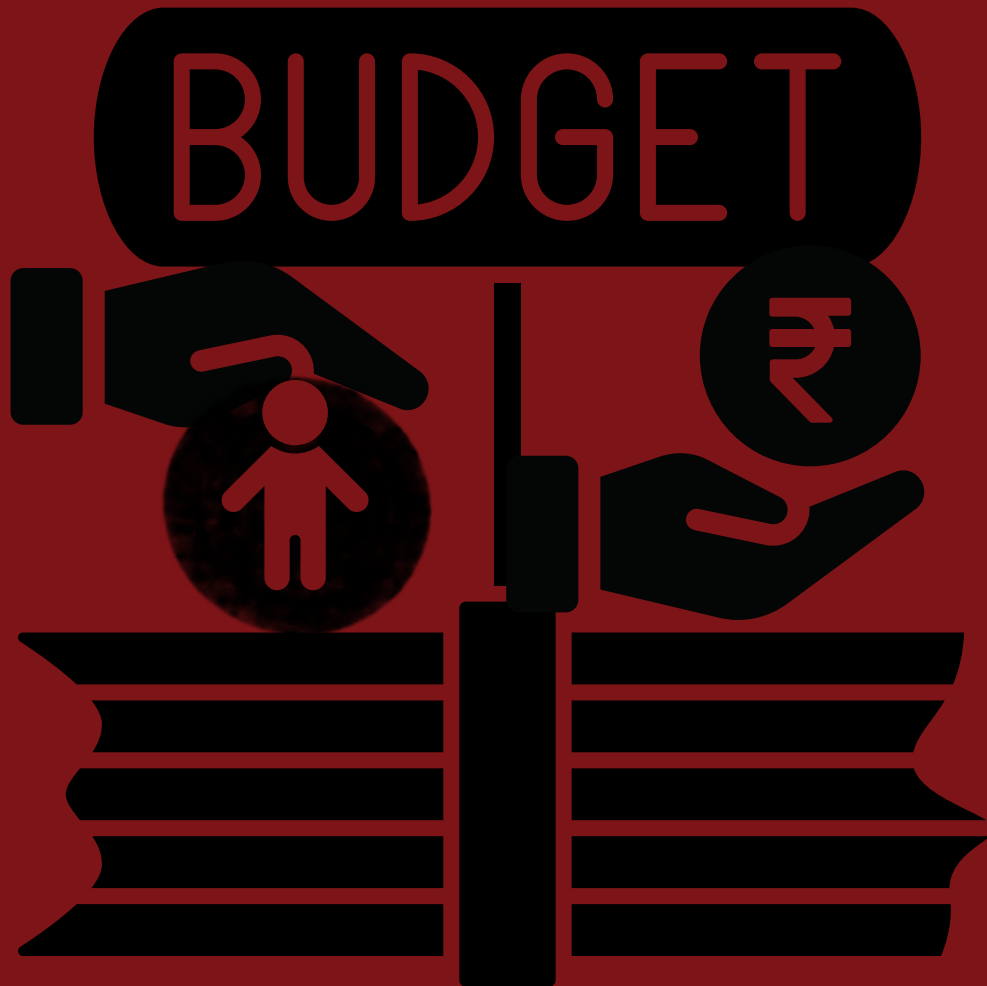


**FROM MARGINALISATION TO  
DEPRIORITISATION  
BUDGET FOR CHILDREN 2023-24  
#Blueprint4India@100**



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The world has recognized India as a bright star, our growth for the current year is estimated at 7.0%, this is the highest among all major economies, in spite of massive global slowdown caused by pandemic and the war.

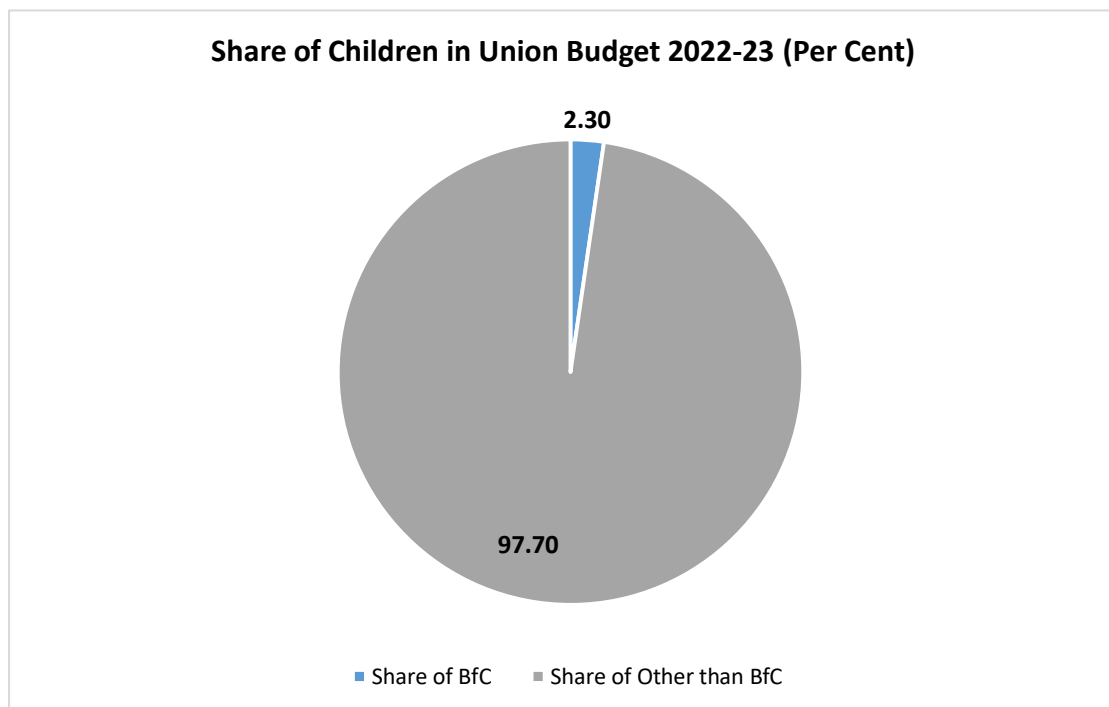
Budget hopes to build on foundation laid in previous Budget. Envision a prosperous, inclusive India in which the fruits of development reach all sections.

