

Brand India

No Equity for Children



India has embarked upon an economic model driven by the free market, incorporating processes of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. Our children today live, in what some describe, as “Brand India” which has the tenth highest GDP in the world. Even while the country is investing its resources to create “India—the Global Brand,” what is its commitment to its children?

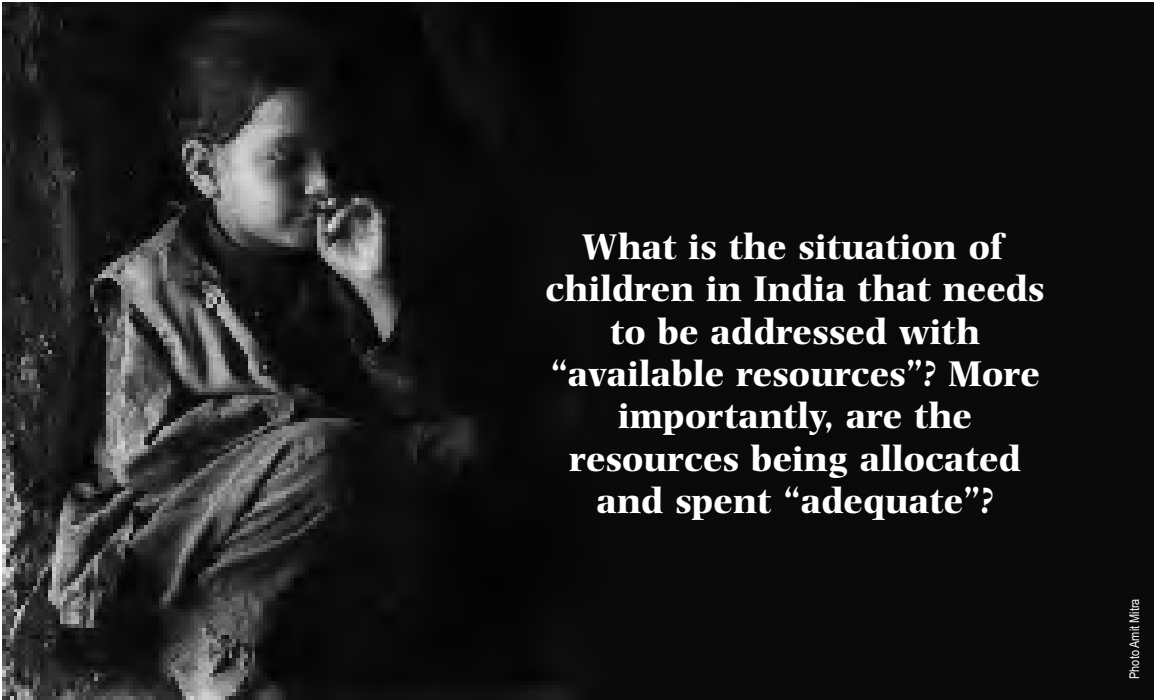


Photo: Amit Mitra

What is the situation of children in India that needs to be addressed with “available resources”? More importantly, are the resources being allocated and spent “adequate”?

Budgets are the most solid expression of a government’s priorities, performances, decisions and intentions.

WHAT IS “BUDGET FOR CHILDREN” (BfC) ?

“Budget for Children” is not a separate budget. It is merely an attempt to dis-aggregate from the overall budget, allocations made specifically for programmes that benefit children.

WHY SHOULD WE GIVE PRIORITY ATTENTION TO CHILDREN IN INDIA ?

Nineteen per cent of the world's children live in India. They comprise 42 per cent of the country’s total population. In international comparisons of the status and condition of children, India continues to rank poorly on several key counts. Children still suffer from poor nutrition, inadequate health services, clean water, sanitation and basic education.

Children are voiceless and vulnerable. They do not form a political lobby, and cannot advocate for themselves more effective delivery of socio-economic services that meet their needs. Thus, the lack of a detailed assessment of how much the government is spending on children inhibits the effective improvement of basic living standards of children.

