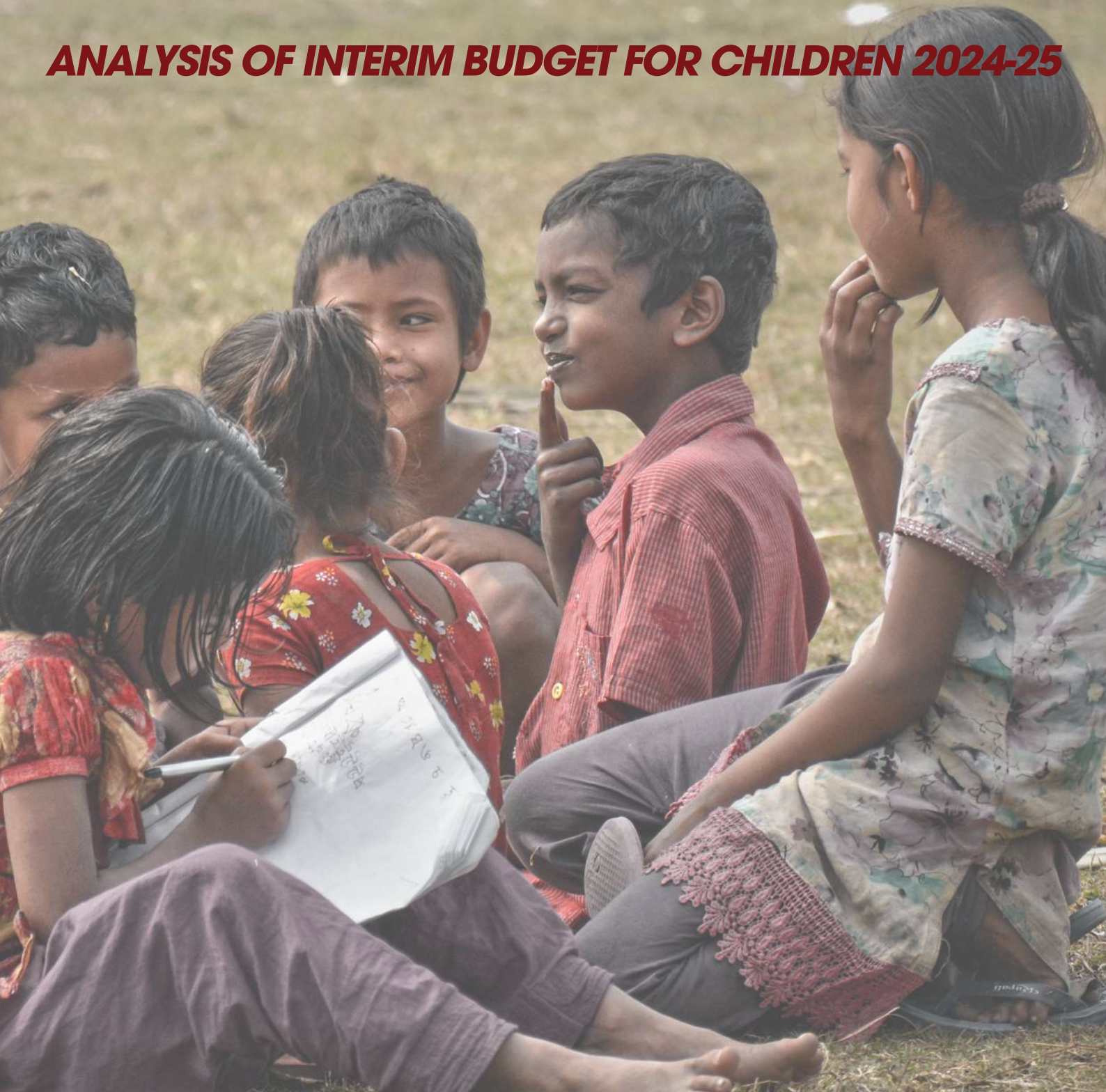


CHILDREN FIND LITTLE SPACE IN 'AMRIT KAAL'

ANALYSIS OF INTERIM BUDGET FOR CHILDREN 2024-25



As the nation gears up for the General Election 2024, the ruling government presented the interim budget 2024-25. As the name suggests, an Interim Budget is a temporary financial plan announced before a new government is set to come in after general elections. It can be understood as a provisional arrangement to meet the expenditure of the government for a short period till the new government comes in and makes the new full budget. An Interim Budget allocates funds for essential government operations, ongoing schemes and urgent requirements. Since it is not a budget for a full year, it refrains from policy reforms.