---Ms. Nirmala Sitaraman  
Minister, Ministry of Finance

While the Finance Minister laid emphasis on building a prosperous and inclusive India, it is pertinent to see how children, which constitute 37% population of India, fit into this definition of 'INCLUSIVE' & 'PROSPEROUS'.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

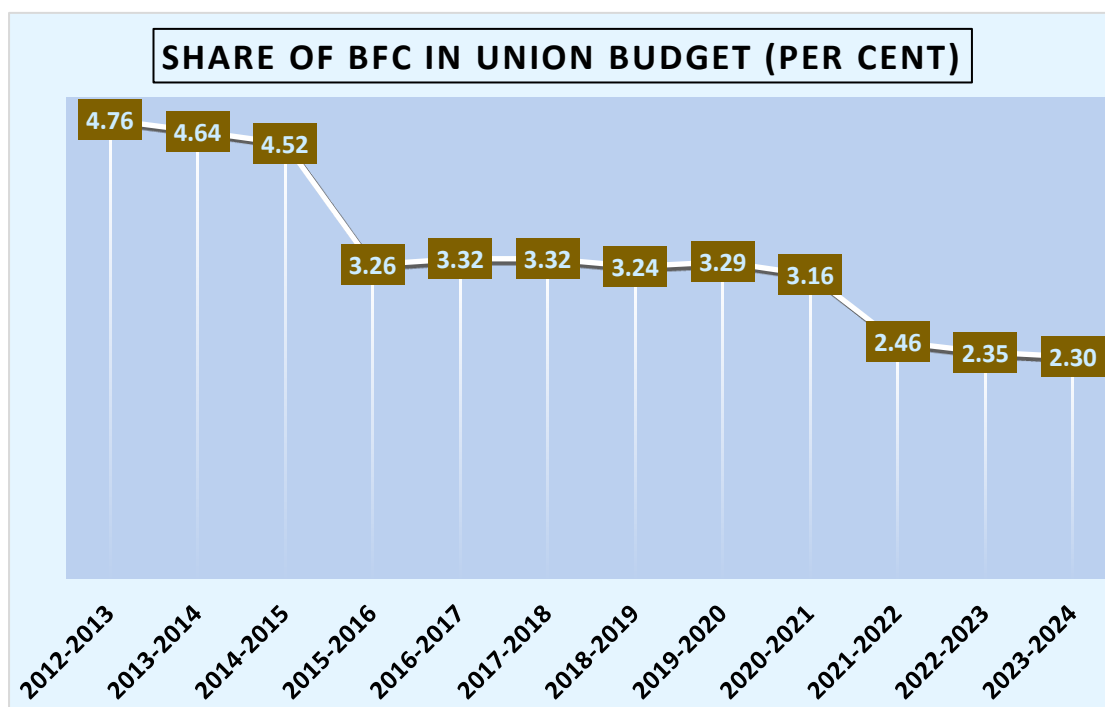
The share of children in the Union Budget 2023-24 continue to decline with a total share of 2.30 per cent.



While the total Union Budget 2023-24 grew by a massive 1415 per cent against previous year (BE), the Budget for Children increased by 11.92 per cent against 2022-23 BE.

In absolute terms, the total allocation for Budget for Children (as per Statement 12) in 2023-24 Union Budget stands at INR 103790.70 Crore.

It is pertinent to highlight that the share of children in the Union Budget has been on a constant decline in the last 11 years. It also bears significance as the Government of India is gearing up to submit its 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> combined Periodic Report to the UN Committee on the Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC).



The Government's commitment for inclusivity and prosperity needs to be seen in the context of allocations towards some of the key Ministries/Departments. In the Union Budget 2023-24, the allocation for Ministry of Minority Affairs reduced by 37.81 per cent followed by 33.33 per cent reduction in the allocation for Ministry of Labour and Employment.

