

Budget 2018: Empty promises for women



Source: <http://www.cbgaindia.org/wp-content/themes/cbga/images/gender-responsive.jpg>

In This Issue

COVER STORY:

Budget 2018: Empty promises for women

HEADLINE OF THE WEEK:

- SBI posts Rs 24.16 billion quarterly loss for first time in nearly 19 years

SECTION 1: GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

- **Government:** Amid a jobs crisis, India's government is sitting on over 400,000 vacancies;
- **Health:** One In Four Children In Indian Cities Malnourished. Poverty Isn't The Only Cause
- **Law and Justice:** Government ignoring plight of children, says Supreme Court

SECTION 2: INDIA AND THE WORLD

Lead Essay

Budget 2018: Empty promises for women

A rising trend in allocation of funds does not necessarily translate into enhanced benefits or wider coverage. This has been proved right when analyzing the overall gender budget this year. While the allocation for Ministry of Women and Child Development which is just 1 per cent of the total projected expenditure for 2018-19 saw a marginal increase from Rs. 12136.81 crore in 2017-18 (RE) to Rs. 24700.00 crore in 2018-19, major schemes which are essential for women empowerment have seen a decrease, the implications of which are alarming. Under such a case this year's budget, a budget that was projected for a better India, that was supposed to be gender equal, has truly empowered India's 48% of its population?

Introduction

The Parliament's Budget Session 2018 began last week with President Ram Nath Kovind's first address to a joint sitting of Parliament that highlighted the progress made and the steps taken in the last financial year towards gender equality and women empowerment in India, through policies schemes, and laws. Some of the major highlights included-construction of toilets, provision of over three crore cooking gas connections to poor households, "Beti bachao, beti padhao" scheme's extension to the whole country to end discrimination against daughters, increase in maternity leave from 12 to 26 weeks, and the "Triple Talaq Bill" to save Muslim women from instant divorce. This was followed by presentation of the "Economic Survey 2017-18", a pre-cursor to the Union Budget that drew attention to important gender concerns including the issue of son preference and declining sex ratio in the country in its volume I, but the much awaited Union Budget 2018-19 puts all speculations to rest. It continues to be as gender-blind as ever, except for the pink cover of the survey document, no concrete steps have been taken by the Union government to address the above issues. Thus, it failed yet again to address the structural issues that keep progress towards gender justice at bay.

Allocations to Ministry of Women and Child Development

Based on the recognition that national budgets benefit women and men differentially, and may even reinforce patriarchal social norms and biases, India formally adopted Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in 2005-06. Its statement comprises of two parts: Part A reflects women-specific schemes with 100% allocation for women, and Part B constitutes of pro-women schemes wherein at least 30% of allocation is for women. As per the 2018 Budget while the total allocations to the Ministry has increased marginally from 21236.81 crore in 2017-18 to 24700.00 crore in 2018-19, the total Gender Budget has declined from 0.69% of the revised GDP for 2017-18 to 0.65 percent of the projected GDP for 2018-19. There has also been a decline from 5.2 percent to 4.9 percent in terms of the proportion of the Gender Budget to the total budgetary expenditure between 2017-18 (revised estimates) and the proposed budget for 2018-2019 as stated by the All India Democratic Women's Association.¹ The decline in the allocations in Part A of the GBS in 2018-19 (BE) is primarily on account of decline in allocations for the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, from Rs. 23,000 crore in 2017-18 (BE) to Rs. 21,000 crore in 2018-19 (BE). No new scheme, specifically for women is reported in the GBS in 2018-19 (BE).

Some of the schemes and achievements that were highlighted in the Finance Minister's speech include:

- In a bid to encourage more women to join the work-force, the finance minister has proposed that women joining the workforce for the first time will have to contribute only 8 per cent (instead of 12 or 10) of the Employee's Provident Fund (EPF) for the first three years.

