

Children not included in 'Inclusive' Budget: Where is the 'Aam Bachcha' in the budget, Mr FM?

Budget for Children in the Union Budget 2010-2011



By¹

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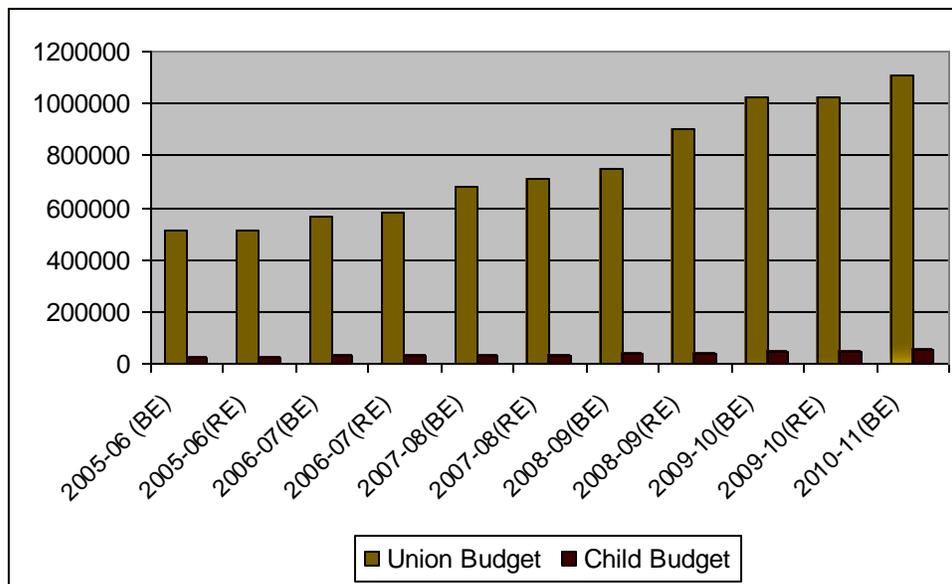
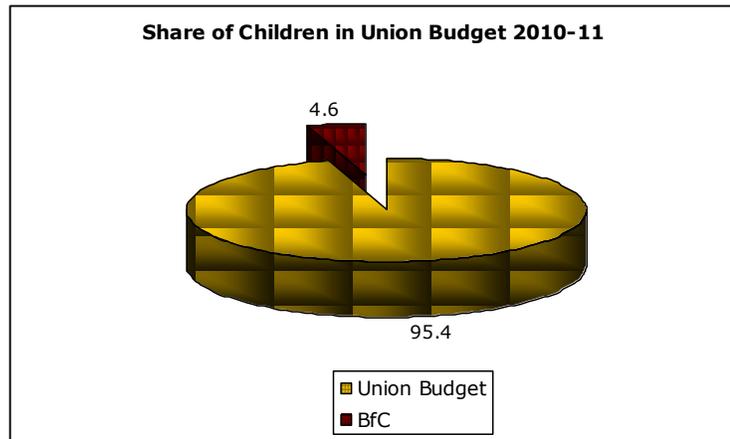
¹Analysis and data processing by Paromita Shastri, Enakshi Ganguly, Madhumita Purakayastha, Preeti Singh, Indarilin Dkhar and Parul Thukral.

“We have to strengthen food security, improve education opportunities and provide health facilities at the level of households, both in rural and urban areas. These are issues that require significant resources, and we have to find those resources.”

Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Budget Speech 2010-2011

Finance Minister’s Pranab Mukherjee’s “inclusive” Budget 2010-11 does not include children, who are over 42 per cent of the population. Out of every rupee spent in the budget, he has allotted only 4.63 paise to children.

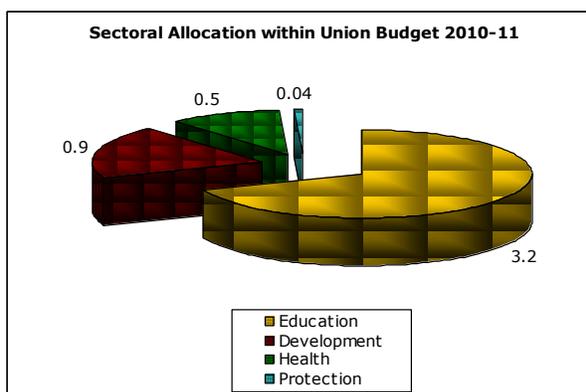
The children’s share in the next fiscal year (Rs. 51453.84 crores) is only slightly higher than 4.21 per cent in 2009-10, even as the total budget size has risen 8.61 per cent to a record Rs 11 lakh crore. This is still lower than the share children had received in 2008-09 or even the years previous to this. (see Table 1). Even the small increase in the share of the budget for children will reduce once the actual estimates (RE) come in, as has been the trend in the past five years.