The Budget Speech by the Finance Minister centred around the Report Card of the ruling government for the last ten years and also a transgression into *Amrit Kaal* and *Viksit Bharat*. Maternal and Child care health has found mention in the Budget Speech this time.

- Our Government will encourage vaccination for girls in age group of 9 to 14 years for prevention of cervical cancer.
- Various schemes for maternal and child care will be brought under one comprehensive programme for synergy in implementation. Upgradation of anganwadi centres under “Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0” will be expedited for improved nutrition delivery, early childhood care and development.
- The newly designed U-WIN platform for managing immunization and intensified efforts of Mission Indradhanush will be rolled out expeditiously throughout the country.

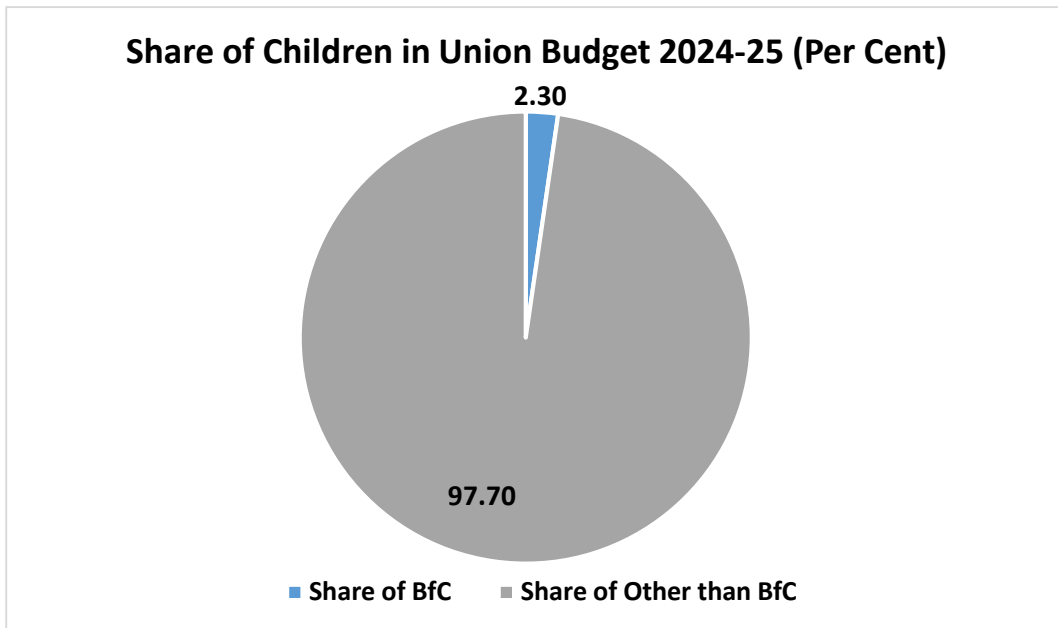
----Excerpts from the Budget Speech 2024-25

It will be pertinent to see how the government is envisioning inclusion of children in the idea of *Viksit Bharat*.