¹ Read Full Text at <http://indianculturalforum.in/2018/02/01/aidwa-opposes-the-anti-women-budget-based-on-false-promises/>

Lead Essay

- Under the Ujjwala Yojana, free gas connections for women will be raised to eight crore connections from the current five crore.
- Loans to self-help women groups are to be increased to as much as 37 per cent. This is likely to provide a much-needed impetus to the sector. Women self-help groups will also be encouraged to take up organic farming.
- In an endeavour to encourage women entrepreneurs, under the Mudra Yojana, a total lending amount of Rs 3 lakh crore has been set aside for women to start new ventures.
- Under the Saubhagya Yojana Under-privileged women will also get four crore electricity connections under the allocations made by this budget.
- One of the primary objectives of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is to end open defecation in rural India. Working towards that, this budget has allocated resources to construct an additional two crore toilets in India.
- In a bid to retain women in the formal work sector even after childbirth, the Finance Minister said the government has not only increased maternity leave for women from 12 to 26 weeks but also ensured the provision of crèches in organisations.

The following table, and highlights the allocations made to the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) in the last three year budget including this year.

TABLE I

Union Budget 2017-19: Allocations

Centre's expenditure	Actual 2016-2017	Budget 2017-2018	Revised 2017-2018	Budget 2018-2019
Total allocation to Ministry of Women and Child Development	16,873.52	22,094.67	21,236.81	24,700.00
Establishment Expenditure of the Centre	51.77	56.4	62.96	57.62
Autonomous Bodies	161.63	187.98	217.06	181.92
Umbrella ICDS	15893.32	20755.19	19962.75	23088.28
Mission for Protection and Empowerment for Women	793.24	1089.02	987.5	1365.58
Social Services	1171.87	1490.19	3543.18	3761.45

Source: <http://www.indiabudget.gov.in/vol2.asp?pageid=5>

Lead Essay

Health:

According to the World Health Organization, due to biological differences women live longer than men in all regions of the world. The difference is wider in high-income nations. India ranks 141, on the health index in World Economic Forum's The Global Gender Gap Report 2017, which benchmarks gender gaps in 144 countries on economic, political, education and health-based criteria (In 2015 India stood at 143 and in 2016 at 142). Across all indicators, the country scores way below the average scores in the report while for some indicators like sex ratio at birth and life expectancy, the results were particularly poor. Women's disproportionate poverty, low socioeconomic status, gender discrimination and reproductive role further deteriorate their position by not only exposing them to various diseases, but also their accesses to and use of health services. The recently released Economic Survey 2018 too, portrays rather a discomfoting picture of the Indian society that still prefers sons over daughters that has led to the birth of millions of "unwanted" girls. As a result, India has one of the most skewed sex ratios in the world. For every 107 males born in India, there are 100 females.

Apart from the declining sex ratio and life expectancy rate, India faces a dual challenge of under nutrition and obesity, according to a the 'Global Nutrition Report 2017' which looked at 140 countries and found significant burdens of three important forms of malnutrition used as an indicator of broader trends which includes childhood stunting, anaemia in women of reproductive age, and overweight adult women. It shows that while 51 per cent women are anaemic, 22 per cent are overweight, 38 per cent of children under five are affected by stunting. About 21 per cent of children under 5 have been categorised as 'wasted' or 'severely wasted' which means they do not weigh enough for their height. Other than these reports, government's own data including Rural Health Statistics 2016, CAG Reports on National Rural Health Mission² and the recent National Health Family Survey (NFHS-4), 2015-16³ too, highlight the urgency to put women and children's healthcare on the top of the priority list.

The government should have taken into consideration the results of these reports while drafting the present Budget in order to address these issues. The Budget ignores the needs of the backbone of India's healthcare system: the Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), who have been staging protests across the country for the last couple of years demanding regularization of jobs and increase in wages. In fact, budget allocation for most of the health schemes apart from National Nutrition Mission have declined showing the government's insensitive attitude towards women's health which once they had proposed as their priority as per their election manifesto 2014.

The following table highlights the health related schemes for women implemented in the 2018 Budget and the budget allocation for the same.