| Sectoral allocation within BfC as Percentage of Union Budget | | |
|---|-------------|---------|
| Sectors within BfC | In per cent | |
| | 2009-10 | 2010-11 |
| Share of Development Sector, BfC in Union Budget | 0.69 | 0.90 |
| Share of Health Sector, BfC in Union Budget | 0.46 | 0.49 |
| Share of Protection Sector, BfC in Union Budget | 0.02 | 0.04 |
| Share of Education Sector, BfC in Union Budget | 3.03 | 3.20 |
| Share of Children in Union Budget | 4.21 | 4.63 |
| Source: Expenditure Budget Volume II, 2008-09 & 2009-10 | | |

As is the trend every year, education gets the largest share of the budget, while protection the lowest.

The gap between the funds allocated and the funds actually released on the ground is never sharper in any other area than in the case of child-focused schemes in education, health, protection and development (see box below).



Even with the huge allocation to elementary education, for instance, children's share of education remains only 3.2 per cent.

The huge gap between approved budget and funds released

Centrally sponsored scheme to build 6000 high-quality model schools at block level as benchmarks of excellence: First phase was launched in November 2008. 419 schools in 12 states were approved during 2009 but only 167 schools in six states have been sanctioned.

Centrally sponsored scheme of hostels for SC boys and girls, renamed Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatravas Yojna from January 1, 2008: Central assistance for girls hostels was raised from 50 per cent to 100 per cent. The target during 2009-10 was to construct 44 hostels for girls and 30 hostels for boys. Only Rs 5.98 crore was released under the scheme against an allocation of Rs 90 crore up to December 2009.

Centrally sponsored scheme to set up Girls Hostels in Educationally Backward Blocks with 100 seats in about 3,500 educationally backward blocks: In October 2008, 647 hostels in 14 States were approved. So far only 163 hostels in seven states have been sanctioned.

Although the government has promised to soon bring in the Food Security Bill, to ensure that the poorest families are provided with 25 kg of wheat or rice every month at Rs 3 per kg, the budget contains several measures that will actually fan inflation. Prices of essential items were acutely high all through 2009, out of reach of average families.

Development Sector in BfC

There are 164 million children in the 0-6 age group in the country. According to the third National Family Health Survey conducted over 2005-06, 37 million children below the age of 3 are underweight, while almost 50 per cent of under-fives are moderately or severely malnourished. Will the less than one paisa share that the allocation for development, of which Integrated Child Development Services forms the major share suffice to address the needs of all these children?

The Integrated Child Development Services, one of the world's largest programmes for early childhood development, has received Rs 7,932.71 crore in the budget, an 18 per cent jump over last year. So far, according to MWCD, about 69 million children aged 6-72 months are covered by the Supplementary Nutrition Programme under ICDS and only 34 million children are covered by any kind of pre-school initiatives, including ICDS. This must be seen against the total number of children under six years, which is 164 million. According to the MWCD website, which lays down a target of 1.4 million Anganwadi centres (one in every habitation); there is still a shortfall of 95731 centres as of March 2009. Hopefully the increased budget will go some way in bridging the shortfall in all these areas.

The much feted Rajeev Gandhi National Creche Scheme for Working mothers sees a fall 31 percent in allocation from 91.52 crores last year to 63.4 crores this year. This scheme caters to only 7.9 lakh children as on 31 March 2009 according to Ministry of Women and Child. With this fall in allocation how many children of working mothers will benefit? This will definitely affect day care services for children.

Health

The 15 per cent increase in the health sector allocation for children is due to the allocation of 351 crores for the new Conditional Maternity Benefit Scheme. This is to tackle the problem of low birth weight. There is also a 14 per cent increase in the Reproductive and Child Health Programme. 33 per cent of the health sector allocations remain externally funded (in RCH and Pulse Polio Immunisation programme).

Despite investments in Polio eradication, according to Union health minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, a total of 107 blocks in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are still effected by the polio virus despite 15 years of campaign in which all other states and Union Territories have been freed of the disease.

