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## **Empowering Women through Sports: The Bihar Government's Institutional and Financial Interventions**

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**DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20621183>**

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### **ARTICLE DETAILS**

**Research Paper**

**Accepted:** 20-05-2026

**Published:** 10-06-2026

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**Keywords:**

*Women Empowerment, Sports Development, Bihar State Sports Authority, ASMITA League, Scholarships, Gender Inclusion*

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### **ABSTRACT**

In recent years, Bihar has witnessed a noticeable shift in its approach to sports development, particularly in relation to women's participation. Traditionally, the state faced numerous challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, limited institutional support, and social attitudes that discouraged girls from pursuing sports as a serious activity. However, a series of policy reforms and targeted interventions have begun to alter this situation. The establishment of the Bihar State Sports Authority (BSSA) in 2023 and the creation of a dedicated Department of Sports in 2024 reflect a growing commitment to strengthening the state's sporting ecosystem. Alongside these institutional reforms, Bihar has introduced several initiatives aimed at increasing opportunities for women athletes. Programmes such as the ASMITA League, the Bihar Women's Kabaddi League, and female athlete wellness schemes have expanded participation at the grassroots level while addressing issues related to health, safety, and access. Financial support has also emerged as a key component of the state's strategy. Increased budgetary allocations, scholarship schemes, and employment-linked incentives have helped reduce economic barriers that often prevent talented girls from continuing their sporting careers. This paper examines the institutional and financial measures undertaken by the Government of Bihar and evaluates their contribution to the promotion of women's sports. It also

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discusses the outcomes of these interventions, including improved participation, competitive achievements, and broader social impacts. While significant progress has been made, the study argues that long-term success will depend upon sustained policy commitment, improved coaching systems, and greater inclusion of rural communities. Bihar's experience illustrates how sports can serve as an effective instrument for women's empowerment and social development when supported by appropriate institutional frameworks and public investment.

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### **Introduction-**

In recent years there has been a growing focus on the link between sport and social development. Sports are no longer just about physical fitness and competition, but are also recognized as a way to develop confidence, leadership, social mobility and community engagement. Participating in sports can defy gender norms and foster personal and career development for women in particular. While there are these advantages, there is still a lack of equality when it comes to access to sports in India, particularly in states where girls and women have less opportunity due to social and economic factors.

It is significant to note that Bihar is a case in point. The state had not been able to develop a robust sporting culture over the years. The expansion of sports was constrained by poor infrastructure, insufficient funding and weak institutional mechanism across the disciplines. Women were impacted more by these challenges than men. A number of girls encountered barriers which included training facilities, safety issues, financial constraints, and a lack of family and community support. As a result, the proportion of females in competitive sports remained relatively low in comparison to a handful of other States.

Things started to change slowly in the early part of the last decade. Considering the capacity of Sports to develop the youth and promote social inclusion, the Government of Bihar took a series of initiatives to enhance the Sports Sector. New structures were created, budgets were increased for sports and more efforts were made to provide opportunities for female athletes. These changes indicated a new emphasis on sports promotion rather than the haphazard approach. These changes indicated a new emphasis on sports promotion rather than the haphazard approach.

The most outstanding steps to be taken were establishment of Bihar State Sports Authority (BSSA) and formation of a department of sports. Their purpose and roles were to coordinate, increase accountability



and offer a targeted approach to athlete development. Meanwhile, several women-oriented schemes were launched to promote their engagement at both the community and competition levels. Scholarship programs, health initiatives and dedicated competitions have also helped to foster a more supportive atmosphere for female athletes.

In this background the present study explores institutional and financial measures taken by the Government of Bihar for women to participate in sports. It aims to understand the results of the growing number of these schemes and to highlight some of the issues that remain to be addressed in the sporting arena in the state. The study can be used to gain insights into the potential for using public policies to promote gender inclusion and empowerment through sport, as well as the experiences of the recent history of Bihar.