TABLE II:

HEALTH RELATED SCHEMES FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN THE UNION BUDGET 2018-19

Name of the Scheme	Ministry	2017-2018 R	2018-19 B
NHM	Health, Family and Welfare	31,292.1	30,634.0
Core ICDS/ Anganwadi services	Health, Family and Welfare	16,195	19,335
National Crèche Scheme	Health, Family and Welfare	65	128
IGMSY/MBPii/PMMVY	Health, Family and Welfare	2,595	2,400

² <http://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/cag-finds-several-shortcomings-in-nrhm-implementation/773831/>

³ <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/EHhF2qhM1wsI0xTrRCTMOL/Building-on-Indias-family-planning-success.html>

Lead Essay

National AIDS and STD Control Programme	Health, Family and Welfare	2163.06	2100.00
Family Welfare Schemes	Health, Family and Welfare	787.87	770.00
Mid day Meal	Women and Child Development	10000	10500

Source: <http://www.indiabudget.gov.in/vol2.asp?pageid=5>

Health, Nutrition and Sanitation in the Union Budget 2018 and what it means for women:

The allocation for the National Health Mission has come down by Rs. 671.95 Crore and the Gender Budget for health has come down by Rs, 157.77 Crore. Maternity Benefit Programme, which provides compensation for the wage loss in terms of cash incentives to mothers, and increasing its budget by a whopping 300 per cent last year, the government, has reduced the budget allocated to this programme this year. It has been allocated Rs 2,400 crore this year. The government has virtually halved the number of beneficiaries under the programme in May last year by restricting the scheme to firstborns instead of ‘first two live births’ applicable earlier. The decline in allocations to Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana is presumably on account of the change in the scheme guidelines restricting the eligibility criteria from two to one children and decrease in the amount paid to women from Rs. 6,000 to 5,000 per beneficiary. This is in contravention to the Provisions of the National Food Security Act, 2013.

The budget allocation to the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) which directly impacts the health and safety of women and girls too has witnessed a dip. A sum of Rs 17, 843 crore has been allocated for the programme as against the allocation of Rs 19,248, according to the revised estimates of last year’s budget. This is the first time in the last four years that the allocation for the sanitation programme has gone down. The Budget for information, education and communication activities under Swachh Bharat-Gramin (rural) is down 6 percent to Rs 300 crore in 2018-19 from Rs 318 crore in 2017-18.

The family planning (FP) component received merely 4% of the total budget available under the National Health Mission's Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) Flexi pool. This implies that government has not taken into consideration the issue of women's lack of agency in making decisions related to sexual and reproductive health highlighted by the Economic Survey 2017-18 that nearly 47% women do not use any contraception, while those who do, use less than a third female-controlled reversible contraception. This implies that since while only few women who use reversible methods of contraception have little control over when they start having children, only some seem to have control over when they stop having children. Thus more allocations on behaviour change communication will lead to improve women's agency in exercising their choice. The long standing demand of ASHA workers for salaries for their work remains unaddressed.

Other Action Plan of the government include eliminating Kala-Azar and Filariasis by 2017, Leprosy by 2018 and Measles by 2020, elimination of tuberculosis by 2025, to reduce IMR from 39 in 2014 to 28 by 2019 and MMR from 167 in 2011-13 to 100 by 2018-2020. These plans have been taken up in the earlier budget speeches yet hardly any major improvement/achievement is visible today.

Education:

Figure I: Literacy Rate in India from Census 1901-2011

Literacy rate in India			
Year	Persons	Males	Females
1901	5.3	9.8	0.7
1911	5.9	10.6	1.1
1921	7.2	12.2	1.8
1931	9.5	15.6	2.9
1941	16.1	24.9	7.3
1951	16.7	24.9	7.3
1981	36.2	46.9	24.8
1991	52.1	63.9	39.2
2001	62.38	76.0	54.0
2011	74.	82.1	65.46

Source: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1081705.pdf>

Lead Essay

In India the female literacy rate is 65.46% as per the 2011 census, which is still below the world average of 79.7%. Despite the fact that the recent Economic Survey had a pink coloured cover as a symbol of support to women's empowerment but the effort of gender empowerment through education is not reflected in the budget. The Right to Education Act (RTE) has helped the school enrolment of girls to rise and match that of the boys. Eleven successive ASER reports have shown enrolment rates for the 7-10 age group as being well over 95% for both girls and boys, and even in the 11-14 age group the gender gap had reduced to just 1% by 2016, the gender gap begins to grow again afterwards, by age 18, there are 4.3% more girls than boys who are not enrolled in the formal education system. The government should take immediate steps to address of the issues such as higher dropout rates especially for girls such as conducting regular assessments, promoting more schemes that allow free education for girls and ensure girls are not forced to drop out .