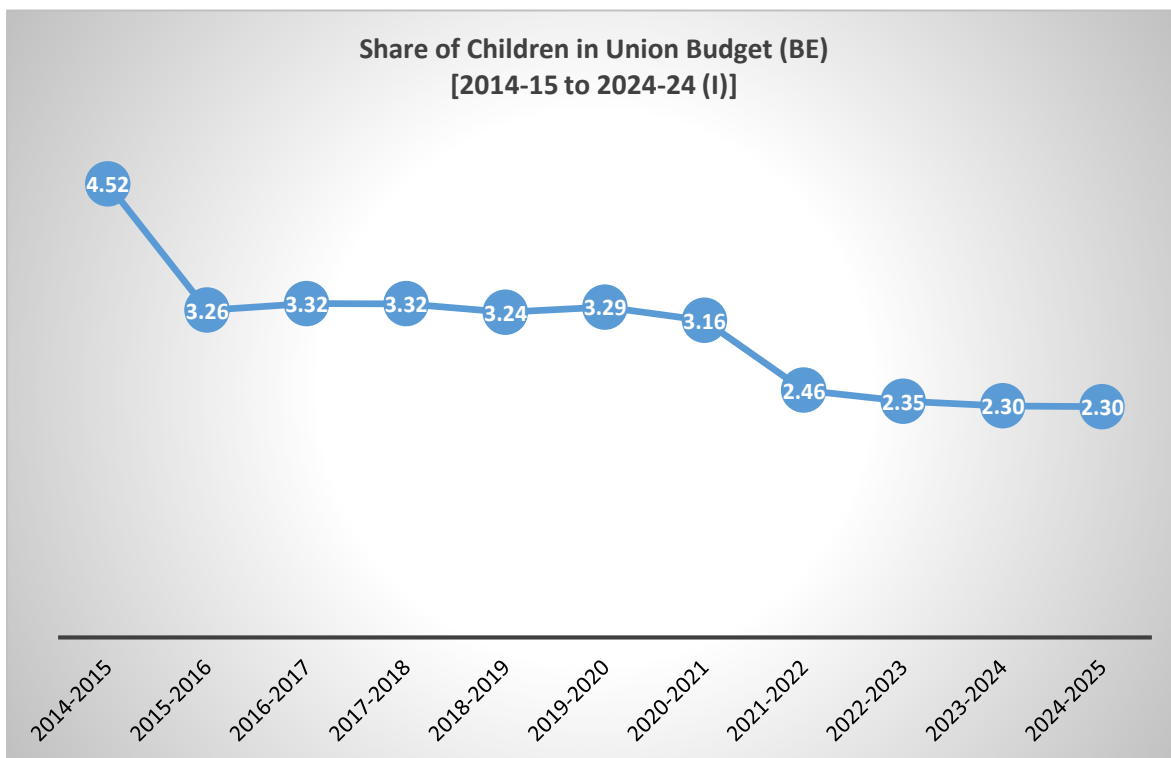
As per the Statement 12 of the Interim Union Budget 2024-25, children related programmes received a total allocation of INR 109493.08 Crore, a 5.49 per cent increase as compared to the allocations in Union Budget 2023-24 at BE stage. In the Union Budget 2023-24, children related programmes received total allocation of INR 103790.70 Crore.

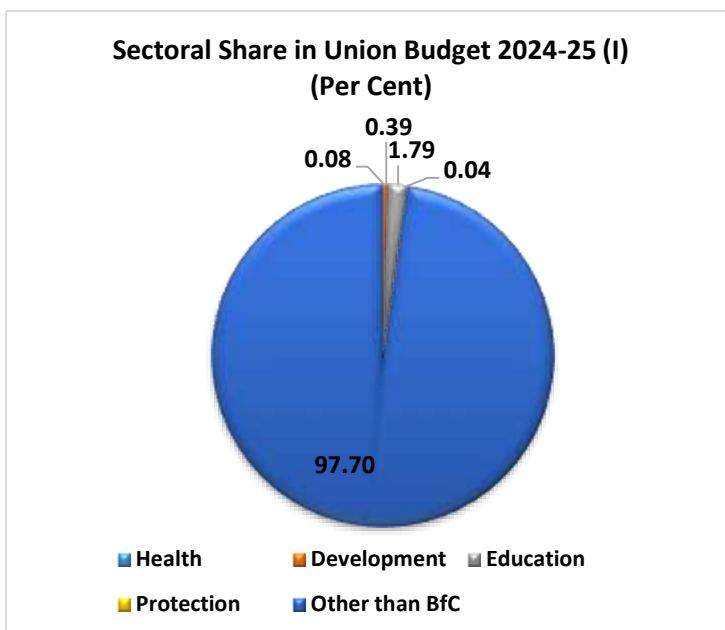
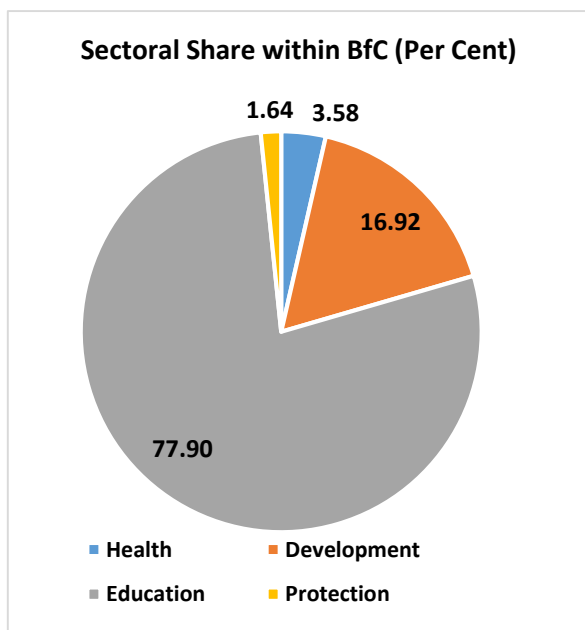
While the total volume of Union Budget (interim) 2024-25 grew by 5.84 per cent at BE stage, the budget for children observed a growth of 5.49 per cent in the Union Budget 2024-25.