<b>Allocation towards Key Ministries/Departments in ion Budget 203-24 (Rs. Crore)</b>				
<b>Ministry/ Department</b>	<b>2022-23 BE</b>	<b>2022-23 RE</b>	<b>2023-24 BE</b>	<b>Increase/ Decrease against 2022-23 (BE) (%)</b>
Atomic Energy	172.05	165.2	122.79	-28.63
Ministry of Ayush	1.73	1.7	3.52	103.47
Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade	0.44	0.4	0.4	-9.09
Department of School Education and Literacy	59819.37	57705.97	67290.34	12.49
Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change	54.32	9.47	53.35	-1.79
Ministry of External Affairs	51.73	39.27	50.63	-2.13
Department of Health and Family Welfare	3498.58	3465.9	3490.5	-0.23
Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs	231	205	230	-0.43
Ministry of Labour and Employment	30	30	20	-33.33
Ministry of Minority Affairs	2544.01	1489.82	1582.1	-37.81

Department of Science and Technology	75	57	73	-2.67
Department of Social Justice and Empowerment	3992.5	3900.23	4153.03	4.02
Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities	73.5	65	76.5	4.08
Ministry of Tribal Affairs	2419	2342.33	6338.94	162.05
<b>Ministry of Women and Child Development</b>	<b>18858.67</b>	<b>18544.9</b>	<b>19336.98</b>	<b>2.54</b>
<b>Source: Statement 12 of Union Budget 2023-24</b>				

A deep dive into the child rights sectors within the Union Budget 2023-24 reveal that the share of child health and child development has declined as against the previous year's allocations (BE) while the share of child protection in the total Union Budget remains the same. It is pertinent to highlight that despite the rising child protection concerns as reflected in the Crime In India Report by NCRB, child protection continue to receive the least share of the total pie.

Sectoral Share in Union Budget (Per Cent)					
Year	Health BE	Development BE	Education BE	Protection BE	Other than BfC
2019-2020	0.12	0.85	2.19	0.07	96.71
2020-2021	0.11	0.80	2.18	0.06	96.84
2021-2022	0.11	0.57	1.74	0.03	97.54
2022-2023	0.09	0.45	1.77	0.04	97.65
<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>0.08</b>	<b>0.40</b>	<b>1.79</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>97.70</b>

The picture remains the same even when we see Sectoral share within Budget for Children (BfC) 2023-24 where share of child education remains the maximum (77.51%) and child protection receives the least attention in terms of financial resource allocation.

Sectoral Share within BfC (Per Cent)				
Year	Health BE	Development BE	Education BE	Protection BE
<b>2019-2020</b>	3.51	25.90	66.72	2.11
<b>2020-2021</b>	3.36	25.49	69.17	1.98
<b>2021-2022</b>	4.35	23.26	70.83	1.27
<b>2022-2023</b>	3.78	19.22	75.31	1.70
<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>3.37</b>	<b>17.43</b>	<b>77.51</b>	<b>1.73</b>

Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SMSA), one of the key flagship Centrally Sponsored Schemes observed a meagre increase of 0.19 per cent as against last year's allocation. In Union Budget 2023-24, the total allocation for SMSA stands at INR 37453.47 Crore. This marginal increase must be examined in the backdrop of overarching objectives

set out under the New Education Policy, 2020 which also promises for 6% GDP to be spent on education.

The National Mid-Day Meal programme which was renamed as PM POSHAN in the Union Budget 2022-23, received an increased allocation of INR 11600 Crore (13.35% increase) as against the BE of 2022-23. While there is a lot of emphasis on PM POSHAN scheme, yet the allocation for the scheme was reduced by 9.38 per cent as against the RE of 2022-23. What is more, the Scheme had observed an allocation of INR 11500 Crore in Union Budget 2021-22 (BE) and yet there is an increase of only INR 100 Crore at BE stage between 2021-22 and 2023-24. Therefore, the mere increase of INR 100 Crore from 2021-22 to 2023-24 for PM POSHAN seems like just an accounting exercise and does not reflect on planned decisions.

There is a welcome allocation of INR 4000 Crore for '*PM Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI)*', a scheme intended to develop more than 14500 PM SHRI Schools managed by Central government/State/UT Government/local bodies including KVS and NVS which will nurture students in a way that they become engaged, productive, and contributing citizens for building an equitable, inclusive, and plural society as envisaged by the National Education Policy 2020.<sup>1</sup> The Union Budget 2023-24 reflects the financial resource allocation for the first time towards this scheme. While this initiative needs to be welcomed, the school closures of 86441 schools in rural India during 2019-20 to 2021-22 raises serious concerns over priority.<sup>2</sup>

Innovative learning is at the core of the New Education Policy, 2020 and yet there is 99.69 per cent reduction in the allocation for '*Pradhan Mantri Innovative Learning Programme (DHURV)*' in the Union Budget 2023-24.

The Education Scheme for Madarasas and Minorities has yet again observed a reduced allocation of INR 10 Crore (BE) in Union Budget 2023-24 from INR 160 Crore in 2022-23. This is a massive 93.75 per cent reduction in the allocation this year. The similar trend of reduced allocation has also been seen in the previous budget (2022-23) where the allocation for this scheme was reduced by 8.04 per cent as against the allocation of 2021-22(BE).

Further, the allocation towards '*Free Coaching and Allied Scheme*' under the aegis of Ministry of Minority Affairs received reduced allocation of (62.03%) INR 30 Crore in the Union Budget 2023-24.

