basis and the IHD survey also reveals that

there were significant leakages in the system. The leakages are there even though the state government has taken initiatives to strengthen the NREGA programme through the e-Shakti project by providing biometric issuance card so that government can take the record of attendance of beneficiaries, can stall false meeting preparation and guarantee full payment to labourers (Singh & Stern, 2013, p.337).Very little asset was created under the NREGA programme. There was heavy outmigration which largely affected the demand for work under NREGA (Singh & Stern, 2013, p.63).

What we have noticed is that among the 29 states in India Bihar is one of the backward states in our country from various aspects. From the above discussion it can be said that in the state as a whole there is a wide inter- district and region-wise disparities in terms of poverty. The state government has taken a number of initiatives for reducing poverty in the state but all the programmes for the elimination of poverty had not been successfully implemented. As a result the performance of the state in the poverty front had been average to poor.