However, when analysed in terms of share of the Budget for Children (BfC) in the total Union Budget 2024-25, it has remained at 2.30 per cent. Children received the same share of financial resources in the Union Budget 2023-24 as well.



While almost all the government advertisements, speeches by political leaders and ministers (including the Budget Speech of 2024-25) constantly remind us of our country entering into Amrit Kaal and committing for Viksit Bharat, it is poignant to see whether children are included in this envisioning or not. The trend of share of children in the Union Budgets over the years could be one of the yardstick to analyse the contention of Amrit Kaal and Viksit Bharat for children. In the last 11 years, the share of children in the Union Budget has been on a downhill. The maximum share of 4.52 per cent was allocated in 2014-15 and now in the current fiscal year, it has come down to 2.30 per cent.





The sectoral break-up of resource allocation reflects the priorities of the Government. Traditionally, child protection has always remained at the backseat of the resource allocation and in the interim Union Budget 2024-25 as well, child protection received only 0.04 per cent of the total budget and subsequently, the share of child protection within the Budget for Children (BfC) remains at 1.64 per cent. This must be seen in the backdrop of growing child protection concerns. As per the Crime in India Report, 2022, a total of 162449 incidences of crimes against children were recorded, which is 8.73 per cent increase than the previous year.

Key Ministries with Increased/Decreased Allocations in Interim Union Budget 2024-25 (₹ Crore)					
Ministry/ Department	AE (2022-23)	BE (2023-24)	RE (2023-24)	BE (2024-25)	Increase/ Decrease 2024-25 (BE) Against 2023-24 (BE) (%)
Ministry of Ayush	1.24	3.52	9.15	13.92	295.45
Department of School Education and Literacy	57904.22	67290.34	60148	71523.07	6.29
Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change	0	53.35	53.16	54.13	1.46
Ministry of External Affairs	19.32	50.63	54.24	126.18	149.22
Department of Health and Family Welfare	3811.9	3490.5	3658.6	3906.43	11.92
Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs	0	230	0	0	-100.00
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting	0	21	23	26	23.81
Ministry of Labour and Employment	15.9	20	6	0	-100.00
Ministry of Minority Affairs	122.85	1582.1	1444	1517.34	-4.09

Department of Social Justice and Empowerment	2918.79	4153.03	3697.4	4212.04	1.42
Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disability	70.1	76.5	82.5	97.5	27.45
Ministry of Tribal Affairs	2356.62	6338.94	2879.22	6835.14	7.83
Ministry of Women and Child Development	18110.41	19336.98	19986.61	19989.34	3.37
Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports	18.04	22	32.85	22	0.00

Despite much emphasis on the implementation of the National Education Policy, 2020, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyaan received the total allocation of ₹37500 Crore in union Interim Budget 2024-25. This is a mere 0.12 per cent increase as against the allocation of ₹37453.47 Crore in 2023-24 Union Budget at BE Stage.