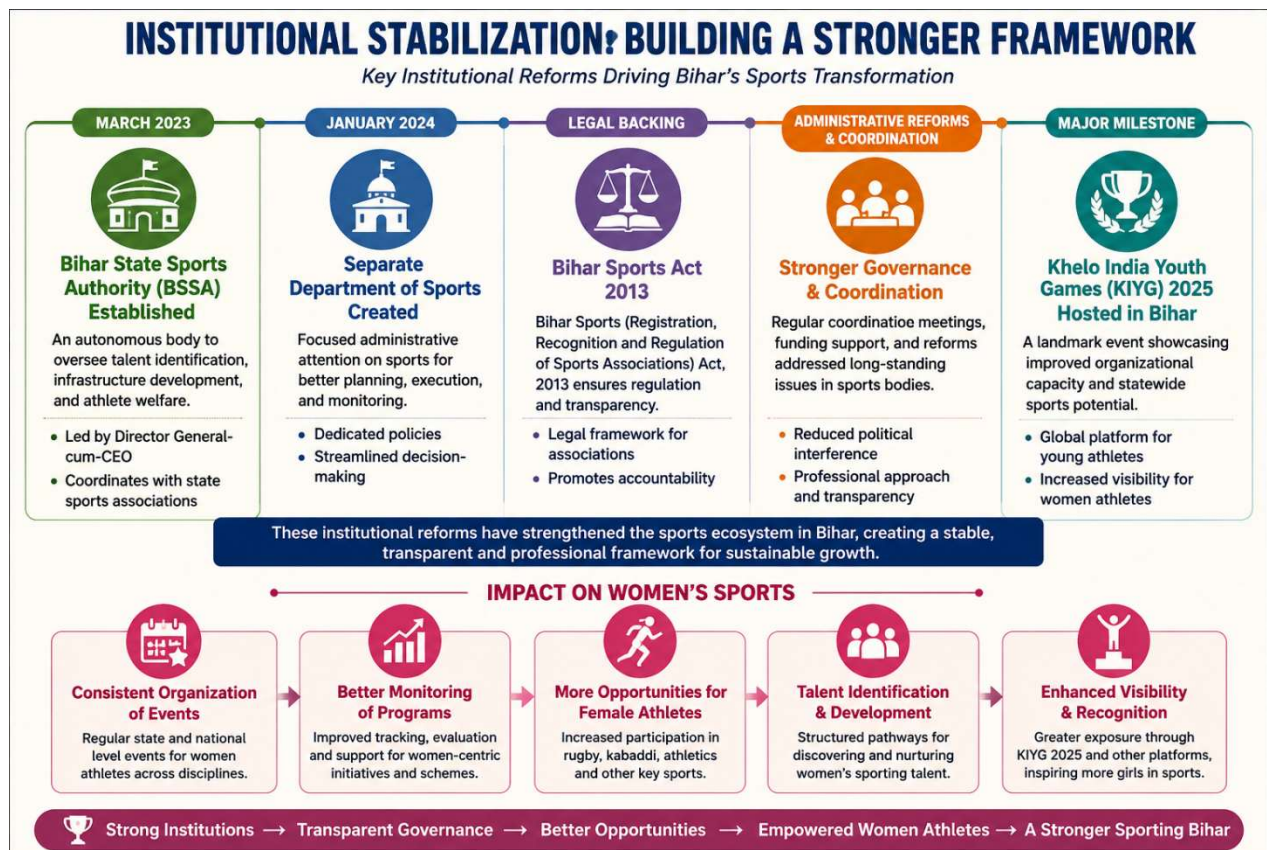
### Review of Literature

- **NITI Aayog. (2024). *Women in Sports in India: Progress, Policies and Prospects*. New Delhi: Government of India.** This report examines the growing participation of women in sports across India and highlights the role of government initiatives in improving access, training, and financial support. The study emphasizes the importance of inclusive policies, infrastructure development, and social awareness in encouraging greater involvement of women and girls in competitive sports.
- **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. (2023). *Khelo India Annual Report 2022–23*. New Delhi: Government of India.** The annual report provides detailed information on the implementation of Khelo India programs across various states. It highlights how targeted initiatives for female athletes have increased participation at grassroots and elite levels. The report also discusses scholarships, competitions, and infrastructure support designed to promote gender equity in sports.
- **Sharma, R., & Singh, P. (2022). *Women Empowerment through Sports Participation in India*. *International Journal of Physical Education, Sports and Health*.** The authors explore the relationship between sports participation and women's empowerment in India. The study finds that involvement in sports enhances confidence, leadership skills, and social mobility among women. It further argues that institutional support and family encouragement are critical factors influencing sustained participation in sporting activities.
- **Kumari, S. (2021). *Sports Development and Gender Inclusion: Challenges and Opportunities in Bihar*. *Indian Journal of Sports Studies*.** This study focuses on the development of sports infrastructure and opportunities for women in Bihar. The author identifies financial assistance, scholarship schemes, and institutional support as major contributors to increasing female

participation. However, the study also highlights persistent social barriers and regional disparities that require policy attention.

- **UNESCO. (2023). *Global Report on Gender Equality and Sport*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.** The report examines global trends in women's participation in sports and evaluates strategies adopted by different countries to promote gender equality. It emphasizes the significance of safe sporting environments, equal access to resources, leadership opportunities, and long-term policy commitment for achieving sustainable progress in women's sports.

### Institutional Stabilization: Building a Stronger Framework



The figure depicts the major institutional reforms accomplished by the Government of Bihar to boost sports sector. Right from the establishment of Bihar State Sports Authority (BSSA) in 2023, creation of a separate Department of Sports in 2024 and implementation of Bihar Sports Act, 2013 has brought a better organized and transparent sports administration system in Bihar. The reforms have led to increased coordination, lesser administrative hurdles and better overall sports management in the state.

