12. CHILDREN

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| Highlights   * No new announcements specific to children have been made in the Budget Speech. * The total budget for children has increased by Rs 5,547 crore in 2017-18 (BE) from 2016-17 (BE). * The share of child specific interventions in the total Union Budget has remained stagnant at 3.3% during the last 3 years. It has registered a declining trend from 2012-13 (RE). * Education accounts for a high share in the budget for children, with child health and child protection schemes continuing to get low allocations. |

Similar to previous Union Budgets, the allocations for child related interventions remain stagnant at about three percent of the total Union Budget (Figure 12.1). No major announcements were made in this Union Budget for children, who constitute 39 percent of India’s population. About 16 Central Ministries allocate resources for children through various interventions; of these, the major share comes from the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and Ministry of Women and Child Development.

**Figure 12.1: Total Budgetary Spending on Child Focused Interventions (Percent)**

*Source:* Compiled by CBGA from Child Budget Statement for various years.

India’s working age population is projected to grow significantly over the next three decades providing an edge to the Indian economy over the other comparable economies (Economic Survey 2016-17). Children of today are the work force of tomorrow. For the benefit of this young population it is important to invest in their education, health and a safe environment for growth. While there are schemes and programmes focusing on these issues, their delivery is adversely affected due to inadequate fund allocations and shortage of staff. In school education, India has achieved significant progress towards increasing school participation; but the quality of education remains a grave concern. Our schools lack trained and professionally qualified teachers. Standing Committee Report of MHRD, 2015, cites shortage of teachers as one of the reasons for the poor quality of education in India.

Education gets the highest share of total allocations in the child budget followed by development (largely comprising of allocations for Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and other nutrition related schemes), health and protection. In his budget speech, Finance Minister associated poor health with poverty and announced an action plan to reduce Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) from 39 in 2014 to 28 by 2019 (IMR as per SRS Bulletin 2016 is 37). However, this target has not translated into increased budget allocation for the health related schemes focussing on children (Figure 12.2)

**Figure 12.2: Sector Wise Composition of Total Child Budget (in Percent)**

*Source:* Compiled by CBGA from Child Budget Statement for various years.

Undernutrition among children is a serious problem in India; almost 40 percent of the world’s stunted children and nearly 50 percent of the wasted children under the age of 5 years live in India (Global Nutrition Report 2015). The budget allocations for ICDS, which is a combination of six services including interventions related to nutrition, health and pre-school education (among others), have remained inadequate; and delivery of this scheme relies on untrained and poorly paid *anganwadi* workers. While the allocations for ICDS have increased by 13 percent from 2016-17 (BE) to 2016-17 (BE), considering severity of malnutrition and the services expected out of overburdened *anganwadi* workers, the allocations need to increase significantly (Table 12.1).

Major schemes related to education show increased allocations in 2017-18 (BE) as compared to 2016-17 (BE); *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) saw an increase of Rs. 1000 crore, while Mid-Day Meal and *Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan* (RMSA) see a modest increase in their respective budgets. (Table 12.1)

**Table 12.1: Budgetary Allocation under Select Schemes for the Welfare of Children (Rs. crore)**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **2012-13 (RE)** | **2013-14 (RE)** | **2014-15 (RE)** | **2015-16 (RE)** | **2016-17 (BE)** | **2016-17 (RE)** | **2017-18 (BE)** |
| Education | SSA | 23,645 | 26,608 | 24,330 | 22,015 | 22,500 | 22,500 | 23,500 |
| MDM | 11,500 | 12,189 | 11,051 | 9,236 | 9,700 | 9,700 | 10,000 |
| RMSA | 3,172 | 3,123 | 3,480 | 3,565 | 3,700 | 3,700 | 3,830 |
| Development | ICDS | 15,941 | 16,632 | 16,667 | 15,584 | 14,810 | 14,551 | 16,745 |
| Protection | NCPCR | 11 | 13 | 14 | 11 | 19 | 19 | 19 |
| ICPS | 273 | 270 | 450 | 402 | 397 | 597 | 648 |

*Notes:* i) Figures for ICDS includes ICDS core; National Nutrition Mission and World Bank assisted ICDS

*Source*: Compiled by CBGA from Child Budget Statement for various years.

Also, protection related schemes continue to receive least share among schemes for children. Though there is an increase of about Rs. 370 crore in schemes related to protection of children, given the increase of crimes against children (5.3 percent in 2015 over 2014 (National Crimes Record Bureau, 2015)) and the range of vulnerabilities faced by children (including, child marriage, child trafficking, child labour, children affected by civil unrest, child sexual abuse etc.), allocations need to increase further.

There are 470 million children in India and India banks on its young population to support its growing economy. It is thus, important that interventions related to children are adequately funded. Each Union Budget with inadequate allocations for these schemes is a missed opportunity and a bigger challenge to address in subsequent years. The National Plan of Action for Children, 2016 provides a comprehensive framework focussing on all the key areas concerning children. It now requires adequate budget allocation for effective implementation. This too, however, seems to have been delayed, hopefully, only by a year.