*'Pre Matric Scholarship for Minorities'* and *'Merit-Cum Means Based Scholarship for Minorities'* received major budget cuts in Union Budget 2023-24 with reduced allocations of 69.61 per cent and 87.95 per cent respectively. These schemes are significant in nature as they are meant to improve the educational outcomes as well as educational opportunities for children belonging to minority communities.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://pmschrischools.education.gov.in/>

<sup>2</sup> LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1850 ANSWERED ON 19/12/2022; Closing of Rural Schools due to COVID; <https://pgals.nic.in/annex/1710/AU1850.pdf>

While we are witnessing glorification of various welfare schemes by the Government, one such scheme '*Pradhan Mantri Young Achievers Scholarship Award Scheme for Vibrant India (PM YASASVI) for OBCs, EBCs and DNTs*' observed significantly decreased allocation of INR 513.40 Crore in the Union Budget 2023-24 as against the allocation (BE) of INR 704.60 Crore in 2022-23. PM YASASVI scheme subsumes three components: a) Post Matric Scholarship for OBCs, EBCs and DNTs; b) Pre Matric Scholarship for OBCs, EBCs and DNTs and c) Boys and Girls Hostel for OBCs. In the Union Budget, the component of Post Matric Scholarship for OBCs, EBCs and DNTs observed a reduced allocation of 41.21 per cent.

Children with disability remain at the peripheries of various welfare schemes run by the government. The reasons thereof include, but not limited to, lack of adequate and appropriate infrastructure, lack of access, lack of awareness, knowledge and sensitivity among many other factors. Despite such huge challenges, '*Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme*' observed a mere increase of INR 2 Crore with total allocations going from INR 50 Crore in 2022-23 (BE) to INR 52 Crore in 2023-24.

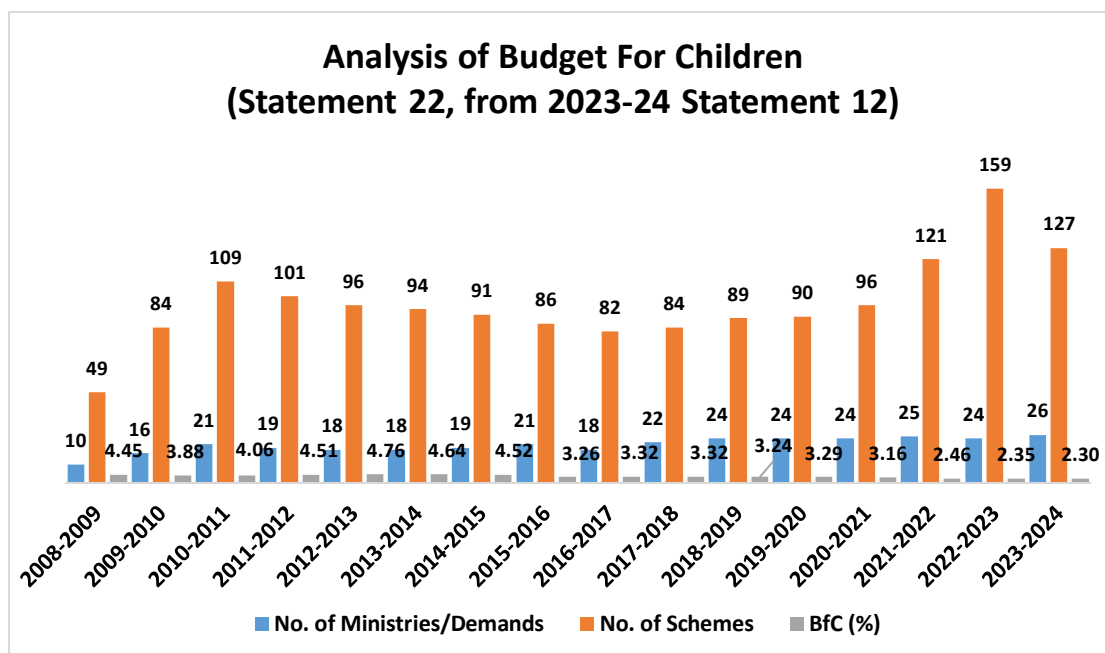
While the major thrust on promoting Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) with an increase of 196 per cent is a welcome step in the Union Budget 2023-24, reduced allocation for '*Pre Matric Scholarship for STs*' falls short on promoting education for children belonging to Scheduled Tribes.

The allocation for umbrella scheme for Child Protection Services '*Mission Vatsalya*' observes no change in Union Budget 2023-24 with INR 1472.17 Crore. The current allocation for Mission Vatsalya demands a justification as it is lesser than the allocation of INR 1500 Crore towards the then '*Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS)*' in 2020-21 Union Budget. While looking at the current child protection concerns as substantiated by the NCRB 2022 Report and the previous allocations made to ICPS, the current allocation for Mission Vatsalya does not do justice to the current needs and concerns.

As per Statement 12 of the Union Budget 2023-24, one of the flagship schemes '*Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0*' received a mere increase of 1.4 per cent in allocation at BE stage as against the BE of 2022-23 Union Budget.