Budgetary programmes, specifically socio-economic expenditures, affect the well-being and life opportunities of children directly.

The well being of society depends on investments in its human resource development, particularly of children and youth.

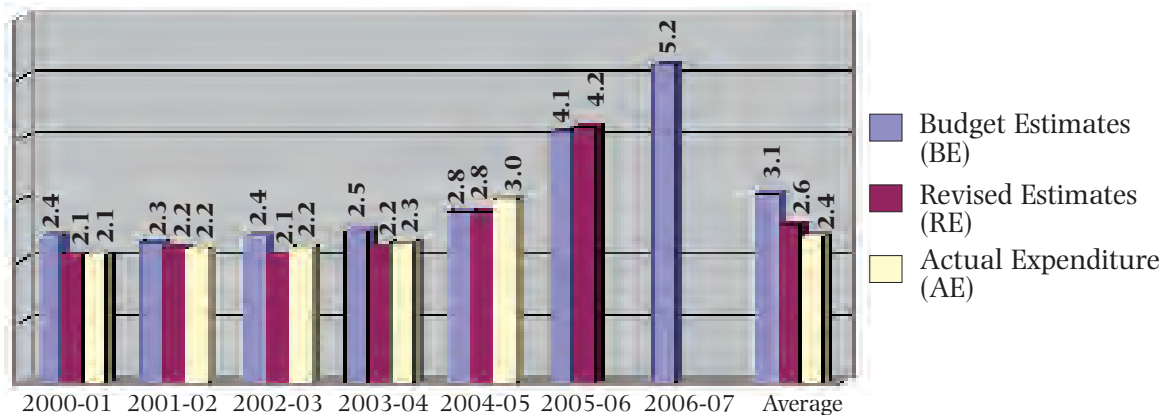
India has ratified the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992 and has thus promised to place Children's Rights at the forefront of development. It promised to give greater priority to children's concerns than was being given before.

“State parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of available resources and where needed the framework of international cooperation”

Article 4, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

WHAT IS THE SHARE FOR CHILDREN IN INDIA'S NATIONAL BUDGET ?

Share for Children in the Union Budget (Average Allocation for 2000-01 to 2006-07)



Note: AE is produced in the document after 2 years of budget estimates hence the AE is not available for the 2005-06 and 2006-07

India allocates **3.1 per cent** of the National Budget to its children. While the maximum allocation is for education, children's health and protection needs have been largely neglected.

At first glance, this growth in the allocations for BfC appears to be fairly impressive. Closer scrutiny however, causes concern. While Budget Estimates for children as a whole record an average growth of 25.4 per cent over seven years, in 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2004-05, allocations for three sectors of the Budget for Children was actually reduced significantly.

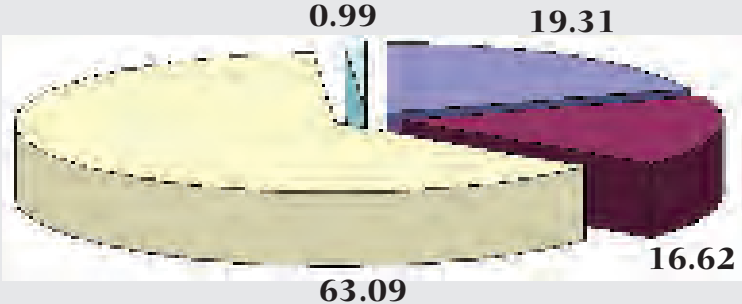
What is a matter of even greater concern is that under-spending of financial resources for children is a recurrent feature. Across the four sectors within BfC, under-utilisation of resources stands at an average of 1.57 per cent during the period of study for which figures are available. What may appear to be a small amount when taken as a percentage, actually comes to millions of rupees in absolute terms. It goes without saying that either the schemes are over budgeted for or the implementation is poor.

“Either the projected allocation has not been based on a scientific assessment or failure of the implementing agencies in reaching the targeted beneficiaries. Both the situations need serious review/rethinking of implementation process of such schemes....”

Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health And Family Welfare, Eighth Report.

As much as 24.1 per cent of the allocations for children is through external financing¹. Financial dependence on external sources has increased from 19.18 per cent in 2000-01 to over 28.4 per cent in 2003-04, falling to about 22 per cent in 2005-06. If analysed sectorally, 11.4 per cent for child development, 19 per cent for education and 51 per cent for health are from external sources. This high dependence on external financing has to be seen against the fact that debt servicing as a proportion of gross external current receipts are 10 per cent and India has been eighth in position among the ten debtor countries in 2004. **Even while it has come to be accepted that countries must draw upon all available sources for funding socio-economic initiatives, including external aid through grants and loans, is this dependence on external resources healthy and desirable ?** Dependence on external aid lays countries open to sanctions, withdrawal of funds and changes in global priorities for funding. It is clearly children who have to bear the brunt.

Sectoral Allocation (BE) as percentage within the BfC
Average for 2000-01 to 2006-07



In the wider context of poverty, disease, malnutrition, high mortality and increase in the number of children coming into conflict with the law, can the neglect of children's health, development and protection requirements in financial terms be justified ?

HEALTH



The status of health of children reveals the ocean-wide gap between the needs on-the-ground and the average annual allocation. Although very difficult to dis-aggregate because a large part of the children's health needs are met by the universal government health facilities, an examination of the budgetary allocation specifically for children shows that children received an average of only 0.61 per cent of the total budget.

In 2001-02, allocations (Budget Estimates) for the health sector was reduced by 4 per cent in comparison to the previous year. The health sector, with the least average annual growth, shows maximum under-spending at 22.41 per cent, AE over BE.

¹This does not include funding received for protection sector. Since funding for child labour elimination programmes, which receive external aid within the protection sector, is through direct partnerships between the funding bodies and implementing agencies or state governments, it does not find reflection in the budget of the National Government (Union Budget).

DEVELOPMENT



This includes early childhood care, pre-school education and schemes for overall development that do not fit into the other sectors. The 385.5 per cent increase in the budget for programmes for child development over the period under study may seem substantial, but has little meaning when set against the fact that very little has been achieved.

In 2004-05, the development sector records a reduction of as much as 8.4 percent. The Government itself has observed that even after 30 years of its existence, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), its flagship programme, fails to reach every poor young child.

Services under the ICDS scheme presently covered only 34.1 million children in the age group 0-6 years, which is around 22 per cent of the total children in that age group. Supplementary nutrition too is currently provided to 34 million children, as opposed to 160 million children who need it. The coverage of settlements is also highly inadequate. There are only 6 lakh anganwadis (child care centres) in the country, compared with an estimated 17 lakh required for universal coverage based on existing norms.



EDUCATION



The education sector receives the highest share of the budget both within the Union Budget as well as within the BfC. However, the Union/National Government funding for education (elementary and secondary) has, for the last few decades, constituted only 10 to 15 per cent of the total public expenditure on education.

India remains “at risk of not achieving the millennium development goal of universalisation of education by 2015.” It has failed to achieve the goals set for itself in the Tenth Five Year Plan—all children in school by 2003; all children to complete 5 years of schooling by 2007; investment of US\$ 1223 million-1333 million (Rs.55-60 thousand crore) over 5 years.

Out of every 100 children, 19 continue to be out of school. Of the 81 who enrol, almost 53 per cent drop out before reaching Class VIII (elementary level). Of every 100 children who are enrolled, 70 drop out by the time they reach the secondary level. Despite the promise of education for all, and non-discrimination being recognised as the basis of human rights, of every 100 children who drop out of school, 66 are girls; 46 per cent children from scheduled tribes and 38 per cent from scheduled castes continue to be out of school as against 34 per cent in the case of others. Children affected or infected by HIV/AIDS continue to be denied access to schools.



