



Share of Children in Budget 2022-23

For Prelims: Poshan 2.0, PM eVIDYA, 'One class, one TV channel' programme, Integrated Child Development Schemes, Findings of NFHS 5 survey.

For Mains: State of Children in India and need to address the issues related to them, Steps taken by governments in this direction.

Why in News?

According to an analysis by a NGO, Children in the country **received the lowest share of allocation in the Budget in 11 years.**

- Budgeting for children by the Union Government had **started as early as 2008** with the publication of the first-ever **Child Budget Statement**. Subsequently, several states have also initiated the practice.

What is in the Budget for the Children?

▪ About:

- The total allocation for children in Union Budget 2023 is Rs. 92,736.5 crore, against an allocation of Rs. 85,712.56 crore in the last Budget.
 - Though this is an increase of 8.19% in absolute terms, it's not proportionate to the increase in the total expenditure in the Union Budget.
 - The share of the Budget for children is a **meagre 2.35% of the Union Budget** for the next fiscal (2022-23), which is a reduction of 0.11%, which is the lowest share children have received in the last 11 years.

▪ Sector-wise Analysis:

◦ For Child health:

- The **allocation** for child health **has decreased by 6.08%**.
- One of the most important child health schemes, the **NRHM-RCH Flexi Pool**, has observed a reduced allocation of 8.22%.
 - This flexipool addresses the needs of health systems strengthening and Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A) of the States.

◦ For Child Development Programme:

- They have seen a **drop of 10.97% in allocation** for the next fiscal at R.17,826.03 crore. These include supplementary nutrition and anganwadi (day care) services.
 - Schemes for children such as **Poshan 2.0**, which provide integrated benefits to women and children, **did not get any additional funds this year**.
 - In 2022-23, an estimated budget of Rs 10,234 crore has been sanctioned to the **Pradhan Matri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN) programme**. Last year, the revised estimate was Rs 10,234 crore.
 - This scheme was **earlier known as the 'National Program of**

Midday Meal in Schools' and provided hot cooked meals to school children between the ages of 6 and 14 years.

- **For Child Education:**
 - The share of child education has witnessed **only a marginal increase of 0.3% points from 1.74%** in the current fiscal to 1.73% for the next fiscal.
 - A '**One class, one TV channel'** programme announced in the budget is a difficult mode of learning for children.
 - The '**One class, one TV channel'** programme of [PM eVIDYA](#) will be expanded from 12 to 200 TV channels.
- **For Protection and Welfare of Children:**
 - Schemes for the protection and welfare of children clubbed under the **Mission Vatsalaya** of the Ministry of Women and Children received Rs. 1,472.17 crore.
 - This is 65% more than this fiscal, but below the allocation of Rs. 15,000 crore in 2019-2020, before the scheme was restructured.

What are the issues with the Budgeting for Children?

- **Mere Annual Accounting Exercise:**
 - Budgeting for children by the Union Government has **remained limited to being a mere annual accounting exercise** culminating in the publication of the **Child Budget Statement (CBS)** by simply collating relevant budget heads across departments.
 - This alone does little to address the core objective of remaining responsive to the special needs of children.
- **Lack of Responsibility from State Governments:**
 - State Governments, being **mainly responsible for implementing many of the critical schemes for children**, play an important role in taking this exercise forward.
 - But even for them, it has **mostly been perceived as an accounting responsibility** rather than as a tool to plan and execute interventions for children more effectively.
- **Lack of Standardisation:**
 - Moreover, there is a **lack of standardisation of norms** among government entities for reporting in their respective **Child Budget Statement (CBS)**.

What about the State of Children in India?

- **NHFS-5 Findings:** The recent [NFHS 5 survey](#) has revealed a mixed picture on child health and nutrition.
 - On one hand there are definite positives like **reduction in child mortality rates**, improvements in the levels of nutrition indicators like stunting and wasting etc.
 - On the other hand, incidents of [anemia](#) among children have gone up **from 58.6% in NFHS 4 to an alarming level of 67.1%** in this round, leading experts to point out that more efforts are needed for meeting the [2030 SDG targets](#).
- **ASER Surveys Findings:**
 - The consecutive [ASER surveys](#) have pointed out that **there has been no improvement in the proportion of children** currently not enrolled in school between 2020 and 2021 and there **exists a lot of variability among the states in this regard**.
- **Impact of Covid-19:**
 - [Covid-19](#) has impacted children in diverse ways – be it physical, emotional, cognitive, or social repercussions, including transition or migration, familial crises, isolation from friends, discontinuity of learning, environment, quarantine, hospitalisation of self or family members, and **entry into adult roles of work or marriage**.
 - Consequently, the **lives of India's children were severely restricted** in terms of their access to education, nutrition and development, and child protection.

Way Forward

- **Orientation of the government officials** working on child-related interventions **through capacity building programmes is important**, not only for reporting in the CBS but also for

enabling them to redesign schemes better and monitor the progress on a regular basis.

- An **outcome orientation of the budget for children is essential** for translating the outlays into better outcomes.
- There is an **urgent need to standardise the reporting structure in the CBS** and the Union Government can develop a detailed framework for it in consultation with states and domain experts to make CBS an effective instrument of accountability as well.
- **Regular monitoring and audits of relevant child related schemes** must be taken up by the respective ministries.

[Source: TH](#)

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