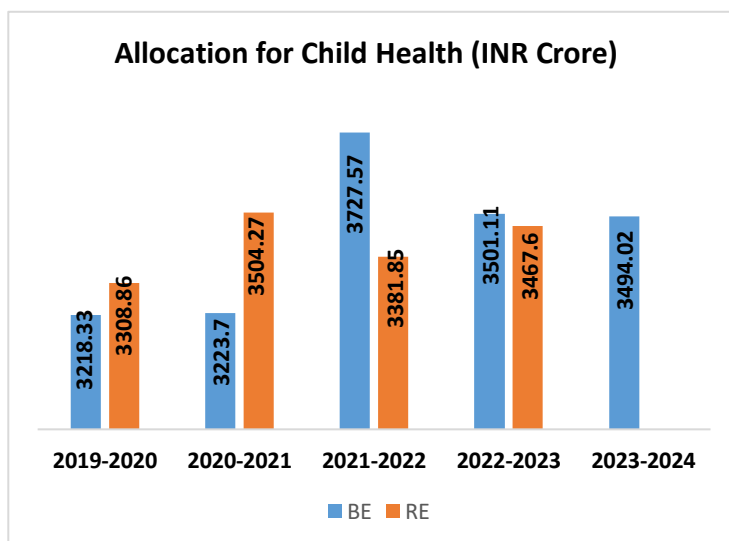
While the Finance Minister in her Budget Speech mentioned "Youth Power" as one of the SAPTARISHIS (7 priorities of the Union Budget), the '*National Programme for Youth and Adolescent Development*' observed no change in allocation this year as against the previous year with a total allocation of INR 22 Crore at BE stage. However, when compared with the RE of 2022-23 Budget, there is a reduction of 19.77 per cent in the current Union Budget.

## STATEMENT 12 OVER THE YEARS: A GLIMPSE



## CHILD HEALTH

The total allocation of Child Health Programmes (as stipulated in Statement 12) in the Union Budget 2023-24 stands at INR 3494.02 Crore. There is a marginal reduction of 0.20 per cent against the BE of Union Budget 2022-23. However, when compared against the RE of 2022-23 Budget, there is a mere increase of INR 35.51 Crore in Union Budget 2023-24.



Since the launch of NFHS-V data in 2021, improvements achieved towards various health indicators have been much applauded, but the prevalence of anaemia among children remain as one of the serious concerns. Between 2015-16 to 2019-21, NFHS<sup>3</sup> estimates indicate that anaemia prevalence among children and adolescents aged 6-59 months and 15-19 years has increased. In order to address this issue, **Anemia Mukh Bharat (AMB)** was launched in 2018 under the Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment (POSHAN) Abhiyaan and the targets were set to reduce anaemia by 3% per year, its been four years the lane but the implementation remains dilatory. While Anaemia Mukh Bharat was a much lauded scheme for the previous year

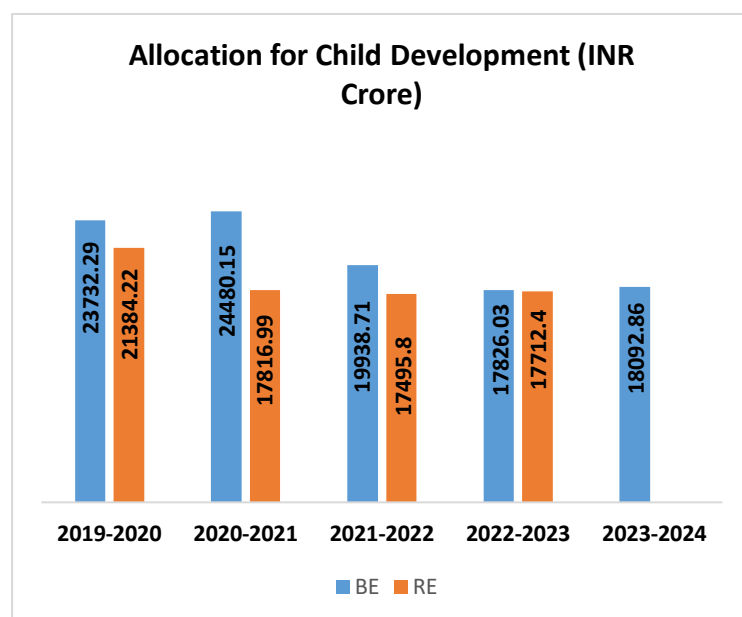
<sup>3</sup> [http://rchiips.org/nfhs/NFHS-5\\_FCTS/India.pdf](http://rchiips.org/nfhs/NFHS-5_FCTS/India.pdf)

as it found mention in the Budget Speech as well, there is no budget head reflecting the allocation towards this ambitious initiative.

One of the flagship schemes for child health '*Flexible Pool for RCH & Health System Strengthening, National Health Programme and National Urban Health Mission*' received the total allocation of INR 3187.17 Crore in the Union Budget 2023-24. This allocation is a mere increase of INR 12.6 Crore allocated under NRHM-RCH Flexi Pool in the Union Budget 2022-23.

The Union Budget 2023-24, the allocation for '*Manufacturing of Sera and BCG Vaccines*' has gone down by 26.51 per cent as against the BE of 2022-23. BCG is one of the most essential vaccines that is preferably given at birth to provide protection in the early years when infection can often lead to diseases such as miliary tuberculosis or tubercular meningitis. It is important to note that the Government has shown its commitment for TB Mukt Bharat, and yet there is such significant decrease in the allocation for manufacturing of Sera and BCG Vaccines is devoid of any logic.