The following table highlights the education related schemes implemented for women in the 2018 Budget and the budget allocated for the same .

Table III:
SCHOOL EDUCATION AND LITERACY-SCHEMES FOR GIRLS IN THE UNION BUDGET 2018-19

Name of the Scheme	Ministry	2017-18 R	2018-19 B
Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls-SABLA	Ministry of Human Resource Development	460	500
Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan	Ministry of Human Resource Development	23500	26128
Beti Bachao Beti Padhao	Ministry of Women and Child Development	200	280
Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan	Ministry of Human Resource Development	3914.90	4213.00
National Scheme for Incentive to Girl Child for Secondary Education	Ministry of Human Resource Development	320	256
UGC	Ministry of Human Resource Development	300	280
Gender Budgeting	Ministry of Women and Child Development	2.00	0

Source: <http://www.indiabudget.gov.in/vol2.asp?pageid=5>

Education in the Union Budget 2018 and what it means for women:

Even though, allocations to SABLA increased from Rs. 460 crore in 2017-18 (BE) to Rs. 500 crore in 2018-19 (BE), , the increase in the allocations may not be adequate to meet the increased coverage of 303 districts of the scheme.

FM Arun Jaitley announced that the Sukanya Samridhi Account Scheme that was launched in January 2015 under the "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" initiative has managed to open up 1.26 crore accounts for the girl child till the age of 10 amounting to Rs 19,183 crore, the government has to allotted an additional 80 Cr in the flagship Beti Badhao Beti Padhao scheme this year. However it should make sure the money is well utilized especially after the recent findings of NCPCR report 2017 that suggests that around 65 percent — of them are "either engaged in household

Lead Essay

activities, are dependents, or, are engaged in begging, etc of adolescent girls, that has further raised questions over the success that remains bleak⁴

While increased allocation in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan scheme is a welcome step, the government should focus on the CAG's criticism which highlighted the discrepancies and under-utilisation of funds under SSA and suggested that importance be given to reviewing the timelines of the RTE budgeting exercise in line with the budget formulation exercise at the centre and the state levels for the better functioning and impact of the scheme. While the Ministry statistics on education outline the concern of growing number of drop outs, it was hoped that the focus would be more on retention rather than enrolment which has already displayed satisfactory results. But the Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyaan (RUSA)⁵ which attempts to fix this imbalance should have been the real game changer for the Higher Education this year.

The allocation for National Scheme for Incentive to Girl Child for Secondary Education has decreased from Rs. 320 crore in 2017-18 (BE) to Rs. 256 crore in 2018-19 (BE). This drop in the budgetary allowance for incentives to the girl child also reflects poor understanding of the prevailing scenario in rural areas where CAG reports have stated an increase in the gender disparity.

Further, there is no allocation for the Ekalavya Vidyalayas and there is no mention of any increase in education infrastructure. Even though, the budget speech did raise concerns over the quality of education delivered to children in school, sadly the HRD ministry's allocation has dropped 0.23 percentage points to 3.48 percent in 2018-19—the lowest since 2014-15—from 3.71 percent in 2017-18 whereas the both the CAG report and ASER survey report has highlighted the lack of infrastructure in the rural areas.