PROTECTION

The budget for child protection largely addresses two very specific categories of children in difficult circumstances: child labour and children that fall within the purview of the juvenile justice system—either as street children or as children in conflict with law or children requiring alternative care such as adoption. There is little reflection of all other categories of children in “difficult circumstances.” For example, according to the Ministry of Home Affairs, 16 out of 28 states in India face internal armed conflict. Children growing up in these states are vulnerable to violence and atrocities by both state and non-state parties. The Government recognises children affected by conflict as children in “difficult circumstances,” yet there are no specific budgetary provisions made to address their needs.

Initiatives for child protection (which includes special programmes for children identified to be in especially difficult circumstances) have consistently received the lowest share. It received 0.03 per cent of the total National Budget and 0.99 per cent within the Budget for Children. In 2003-04, the protection sector shows a negative annual growth of 7.2 per cent. The average under spending (AE-BE) of 15.23 per cent in the protection sector for the period 2000-01 to 2004-05 is a reflection of the low priority that child protection receives.



India has the highest number of working children and the highest number of sexually abused children in the world. Violence and abuse is on the rise. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, there has been an average increase of 12.97 percent during the period 2002-2005 in crimes against children. More subtle forms of violence against children, such as child marriage and economic exploitation continue. Physical and psychological punishment is rampant in the name of disciplining children and is culturally accepted.

HAQ'S INITIATIVE ON BfC

HAQ began its work on Budget for Children in 2000. In the first year of its work, it undertook a decadal analysis published in *India's Children and the Union Budget*, released in September 2001. This was the first endeavour of its kind in the country and it helped in understanding the process of budgeting and establishing the need for such analysis along with developing a methodology for the same. Since then HAQ has been consistently undertaking analysis of the

“After gender, the next logical step for the Department of Women and Child Development, as a nodal Department for women and children is the analysis of public expenditure on children. . . . A pioneering effort was made by HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, in their publication 'India's Children and the Union Budget' (Annual Report, DWCD.2002-2003 pg. 143).

“... The approach adopted was broadly based on the pioneering effort by HAQ Centre for Child Rights. This initiative has been continued in 2004-05” (Annual Report, DWCD. 2004-05. pg.114)

National Budget for Children every year and from 2002, has initiated this in 7 states also. Following HAQ's work on BfC, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, too has decided to undertake regular child budget analysis as an important mandate and have included it in the National Plan of Action for Children 2005. Civil Society groups have used the findings to file petitions, build their arguments for lobbying and advocacy, write shadow reports to the UNCRC Committee, drafting demands for inclusion of children in election manifestoes, as well as mobilise institutions of local self-governance.

ABOUT HAQ

HAQ works towards the recognition, promotion and protection of rights of all children. It aims to look at the child in an integrated manner within the framework of the Constitution of India and the Convention of the Rights of the Child, which India ratified in 1992, and contributes to the building of an environment where every child's rights are recognised and promoted without discrimination. At HAQ we believe that children's rights have to be mainstreamed into all developmental planning and action and must become a core developmental indicator.

To carry forward its mandate, HAQ undertakes research, documentation, public education and advocacy on children's rights. It also seeks to serve as a resource and support base for individuals and groups dealing with children at every level. It not only provides information and referral service but also training and capacity building of all those working with children or on issues concerning them, and the children themselves.

Over the last nine years, HAQ has been working on areas such as children and governance, violence and abuse of children, child trafficking and juvenile justice. HAQ provides legal support to children in need, particularly those who are victims of abuse or are in conflict with the law.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Status of Children in India.Inc. (2005)

Says a child... Who Speaks for My Rights? (a series of booklets analysing parliamentary questions and debates)

Children in Globalising India—Challenging our Conscience (2003)

Children Bought and Sold—We can Stop It! (Booklet on Child Trafficking in Hindi and English)(2003)

Children and Right to Adequate Housing: A Guide to International Legal Resources (2002)

India's Children and the Union Budget (2001)

Child Trafficking in India (2001)

AUDIO VISUALS

Toys of Lust and Greed—Kuch Chehre, Kuch Sawaal

Stop Child Trafficking—Give Back our Childhood (35mm film spot on child trafficking)



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