## CHILD DEVELOPMENT



Child Development, which largely constitutes nutrition related programmes, received a total allocation of INR 18092.86 Crore in the Union Budget 2023-24, which is 1.50 per cent increase in the allocation (BE) as against the previous Union Budget of 2022-23.

One of the key flagship programmes which addresses the

malnutrition concerns, Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0, received a mere increase of 1.42 per cent in the allocation in Union Budget 2023-24. **Can a meagre 1.42 per cent increase in the allocation for Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan Abhiyan 2.0 help address malnutrition among children?**

According to NFHS-5...

- 36 percent of children under age five are stunted (short for their age);
- 19 percent are wasted (thin for their height);
- 32 percent are underweight (thin for their age);
- 3 percent are overweight (heavy for their height).
- Children born to mothers with no schooling and children in the lowest wealth quintile are most likely to be undernourished.



- 37.3% of the children that are stunted live in rural areas, compared to 30.1% in urban areas.

In reply to an RTI application filed by the PTI, the Ministry of Women and Child Development shared that as of October 14, 2021 there were 17,76,902 (17.76 lakh/1.7 million) severely acute malnourished children (SAM) and 15,46,420 (15.46 lakh/1.5 million) moderately acute malnourished (MAM) children in India.<sup>4</sup>

A large number of children not covered through Saksham Aanganwadi and Poshan 2.0 are children of seasonal migrant workers such those working in the plantations, sugarcane and brick kiln industry. Malnutrition is a critical health issue affecting these children. Most studies on the brick kiln sector suggest that the Anganwadi centres are inaccessible to children who accompany their parents to the kilns as the brick kilns do not fall within the earmarked jurisdiction of an AWW, which primarily includes permanent population and not seasonal migrants.

According to response to a Parliament Question<sup>5</sup>, the number of beneficiaries of SNP and PSE under ICDS was 10,74,14,839 as on 30.06.2022. Even if one goes by the Census 2011 figure of 16,45,15,253 children in the 0-6 years' age group, the outreach of SNP and PSE under ICDS falls short by 34.7 percent (5,71,00,414 children).

#### **SAMARTHYA: Sheer Lack of Planning and Mere Accounting Business As Usual**

In July, 2022, the Ministry of Women and Child Development issued detailed guidelines for 'Mission Shakti' scheme. The Government of India launched 'Mission Shakti' - an integrated women empowerment programme as umbrella scheme for the safety, security and empowerment of women for implementation during the 15th Finance Commission period 2021-22 to 2025-26. 'Mission Shakti' has two sub-schemes - '**Sambal**' and '**Samarthya**'.

The components of 'Samarthya' sub-scheme consist of erstwhile schemes of Ujjwala, Swadhar Greh and Working Women Hostel have been included with modifications. In addition, the existing schemes of National Creche Scheme for children of working mothers and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) under umbrella ICDS have now been included in Samarthya. A new component of Gap Funding for Economic Empowerment has also been added in the Samarthya Scheme. The Statement 12 of the Union Budget 2023-24 reveal that the allocation for Samarthya component was increased by 13.33 per cent as compared to BE of 2022-23 Budget. However, the allocation for Samarthya was reduced at RE stage in 2022-23 by 53.33 per cent. As Samarthya embodies components aligned to women welfare and child care, such reduction at RE stage raises serious concerns over the planning of this scheme.

<sup>4</sup><https://indianexpress.com/article/india/33-lakh-children-india-malnourished-17-lakh-severely-malnourished-govt-data-7611676/>

<sup>5</sup> Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1659 dated 16.12.2022

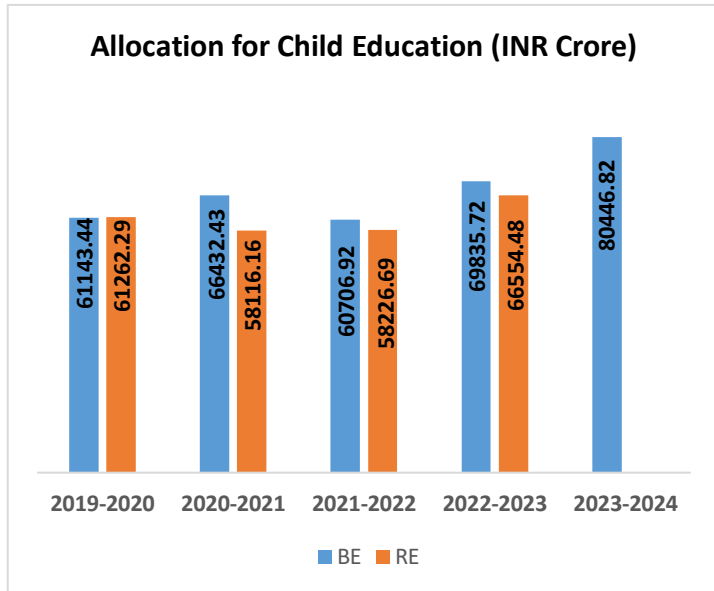
## CHILD EDUCATION

COVID-19 has presented an unprecedented challenges to the India' education system where the country saw one of the longest school closures across the globe. With the launch of New Education Policy, 2020 which brought back the education expenditure to 6% of GDP at the centre-stage, promises for reforms have been resonating in all the speeches and declarations by the Government. As per Economic Survey 2022-23, the total expenditure on education was about 2.9 per cent of India's GDP in 2022-23.<sup>6</sup>

There is an increase of 15.19 per cent towards the allocation of child education schemes with the total allocation of INR 80446.82 in the Union Budget 2023-24.