Employment and Empowerment:

The Ministry of State for Labour and Employment in a reply to Lok Sabha questions stated that male workers in FY16 stood at 73.3%, while females stood at 25.8%. According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), while jobs for men increased by 9 lakh, 24 lakh women fell off the employment map in the first four months of 2017. As a result, according to Oxfam's statistics, where Indian billionaires' wealth increased by Rs 4.89 lakh crore, from Rs 15.77 lakh crore to over Rs 20.67 lakh crore, there still continues to be just four women on the list. Recently, at Davos, when the International Monetary Fund chief Christian Lagarde, quoting IMF research, said when an equal number of women and men participate in the workforce it can boost the Indian economy by no less than 27 per cent. However the Government has not taken any concrete steps to encourage women to join the workforce. There are few positive announcements in the case of employment that was made. One of them being that women joining the workforce for the first time will have to contribute only 8 per cent (instead of 12 or 10) of the Employee's Provident Fund (EPF) for the first three years, it proposes to lend Rs. 3 lakh crore under MUDRA Yojana in 2018-19, as 76% of creditors under this scheme are women. Focus now has been on Women Self Help Groups (SHGs) who will be encouraged to take up organic agriculture in clusters under National Rural Livelihood Programme.

The following table highlights the employment related schemes implemented/provided in the 2018 Budget for women and the budget allocation for the same. :

TABLE IV:
WOMEN WELFARE AND EMPOWERMENT SCHEMES IN THE UNION BUDGET 2018-19

Name of the scheme	Ministry	2017-18 R	2018-19 B
Mahatma Gandhi	Ministry of Labour and	55000	55000

⁴ The NCPCR report 2017 states that around 39.4 percent of adolescent girls in the 15-18 age group are not attending any educational institution, and a vast majority — around 65 percent — of them are "either engaged in household activities, are dependents, or, are engaged in begging, etc

⁵ *Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)* is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS), launched in 2013 aims at providing strategic funding to eligible state higher educational institutions.

Lead Essay

National Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)	Rural	Employment		
Ujjwala		Ministry of Women and Child Development	35.00	50.00
Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP)		Ministry of Labour and Employment	4.50	5.00
Mahila Shakti Kendra		Ministry of Women and Child Development	64.00	267.30
Swadhar Greh			100.00	95.00
Working Women Hostel		Ministry of Women and Child Development	30.00	60.00
Nirbhaya Fund		Ministry of Women and Child Development		500.00
Mahila Shakti Kendra (National Mission for Empowerment of Women)		Ministry of Women and Child Development	64	267
One Stop Centres		Ministry of Women and Child Development	90	105
Child Protection Services		Ministry of Women and Child Development	648.00	725.00

Source: <http://www.indiabudget.gov.in/vol2.asp?pageid=5>

Women Employment in the Union Budget 2018:

Women in agriculture: The Budget made claims about benefiting the farmers because of the pressures created by the massive farmers' mobilizations. But unfortunately these pronouncements are not backed by requisite allocations. While the total budget for agriculture and farmers' welfare has only increased by 0.05 percent of the total expenditure in the last year, the gender specific allocation for women farmers is only 3.92 percent of the entire gender budget (that is an increase of a paltry 0.63 percent in one year). Also, the government needs to understand the continuing large gender gaps in land ownership and independent access to land, lack of recognition of the "unpaid work" that women farmers perform or the systemic barriers women farmers face will not reduce the vulnerability of women farmers even after investments in productivity or price increase. Much more needs to be done. The Mahila Kisan Adhikaar Manch states while the Economic Survey highlighted the measures being taken by the Government for mainstreaming women in agriculture sector, such as earmarking 30% of the budget allocation for women beneficiaries in all ongoing schemes/programmes and development activities, or even initiating women-centric activities to ensure benefits of various beneficiary-oriented programmes/schemes reach them. The budget however lays out no road map for how this is to be achieved without recognizing the reasons why these allocations remain on paper year after year.⁶

⁶ Read Full Text at <http://www.makaam.in/makaam--budget-2018-19.html>

Lead Essay

Women and MGNREGA: In order to boost employment, the government focuses on skill development, increase in self-employment, support to medium and small enterprises, and the use of MNREGA for building infrastructure. Once again none of these claims are backed by adequate allocations. The allocation for MNREGA remains the same as the revised estimate of 2017-18 at Rs. 55000 Cr.