“The deficit in primary infrastructure for health centres, coupled with the non-availability of health centres in rural areas, poses a serious challenge to the future course of the Mission and the progress made under it. “
CAG Report

Without adequate health infrastructure access to health will remain a challenge. According to the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) Report on the basis of a performance audit has also observed that there was a shortfall of **43,987 Sub Centres (27 per cent) in 22 States/UTs**, 8613 PHCs (31 *per cent*) in 21 States/UTs and 4200 CHCs (55 *per cent*) in 23 States/UTs, which are required to be created during the NRHM period (2005-12). The shortfall of health centres was noteworthy in the eight EAG States, which had 74 *per cent* of the total shortfall in Sub Centres, 60 *per cent* of PHCs and 70 *per cent* of CHCs countrywide.

Education

There is a 15 per cent raise in the out lay for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan to 15000 crores, and an 18 per cent increase in the outlay for in the Mid –day Meal Scheme. However, most of this increase is funded by the education cess (Rs. 14433 crores) collected from the *aam aadmi* for the Prarambhik Shiksha Kosh. In effect, the citizen is paying for the education of the children of India and yet getting inadequate quality and poor access. With 52 percent children in India either not attending school or dropping out before class eight, we are still long way from universalisation that the right to education law promises. The World Bank Survey had found that 25 per cent of government primary school teachers are absent from work and only 50 percent were actually engaged in teaching while at work. With 14 per cent of the teachers being para-teachers according to District Information System for Education (DISE) and only 10 percent schools still single teacher- quality is a far cry.

“I propose to increase the plan allocation for school education from Rs.26,800 crore in 2009-10 to Rs.31,036 crore in 2010-11. In addition, States will have access to Rs.3,675 crore for elementary education under the Thirteenth Finance Commission grants for 2010-11.”

Shri Pranab Mukherjee.
Budget Speech 2010-2011

Protection

Protection has in every budget over the years has received the least attention. This year too it receives 0.04 per cent of the budget. All initiatives till the Eleventh Five Year plan had been towards had been ameliorative in nature- that is they addressed children after they fell through the protective net.

With the designing of the Integrated Child Protection Scheme the effort was to create a protective environment for children would, thereby addressing their needs so that they do not become vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

It is indeed heartening to see a 300 percent increase in the allocation for the Integrated Child Protection Scheme this year 54 crores to 270 crores) However this is still not enough to even implement the Juvenile Justice Law in the country. The specific programme for Juvenile Justice entitled Prevention and Control of Juvenile Social Maladjustment no longer exists. Clearly this increase although long overdue will not cover the deficits in outcome that have to be achieved.

HAQ has calculated that one day's expenditure on just the members alone, if all CWCs and JJBs are to be in place, amounts to Rs. 2,13,800 per day (based on the norm of Rs.500 per member per sitting, with a minimum number of three sittings a week), leave aside other administration costs, as well as the salaries of all the Principal Magistrates.

Protection should ideally be taken up on a war footing by policymakers. India has the highest number of working children in the world, 12.66 million as per the 2001 census and anywhere between 14 million and 50 million unofficially. More alarmingly, crimes against children went up by 7.6 per cent in just one year to 2007, according to Crime in India 2007, published by the National Crime Records Bureau.

India also has the highest number of sexually abused children in the world, with one in every 10 children sexually abused at any point in time, and a child below 16 years raped every 155th minute. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) says that on an average, 44000 children are reported missing every year and one fourth remain untraced.

Children are also getting more vulnerable in an increasingly politicised environment. Children in 19 out of 28 states are growing up in internal armed conflicts. This has an effect in juvenile crimes, which are rising three times faster than all crimes. Since 2001, juvenile crimes have gone up by 38.5 per cent, as compared to a 12.5 per cent rise in all crimes.

Conclusion

To echo the finance minister, "The Union Budget cannot be a mere statement of Government accounts. It has to reflect the Government's vision and signal the policies to come in future." More importantly, the "government concentrates on supporting and delivering services to the disadvantaged sections of the society". Yet, this budget does not reflect this sentiment in the case of children. How else do we explain the fact that the share of children does not even match that of three years ago?

Budget for Children must be looked within the framework of the overall economic scenario. The budget measures will lead to an all-round price rise, adding to the inflation ruling at over 7 per cent now. Worse, it has no concrete measure to counter the seriously high food inflation, at 20 per cent, with severe implications for the nutrition of small children and new and would-be mothers. How then will we tackle the growing malnutrition and hunger that children face?

More importantly, out of every rupee spent in the budget, 29 paise is coming from borrowing even as 19 paise is being spent on interest payment. Thus, even as growth has shrunk, the fiscal deficit, or the total new borrowing of the government has dipped only a little, from 6.8 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product in 2009-10 to 5.5 per cent in 2010-11. The high debt, described by economists as "a generational burden", remains on India's children who will keep paying the cumulative interest burden and bear the price pressure.