While there have been major budget cuts for the Scholarship Schemes for Minorities and STs, allocation towards Eklavya Model Residential Schools received the observed significant growth in the

Union Budget 2023-24. The total allocation for EMRS in the current budget increased from INR 2000 Crore in 2022-23 (BE) to INR 5927.31 Crore.



**The addition of 38,800 teachers for Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) announced by the Finance Minister in her Budget Speech, 2023.**

**But, will that make the 288 non-functional EMRS functional?**

As per the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, a total of 689 EMRs have been sanctioned, out of which only 401 EMRs are functional and further 51 EMRs are yet to be sanctioned.

As per the National Education Society for Tribal Students (NESTS) Annual Report 2020-21, there are 353 functional EMRs and 235 non-functional EMRs, which sums up to be 588 EMRs.

While mentioning about the learning losses due to COVID-19, the Finance Minister in her Budget Speech announced setting up of **National Digital Library**. This must be seen in the backdrop of available data which shows that out of 14,89,115 schools in India only 5,04,989 (33.9 per cent) have internet access and only 45.8% of schools have functional computers.<sup>7</sup> Government schools with internet access are only 24.2 per cent and those with functional computers are only 35.8 per cent. Government aided schools with internet access are 53.1 per cent and 67.5 per cent of such schools

<sup>6</sup> Economic Survey of India, 2022-23

<sup>7</sup> UDISE 2021-22

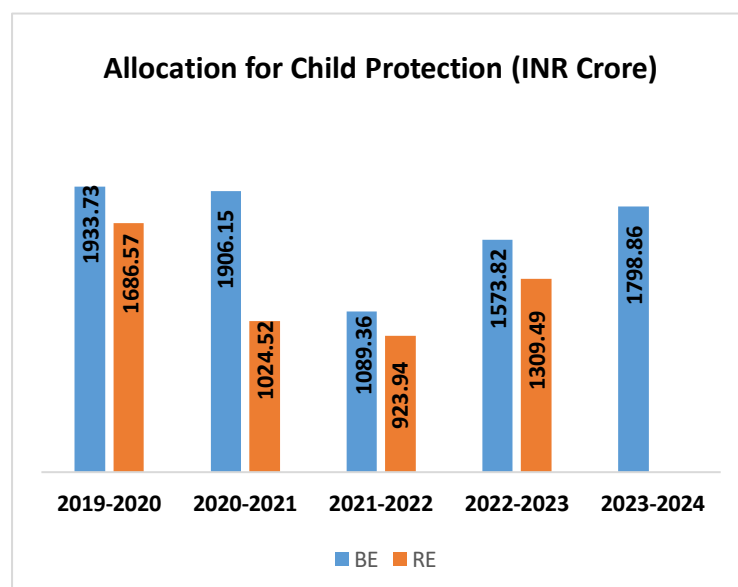
have functional computers. As regards private schools, those with access to internet are 59.6 per cent and with functional computers are 71.9 per cent. Although setting up of the National Digital Library may sound pleasing and attractive, but we cannot deny the unfortunate incidents of children committing suicide due to inability to access online education during the pandemic.<sup>8 9</sup>

Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SMSA), one of the key flagship schemes of the Government, received a total allocation of INR 37453.47 Crore in Union Budget 2023-24, which is 0.19 per cent increase against the allocation made in 2022-23 Budget (BE). The fund approved vis-a-vis funds released for SMSA shows gaps in planning and implementation of the scheme. For example, for the FY 2021-22, the total approved budget for SMSA was INR 35286.46 Crore whereas the total fund released for the programme stood at INR 16814.4 Crore (47.65%).

Funds Approved Vs. Funds Released for SMSA		
Year	Funds Approved (Crore)	Funds Released (Crore)
2018-19	45043.33	29294.22
2019-20	49568.25	32326.81
2020-21	35772.81	27755.62
2021-22	35286.46	16814.4

Source: Openbudgets;  
<https://schemes.openbudgetsindia.org/scheme/smsa?indicator=expenditure-incurred-by-the-states-uts>

## CHILD PROTECTION



Over the years, child protection has been one of the most under prioritised sectors across the table in terms budget allocations. In the Union Budget 2023-24, child protection received only INR 1798.86 Crore, which is an increase of 14.30 per cent as against the BE of 2022-23 Budget. However, child protection still remains one of the least funded sectors when it comes to

its share in the Union Budget as well as within the Budget for Children.

Mission Vatsalya is one of the biggest flagship umbrella schemes to address child protection concerns. In 2021-22, the Integrated Child Protection Scheme was merged

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.timesnownews.com/mirror-now/in-focus/article/with-no-computer-or-smartphone-16-year-old-student-commits-suicide-after-failing-to-attend-online-classes/609273>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/india-teenager-suicide-mobile-phone-screen-online-classes-b1371700.html>

under Mission Vatsalya and in July 2022, the Guidelines for implementation of Mission Vatsalya were approved. If the norms under these Guidelines are to be followed and going by conservative estimates, there is a need of INR 1639.94 Crores per year only to ensure care, protection and rehabilitation for children in government run child care institutions. The requirement is will increase if the number of NGO run childcare institutions supported by the government are counted. And if the non-institutional care component is added @INR 4000/- per child per month, the budget requirement will be much more. Yet, the allocation for Mission Vatsalya remains at 1472.17 Crores.