Skill Development of women: The allocations for medium and small scale enterprises (MSME) has only gone up by Rs 85 Cr in the entire budget whereas the allocation for Skill Development and Livelihood generation has in fact decreased by Rs. 33 Crore in the last year. While the tax break announced for MSME is limited to enterprises with an annual turnover of Rs. 100 Crore this might rule out 90 percent of the small scale enterprises where women make up a large part of the work force. Further, Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP) scheme that aims to provide skills that give employability to women; competencies and skills that enable women to become self employed/entrepreneurs received only a slight increase in the budget

Women Safety policies/schemes

- A. Swadhar Greh: The decline in allocations to Swadhar Greh⁷ from Rs.100 crore in 2017-18 (BE) to Rs. 95 crore in 2018-19 (RE) and the proposed coverage of 18,000 women, under the scheme, a relatively low number is also a concern. Similarly, the proposed outcome for One Stop centres (operationalisation of the sanctioned 186 centres and expansion of One Stop Centres in 50 districts) could be more ambitious.
- B. Nirbhaya Fund: The Nirbhaya Fund continues to remain at Rs. 500 Cr. Official documents on the status of implementation of Budget announcements show that by January 2016, only Rs 24.62 crore of expenditure had been sanctioned under the fund for a one-stop centre and women's helpline. The under-utilization or no utilization of *Nirbhaya fund* has now come under the radar of the Supreme Court⁸. In 2016, a Parliamentary Standing Committee too had slammed the Ministry of Women and Child Development over the slow implementation of schemes under the Nirbhaya fund⁹. Thus simply increasing the allocation every year will not suffice. Concrete steps need to be taken.
- C. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao: Last year, the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Human Resource Department had highlighted the underutilization of the budget allocation under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, 75 per cent of the funds for the One Stop Centre (OSC), a key initiative for survivors of sexual assault under the Nirbhaya scheme could not be utilised by Women and Child Development Ministry.¹⁰
- D. The Pradhan Mantri Ujjawala Yojana (Ujjwala scheme) has been a big hit in rural areas. However, usage of cylinders is a cause for concern and not all beneficiaries are utilising gas cylinders regularly and tend to go back to their chulah's. Apart from that there are logistical and pricing issues as well which constrain the segment that Ujjwala targets. While the Centre claimed that it has been successful in plugging leakages in the distribution of subsidised Liquefied Petroleum Gas through direct benefit transfers and its 'Give It Up' scheme and that their initiatives have saved the country about Rs 23,000 crore, the CAG pointed out said that much of the savings –about 92% – are on account of falling oil prices. Only about Rs 1,764 crore of the savings were because of the government initiatives. Furthermore it said that after the scheme was launched, the number of

⁷ A Scheme that caters to primary needs of women in difficult circumstances

⁸ <http://www.indialegallive.com/did-you-know-facts-about-news/perspective-news/supreme-court-raps-centre-for-under-utilisation-of-nirbhaya-fund-36630>

⁹ Parliamentary Standing Committee full report presented by the Rajya Sabha available at <http://164.100.47.5/newcommittee/reports/EnglishCommittees/Committee%20on%20HRD/278.pdf>

¹⁰ 90% Of Funds From 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' Programme Remain Unused, Says Parliamentary Panel. Read full text at http://www.huffingtonpost.in/2017/03/21/90-of-funds-from-beti-bachao-beti-padhao-programme-unused_a_21904301/

Lead Essay

cylinders used on average had come down to 5.6,¹¹. Hence, to arrive at an accurate assessment of the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojna, experts say, merely counting the number of new gas connections cannot be the only criteria.

So what does the Gender Budget Statement 2018-19 reflect?