Samagra Shiksha Abhiyaan has been realigned for the purpose of implementation of the National Education Policy, 2020. The Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSE&L) has introduced the national mission to improve learning outcomes through an integrated teacher training programme called NISHTHA (National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement) for teacher development. Among many other initiatives of the DoSE&L to streamline implementation of the NEP, strengthening of vocational education initiatives in Samagra Shiksha has also been one of the focus areas.¹ And yet, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyaan received so little attention in the Interim Union Budget 2024-25.

One of the flagship programmes, PM School for Rising India (PM SHRI) has received 48.15 per cent increased allocation as against the last year. In the interim Union Budget 2024-25, the total allocation for PM SHRI stands at ₹6000 Crore. Surprisingly, at RE stage in 2023-24, the total allocation for PM SHRI was brought down by 30 per cent with reduced allocation from ₹4000 Crore at BE stage in 2023-24 to ₹2800 Crore at RE stage. As per Press Information Bureau, under PM SHRI (PM Schools for Rising India) for upgradation of schools, a total of 6448 schools were selected and ₹630.11 crore has been released to 6207 PM SHRI schools in 27 States/UTs along with KVS/NVS as first instalment.²

National Child Labour Project (NCLP) is one of the flagship schemes for rehabilitation of child labourers through District Project Societies under the Chairmanship of the District Magistrate. Under the NCLP scheme, the children in the age group of 9-14 years are rescued / withdrawn from work and enrolled in the NCLP Special Training Centres (STCs), where they are provided with bridge education, vocational training, mid-day meal, stipend, health care, etc. before being mainstreamed into formal education system. **In the interim Union Budget 2024-25, NCLP programme has received no allocation.** The reason for no allocation for NCLP could also

¹ "Implementation of the new National Education Policy 2020: An assessment"; Observer Research Foundation; <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/implementation-of-the-new-national-education-policy-2020>

² "Achievements of National Education Policy"; Posted On: 20 DEC 2023 7:00PM by PIB Delhi; <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1988845>

be because NCLP has been subsumed under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan w.e.f. 01.04.2021. Henceforth, the rescued child labourers will be mainstreamed into formal education system through STC operational under SSA. At present, no Special Training Centres (STC) is functional under NCLP scheme. No new STCs under NCLP Project have been approved after 31.03.2021.³

In the interim Union Budget 2024-25, the overall allocation for the Ministry of Minority Affairs has been reduced by 4.09 per cent as against the previous year's allocation. The allocations for some of the significant schemes under the aegis of Ministry of Minority Affairs have been cut down drastically in the current interim budget. For example, 'Education Scheme for Madarsas and Minorities' received the reduced allocation from ₹10 Crore in 2023-24 to ₹2 Crore in 2024-25. Similarly, 'Free Coaching and Allied Scheme' received only ₹10 Crore. This scheme was allocated ₹30 Crore in Union Budget 2023-24. Another crucial scheme 'Pre-Matric Scholarship for Minorities' observed massive reduction of 24.67 per cent with total allocations coming down from ₹433 Crore in 2023-24 to ₹326.16 Crore in 2024-25 interim Union Budget.

Schemes Observing Reduced Allocation in interim Union Budget 2024-25 (₹ Crore)				
Programmes/ Schemes	BE (2023-24)	RE (2023-24)	BE (2024-25)	Per Cent decrease in Allocation over the last year
Pre- Matric Scholarship for Minorities	433.00	400.00	326.16	-24.67
Pre Matric Scholarship for OBCs, EBCs and DNTs	281.00	281.00	210.00	-25.27
Post Matric Scholarship for OBCs, EBCs and DNTs	217.40	217.40	184.20	-15.27
Free Coaching and Allied Scheme for Minorities	30.00	14.00	10.00	-66.67
Merit cum Means based scholarships	44.00	25.00	33.80	-23.18
Education Scheme for Madarsas and Minorities	10.00	5.00	2.00	-80.00
Post Matric Scholarship Scheme for SCs	3052.39	2592.00	3047.99	-0.14
Grants-in-Aid to Maulana Azad Education Foundation	0.10	0.00	0.00	-100.00
Procurement of children books for Mission/Posts abroad.43rd book committee and other recommended children books under 'Bharat Ek Parichay'	0.05	0.00	0.00	-100.00
ATAL Mission for Rejuvenation and urban transformation(AMRUT)	230	0	0	-100.00
Inspired Award MANAK	73	53	66	-9.59

³ MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 228 TO BE ANSWERED ON 04.12.2023

Improvement in working conditions of child/women labour (National Child Labour Project)	20	6	0	-100.00
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The allocation for Mission Vatsalya has remained unchanged in the interim Union Budget 2024-25 with total allocation of ₹1472.17 Crore. The Ministry of Women and Child Development has revised the guidelines under Mission Vatsalya in 2022 and all the States and UTs have signed the Memorandum of Understanding with the Central Govt. The number of children supported under Non-Institutional Care has been increasing during the last few years i.e. 26084 children covered in 2019-20, 29337 children in 2020-21, 29338 children in 2021-22 and 62675 children in 2022-23.⁴ Yet, the unchanged allocation for the scheme remain a cause of concern.

Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRs) have been another focus area of this year's budget wherein the scheme has received 7.89 per cent increased allocation as against previous year's allocation. As per the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, a total of 690 EMRs have been sanctioned, out of which only 401 EMRs are functional.⁵ Whereas as per the **National Education Society for Tribal Students (NESTS)** Annual Report 2021-22, there are 378 functional EMRs and 303 non-functional EMRs which sums up to be **681 EMRs**.⁶ Although the scheme has observed increased allocations, but different ways of calculating the number of functional EMRs has caused confusion and lack of clarity.

Schemes Observing Increased Allocation in interim Union Budget 2024-25 (₹ Crore)				
Programmes & Schemes	BE (2023-24)	RE (2023-24)	BE (2024-25)	Per Cent increase in Allocation over the last year
NRHM-RCH Flexible Pool	3187.17	3366.70	3571.43	12.06
Manufacture of Sera and BCG Vaccine	109.92	99.32	125.00	13.72
Kalawati Saran Children's Hospital	168.53	167.14	180.00	6.81
PM Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI)	4000.00	2800.00	6050.00	51.25
Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN)	11600.00	10000.00	12467.39	7.48
Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS)	5927.31	2467.59	6394.78	7.89
Post Matric Scholarship for Minorities	1065.00	1000.00	1145.38	7.55
Samagra Shiksha	37453.47	33000.00	37500.00	0.12
Pre Matric Scholarship for ST Students	411.63	411.63	440.36	6.98
National Means cum Merit Scholarship Scheme	364.00	358.00	377.00	3.57
Scheme of Residential Education for Students in High School in Targeted Area (SRESHTA) for SCs	41.86	36.00	53.23	27.16

⁴ RAJYA SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.2074 TO BE ANSWERED ON 20.12.2023

⁵ <https://tribal.nic.in/EMRS.aspx>

⁶ <https://emrs.tribal.gov.in/WriteReadData/RTF1984/1688722020.pdf>

Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana (PM AJAY)	20.50	4.50	21.50	4.88
Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0	17471.16	18294.66	18020	3.14
SAMARTHYA	85	85	150.11	76.60
National Institute of Public Cooperation & Child Development	56	73.5	88.87	58.70
Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme(Now under Department of Disability Affairs)	52	52	66	26.92
Aids and Appliances for Handicapped (Now under Department of Disability Affairs)	24.5	30.5	31.5	28.57
Scheme for prevention of alcoholism and substance (Drug) abuse	24.88	14	25.12	0.96

As we are looking ahead to the new Government and a full-fledged Union Budget in July 2024, this interim Union Budget is a statement of intent of the Government. It also reflects that children have a very little space in the idea of *Viksit Bharat* and *Amrit Kaal*. The downward trend of children's share in the Union Budget (over the years) remain a cause of concern. If the Sustainable Development Goals are to be achieved in the stipulated timeline, then the trend of financial resource allocation for children need to adopt an upward trend and then only '*Sabka Saath Sabka Vikaas*' can be ensured.