Components as per Guidelines for Implementation of Mission Vatsalya	Budget requirement as norms under the Guidelines	Break-up of Financial Norms for certain components of Mission Vatsalya under the Guidelines	Number of Units	Budget requirement for certain components of Mission Vatsalya as per the Guidelines	Description/ Remarks/ Criteria followed
Financial support for the Central Project Monitoring Unit (CPMU)	4,00,20,000				
Financial Support for SCPS	45,83,34,256				
For States with maximum 5 districts		44,01,880	8	35215040	Goa, Sikkim, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Lakshadweep , Puducherry and Ladakh)
For States with 6 to 20 districts		1,01,63,432	10	101634320	Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Uttarakhand and Delhi)
For States with more than 20 districts		1,78,60,272	18	321484896	Arunachal, Pradesh Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand,

					Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Jammu & Kashmir)
<b>Financial Implication for SARA</b>	<b>8,24,12,720</b>				
For States with maximum 5 districts		18,17,020	8	14536160	
For States with 6 to 20 districts		21,67,020	10	21670200	
For States with more than 20 districts		25,67,020	18	46206360	
<b>Financial Support for DCPU</b>	<b>4,38,29,50,044</b>	59,79,468	733		One DCPU per district according to JJ Act @733 districts
<b>Financial Support for Juvenile Justice Board</b>	<b>1,07,71,37,636</b>	14,69,492	733		One JJB per district according to JJ Act @733 districts
<b>Financial Support for Child Welfare Committee</b>	<b>2,13,26,57,636</b>	29,09,492	733		One CWC per district according to JJ Act @733 districts
<b>Financial Support to Child Care Institutions</b>	<b>5,75,17,76,688</b>	74,02,544	777		Only Government run institutions as per CIF Report, 2018
<b>Financial support to SAA</b>	<b>14,95,94,560</b>	21,99,920	68		Only Government run SAAs as per CIF Report, 2018
<b>Financial Support for Open Shelter (a unit of 25 Children)</b>	<b>88,14,80,704</b>	29,48,096	299		Only Government supported Open Shelters as

					enumerated by CIF prior to its survey
<b>Financial support for children in CCIs</b>	<b>1,44,30,96,000</b>	36,000	40086		1144 CCIs including SAAs and Open Shelters Number of child beneficiaries in 2020-21 as per the figures released to PIB release by the Ministry of Women and Child Development is 77615 in 2215 CCIs. This implies 35 children per CCI. 35x 1144 government run CCIs = 40086 children.
<b>All above components</b>	<b>16,39,94,60,244</b>				

India ratified the ILO Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age for Employment, 1973 (No. 138) and Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 on 13 June, 2017. India is also committed to SDG 8.7. But can the merger of NCLP under SSA help achieve the SDG and provide the much needed data to measure progress on the ILO Conventions?

### Is NCLP soon going to become history?

In October 2020, as per a PIB release, Shri Gangwar, the then Minister for Labour and Employment had alerted against possibility of increase in the incidence of child labour in view of the adverse effect of Covid 19 on the economy and called for suitable action, including working on mission mode for rehabilitation of child especially in view of Covid 19. He had also announced an increase in the stipend given to children rescued under the NCLP from Rs. 150 to Rs. 400 per month and payment to children through direct bank transfer. Yet, in its response to a question raised in the Lok Sabha [Unstarred Question No. 64], dated 18.07.2022, the Ministry of Labour and Employment states that the NCLP scheme was approved for continuation only up to 31.03.2021 and since then has been subsumed/merged with the Samagara Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Scheme. The Ministry's response also mentions that a total of 254 number of Special Training Centre (STC), approved by the Ministry of Labour & Employment prior to 31.03.2021, and which have not yet completed two years as per NCLP Scheme guidelines, are operational in the States of Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Assam and West Bengal as on 12.07.2022.

While these are clear signs of the NCLP dying out, there is no clarity on how the rescued children will receive the stipend due to them under the NCLP and whether the stipend will continue at all. There is also sufficient reason to question if the merger of the NCLP with SSA implies no data on number of children rescued and rehabilitated in the years to come.

Besides, Data on number of children rescued/withdrawn from work and rehabilitated under the NCLP is no longer available from the Parliament questions. The Ministry of Labour and Employment is now strictly sharing only the number of cases registered for violation of the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) (CALPR) Act, 1986 as recorded by the NCRB.

Year	Number of children rescued/ withdrawn from work, rehabilitated and mainstreamed under the NCLP Scheme	NCRB data on cases registered under the CALPR Act
2019-20	54,894	772
2020-21	58,289	476
2021-22	13,271	613

Source: Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 64 (answered on 17.07.2022) and 1859 (answered on 19.12.2022)

**The much acclaimed 5th largest economy in the world can afford only 2.3% of its budget for 37% of its citizens under 18 years**