For women, the Union Budget of 2018-19 does not hold much promise. There are issues of low budget allocations, non utilization of earlier funds and targeting the wrong group of beneficiaries in some cases. Constituting 48 per cent of India's population, women lag far behind men on crucial social indicators like health, education and economic opportunities and sadly this year's Union Budget too, does nothing for them. While the nation celebrates that the Budget has increased for women, but it's the utilisation that matters. The pink cover of the just-released Economic Survey was to signal the Centre's pro-women approach. However, it inadvertently points out the existing patriarchal mindset that dominates our society. Instead of endorsing gender stereotypes through association of colours, concrete efforts need to be made to firmly institutionalise GRB within the government at the national and sub-national levels, including expenditure tracking and benefit incidence. Without these steps, the budgetary exercise will continue to hold empty promises for women. .

References

- i. Did 'Pink' of Economic Survey reflect in budget.

Read more at: <http://www.indialivetoday.com/did-pink-of-economic-survey-reflect-in-budget/214572.html>

- ii. Union Budget 2018: Gender budget allocation has increased, but merely funds are not enough. Read more at <https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/union-budget-2018-gender-budget-allocation-has-increased-but-merely-funds-are-not-enough/story-czIRVEeD2gVVSWqoBIqYSI.html>
- iii. Of Hits and Misses An Analysis of Union Budget 2018-19 by CBGA India available at <http://www.cbgaindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Of-Hits-and-Misses-Analysis-of-Union-Budget-2018-19.pdf>
- iv. A Gender Responsive Budget online available at <http://indianexpress.com/article/gender/economic-survey-of-2017-2018-a-gender-responsive-budget-5045966/>
- v. Budgeting for Gender Equality <http://wcd.nic.in/gender-budgeting>

Prepared by
Nancy D Cruz

Headlines

SBI posts Rs 24.16 billion quarterly loss for first time in nearly 19 years

(Abhijit Lele, *Business Standard*, February 10, 2018)

Owing to a sizable increase in the provisioning for bad loans, the State Bank of India reported its first quarterly loss in nearly 19 years. The country's largest lender reported a net loss of Rs 2,416 crore for the December quarter. It is pertinent to note that this came after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), after completing its annual financial inspection for FY17, asked SBI to reclassify some corporate loans as non-performing assets (NPAs) for the year ended March 2017. These loans were earlier being treated as stressed loans. The SBI is now planning to raise about Rs. 200 billion in the FY18 to support credit growth.

Read more: http://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/sbi-posts-rs-24-16-billion-quarterly-loss-for-first-time-in-nearly-19-years-118021000037_1.html

Date accessed: 12.02.2018

Governance and Development

GOVERNMENT

Amid a jobs crisis, India's government is sitting on over 400,000 vacancies

(Nupur Anand, *Quartz India*, February 08, 2018)

In the backdrop of the unemployment crisis in India as indicated by the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) recent report, Santosh Kumar Gangawar, junior minister for labour and employment told the Rajya Sabha that there were about 412,752 vacant posts as of March 2016 in various government departments – nearly 11% of the around 3.6 million workforce of the various central government departments. The ILO recently noted that unemployment rate in India will stand at 3.5 per cent in 2018-2019, slightly up from the 2017-18 projection of 3.4, implying a stagnant growth rate. This stands in stark contrast to the Prime Minister's 2014 election promise of creating 10 million jobs.

Read more: <https://qz.com/1202121/jobs-crisis-the-modi-government-is-sitting-on-more-than-400000-vacancies/>

Date accessed: 11.02.2018

HEALTH

One In Four Children In Indian Cities Malnourished. Poverty Isn't The Only Cause

(Swagata Yadavar, *Indiaspend*, February 08, 2018)

The Urban HUNGaMA (hunger and malnutrition) Survey report 2014, released on February 7, 2018, by Naandi Foundation, a Hyderabad-based non-profit, revealed that one in every four children in India's most populous cities was malnourished, while mother's education, feeding patterns and government service delivery have a bearing on child nutrition in addition to household wealth. Conducted to assess the nutrition status of children aged 0-59 months living in the ten most populous cities of India, the survey interviewed more than 12,000 mothers and measured the heights and weights of more than 14,000 children aged 0-59 months. While 14.7% children aged 0-5 months were found to be stunted, the number rose to nearly 22.9% for children aged 12-17 months and 25.7% among children aged 36-47 months. Additionally, 17.3% children aged 0-5 months were underweight while the prevalence rose to 23.3% for children aged 48-59 months.