The benefits of these measures are more apparent in women's sports. Better governance has led to the orderly running of competitions, improved oversight of sports programmes and improved talent



identification. Bihar's hosting of Khelo India Youth Games 2025 was yet another testament to Bihar's organizational prowess and the visibility of women athletes. In summary, these institutional changes have led to more opportunities for women to participate, develop their skills and gain recognition, which is helping to build a larger and more inclusive sports ecosystem in Bihar.

### Financial Support: Budgets, Scholarships, and Inclusion

**Table 1: Financial Support for Women Athletes in Bihar**

Component	Details	Impact on Women Athletes
<b>Sports Budget Allocation</b>	Increased from approximately ₹30 crore to ₹568 crore in 2025–26, with subsequent allocations reported at around ₹680 crore.	Demonstrates strong government commitment toward sports development, including women's sports.
<b>Infrastructure Expenditure</b>	Approximately ₹373 crore allocated for sports infrastructure development.	Creation of safe, accessible, and women-friendly sports facilities across the state.
<b>Sports Activities Expenditure</b>	Approximately ₹195 crore allocated for sports activities, training, competitions, and athlete support.	Enhances participation opportunities and competitive exposure for female athletes.
<b>Bihar Sports Scholarship Policy (2026)</b>	Total of 514 athletes selected under various scholarship categories.	Provides financial assistance to talented women athletes for sustained training and development.
<b>Utkarsh Category</b>	Scholarship of up to ₹20 lakh per year for international-level performers.	Supports elite women athletes competing at national and international levels.
<b>Saksham Category</b>	Scholarship of up to ₹5 lakh per year.	Assists emerging women athletes in advancing their sporting careers.
<b>Prerna Category</b>	Scholarship of up to ₹3 lakh per year.	Encourages young and promising female athletes to continue



Component	Details	Impact on Women Athletes
		participation in sports.
<b>Coverage of Scholarship Benefits</b>	Includes training expenses, sports equipment, nutrition, travel, accommodation, and recovery support.	Reduces financial burdens on women athletes and their families.
<b>“Medal Lao, Naukri Pao” Policy</b>	Government jobs offered to medal-winning athletes.	Provides career security and motivates greater participation among girls and women.
<b>Support for Rural and Economically Weaker Families</b>	Direct financial transfers and incentives linked to sports achievements.	Helps overcome economic barriers that often lead to dropout among talented girls.
<b>Overall Outcome</b>	Integration of sports development with financial and career support mechanisms.	Makes sports a viable and sustainable career option for women in Bihar.

**Source:** Compiled from Department of Sports, Government of Bihar (2025–26) and Bihar State Sports Authority (BSSA) Scholarship Policy (2026).

### Summary of Financial Support Mechanisms

Scheme/Initiative	Financial Assistance	Primary Objective
<b>Utkarsh Scholarship</b>	Up to ₹20 lakh/year	Support international-level athletes
<b>Saksham Scholarship</b>	Up to ₹5 lakh/year	Support developing athletes
<b>Prerna Scholarship</b>	Up to ₹3 lakh/year	Encourage emerging talent
<b>Medal Lao, Naukri Pao</b>	Government employment	Ensure livelihood security
<b>Sports Infrastructure Investment</b>	₹373 crore	Improve training facilities
<b>Sports Activities Funding</b>	₹195 crore	Enhance participation and competition opportunities



**Source:** Compiled from Department of Sports, Government of Bihar (2025–26) and Bihar State Sports Authority (BSSA) Scholarship Policy (2026).

The support of the financial commitment has been a game-changer. The sport budget has gone up significantly, from about ₹30 crore a couple of years ago to ₹568 crore in 2025-26 and further additions were made to reach ₹680 crore in the next budgets. A significant proportion of this is spent on infrastructure (approx. ₹373 crore) and sports activities (₹195 crore), with a definite focus on sports for women.

The Bihar Sports Scholarship Policy is one of the most significant policies. 514 athletes were chosen in 2026 in 3 categories:

- **Utkarsh: Up to ₹20 lakh per year (for the top performers in the international level)**
- **Saksham up to ₹5 lakh per year**
- **Prerna: upto ₹3 lakh/ year**

One significant area is for women athletes who can help to offset training, equipment, nutrition, travel and recovery expenses. The “Medal Lao, Naukri Pao” policy also encourages the performance, as the government jobs are given to medal winners.

The direct financial transfers come at a critical point — when economic considerations stop talented girls from continuing to study. The Government's decisions to tie up sports with livelihood security are making it more possible for the families in rural Bihar to participate in sports.

### **The project generates performance outcomes and has a broader impact**

The Government of Bihar is making valuable contributions towards the promotion of women's sports and the outcomes are good. There have been remarkable achievements by women athletes in recent events, such as the Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG) 2025, where Bihar's women's rugby team secured a gold medal. Several of these have come from grassroot organizations like the ASMITA League, which provides a good example of the effectiveness of structured development initiatives.

Women have also done well in Kabaddi, Archery and Athletics in which apart from improvement in training facilities, coaching and competition exposure, women sportspersons are playing a prominent role. The accomplishments reflect increased sports talent in the state and a more sustainable talent pool.



This has implications for more than just sport performance. Women's involvement in sports is helping to break gender stereotypes, to motivate younger girls to find a way to sports and to establish greater social acceptance of women athletes. Sport is also a benefit to physical wellbeing, self-confidence, leadership qualities and personal growth.

This transformation is further aided through awareness and encouragement of girls' participation in sports created through community-based initiatives like JEEViKA. This has resulted in sports initiatives in Bihar achieving better sports outcomes and also promoting women empowerment, social inclusion and overall community development.

### Challenges

- **Governance and Administrative Efficiency-** There are challenges in the administration of certain sports associations in terms of transparency, coordination and effective application of policy. Improving governance arrangements is needed to ensure successful delivery and maximisation of sports programmes and resources to those intended.
- **Lack of quality coaching and sports science support** – too many districts, especially in rural areas, have coaches that are not well-trained, sports scientists, physiotherapists, and nutrition experts that are not available. It restricts women athletes from receiving a professional guidance and scientific training support.
- **Social and Cultural Barriers-** Traditional attitudes in some communities still discourage girls to participate in sports. The need to put in the time at home, the fear of losing mobility, and the stigma of gender are still playing a role in keeping women in sports and helping them reach their potential.
- **Disparities in Infrastructure and Resources-** Sports infrastructure has grown significantly but facilities and opportunities are still concentrated in certain areas. One of the key issues is equitable access to services to all districts particularly in the remote and underserved districts.
- **Monitoring, Data Transparency and Resource Utilization-** there is need for improvement in effective monitoring of schemes, utilization of funds allocated to the scheme on time and availability of gender-disaggregated data. More effective assessment tools would contribute to better measurement of outcomes and subsequent decisions on policies.

### Major Initiatives and Outcomes

**Table 2: Sports Infrastructure in Bihar**



Indicator	Value
Rajgir Sports Complex Investment	₹740 Crore
Sports Budget (2025–26)	₹568 Crore
Registered Sports Clubs	991
Sports Associations	78
Proposed Block-Level Stadiums	252

Source: Department of Sports, Government of Bihar (2025–26); Bihar State Sports Authority (BSSA), 2025.

**Table 3: Gender Composition of Athletes in Bihar**

**Gender Composition of Athletes in Bihar**

Distribution of female and male athletes among registered athletes in Bihar.



● Female Athletes    ● Male Athletes

Category	Number
Total Athletes	418
Female Athletes	180
Male Athletes	238



Category	Number
Female Share (%)	43.1

Source: Department of Sports, Government of Bihar (2025–26); Bihar State Sports Authority (BSSA), 2025.

Tables 2 and 3 together show the journey that Bihar has made towards establishing a robust and inclusive sports ecosystem. The state has invested huge amounts in sports infrastructure, including the Rajgir Sports Complex, which costs ₹740 crore, and a sports budget of ₹568 crore for 2025–26, with 991 registered sports clubs and 78 sports associations, and plans for 252 block-level stadiums. These developments have increased the opportunities available for training and competing statewide. Consequently, women in sports have come into great numbers, with 180 of the 418 registered athletes being female, or 43.1%. This increased involvement is a positive trend and results of the support and targeted effort that has been placed in the development of infrastructure, institutions and promoting gender inclusion in sport.

## Conclusion

The Bihar experience shows how policy that targets sports can change the sport environment of a state in a relatively short period. The state has made significant strides to broaden opportunities for women athletes through institutional changes, greater financial resources and programmes tailored specifically for women. The Bihar State Sports Authority, creation of a dedicated Department of Sports and creation of scholarship and welfare schemes have helped in structuring and supporting the sports development.

They are seeing positive results as a result of these efforts. Increased participation, as well as better results at the national level in competition and the recognition by the public of women athletes, is signs that the state is on the right track. Meanwhile, sports are helping to achieve other social goals, such as building confidence and leadership, health and gender inclusion with women and girls.

However, the trip isn't over yet. Issues of governance, coaching quality, infrastructure inequities and social perceptions remain a challenge to women's sport development. These challenges will have to be tackled by policy makers and stakeholders to achieve sustainable progress, along with long-term support to the sector.



Bihar's recent efforts demonstrate the transformative power of sports and its potential as a platform for women's empowerment and social change. The state can not only enhance its sporting performance, but build opportunities for sport for future generations if it continues to work harder and more widely.

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