Read more: <http://www.indiaspend.com/indias-great-challenge-health-sanitation/one-in-four-children-in-indian-cities-malnourished-poverty-isnt-the-only-cause-67137>

Date accessed: 09.02.2018

AGRICULTURE

Higher MSP: Government needs to balance farmer, consumer interest

(The Indian Express, 12 February 2018)

The Finance Minister during his budget speech announced the proposal to fix the minimum support price at 50% higher than the cost of production. However with inflation maintaining an upward trend the last few months, Assocham President has contended that the government will have to take into account conflicting interests between farm producers and consumers. The RBI in its credit policy commentary has also stated that it is yet to assess the impact of increased MSP on retail inflation including effect on prices of cereals, vegetables and fruits. Since majority of rural workers growing grains are landless, the government must ensure that the entire rural population especially those earning wages are protected and not just the land owners.

Read more: <http://indianexpress.com/article/business/higher-msp-government-needs-to-balance-farmer-consumer-interest-5060791/>

Date Accessed: 12.02.2018

Governance and Development

Vasundhara Raje govt offers farm loan waiver of up to Rs 50,000

(*The Indian Express*, 12 February 2018)

The Rajasthan government has announced the setting up of a farmer loan relief commission and a farmer loan waiver of upto Rs 50,000. Opposition members however were dissatisfied with the waiver amount and demanded a full waiver. The state government had initially promised a Rs 20,000 crore package after a two-week long protest by thousands of farmers in Sikar. The budget announcement also included a hike in honorarium to Anganwadi workers and free travel for those above the age of 80 years in state transport buses.

Read more: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/rajasthan-budget-2018-live-updates-vasundhara-raje-farm-loan-waiver-rs-50000-key-highlights-5060551/>

Date Accessed: 12.02.2018

LAW & JUSTICE

Government Ignoring Plight of Children, says Supreme Court

(Legal Correspondent, *The Hindu*, February 12, 2018)

A Social Justice Bench of the Supreme Court, comprising of Justices Madan B. Lokur and Deepak Gupta, wrapped up the government for the tardy implementation of the juvenile justice laws. The issues, the bench highlighted in its 62-page judgment, include pendency of cases of orphaned, abandoned and surrendered children, the “uncomfortable” conditions of life of children in observation and care homes, the increasing number of vacancies in juvenile justice institutions and the lack of initiative by legal services authorities. This is the situation despite the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 and its new and improved version passed in 2015, the bench noted. The court directed the Ministry of Women and Child Development and all state governments to fill all vacant positions in the national and state commissions for protection of child rights, Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees.

Read more: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/supreme-court-slams-centre-for-tardy-implementation-of-juvenile-justice-laws/article22722172.ece>

Date accessed: 12.02.2018

India and the World

Oman visit will impart ‘substantial momentum’ to ties: PM Modi

(The Hindu, 12 February 2018)

In his current visit to Muscat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has underscored the value of bilateral ties between Oman and India while signing eight agreements, including an MoU on legal and judicial cooperation in civil and commercial matters. Most of the discussions and agreements signed revolved around issues of mutual visa exemptions, defence cooperation, trade and investment, energy, defence and security, food security and regional issues. India’s Ambassador to Muscat highlighted the role played by Indian companies in Omani free zones and ports in Suhar and Salalah which are estimated to be valued around 1.8 billion dollars. Oman’s Sultan also acknowledged the role of the Indian community working in Oman in the development and growth of the country.

Read more: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/oman-visit-will-impart-substantial-momentum-to-ties-pm-modi/article22729292.ece?homepage=true>

Date Accessed: 12.02.2018

Issue Coordinator: Nancy D Cruz

Connect with RGICS at: info@rgics.org; www.rgics.org



Disclaimer: This document has been prepared by the RGICS staff and has not been seen by the Trustees of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF). Further, the views presented in this document in no way reflect the views of the RGF Trustees.

To unsubscribe, please write to us at info@rgics.org