



Viksit Bharat: Big Dreams, Little Change for India's Children

An Analysis of Budget for Children

2025-26

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The Finance Minister, Ms. Nirmala Sitaraman presented the second budget of the NDA government in its 3rd term. While usually, all the eyeballs were caught towards the much awaited tax deductions and support to the middle class of the country, it is poignant to understand the budget priorities and the main budget themes which promises the vision of 'Viksit Bharat'. In the Budget 2025-26, the development measures span across the focus areas with special attention to Garib, Youth, Annadata and Nari.

The great Telugu poet and playwright Gurajada Appa Rao had said, '*Desamante Matti Kaadoi, Desamante Manushuloi*'; meaning, 'A country is not just its soil, a country is its people.' In line with this, for us, Viksit Bharat, encompasses:

- a) zero-poverty;
- b) hundred per cent good quality school education;
- c) access to high-quality, affordable, and comprehensive healthcare;
- d) hundred per cent skilled labour with meaningful employment;
- e) seventy per cent women in economic activities; and
- f) farmers making our country the 'food basket of the world'.

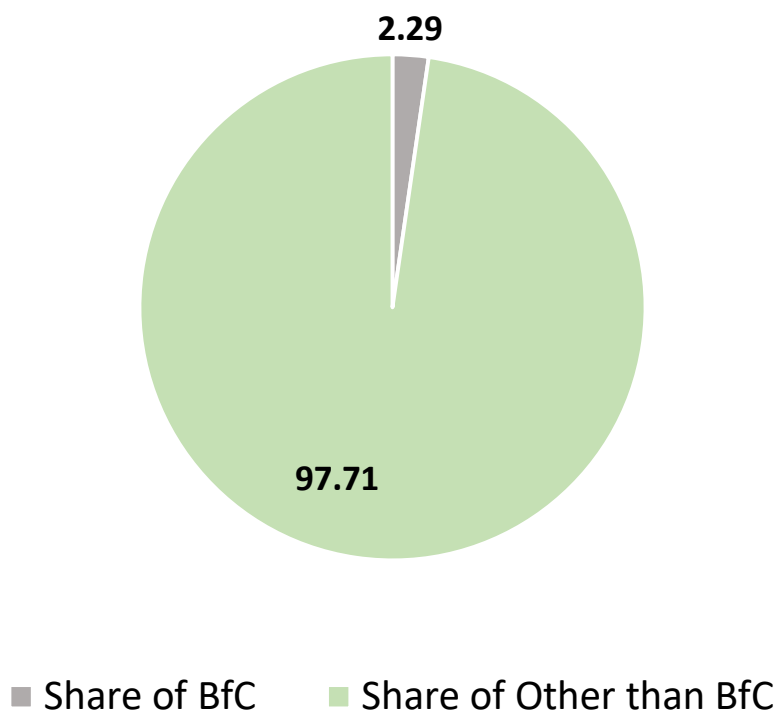
----Excerpts from the Budget Speech 2025-26



It is to be highlighted that traditionally, over the years, children are always left behind in the vision of DEVELOPMENT and therefore, not much is seen in the allocation for children other than a mere accounting business.

The share of children in the Union Budget 2025-26 is mere 2.29 per cent against the BE of 2024-25 Budget.

Share of Children in Union Budget 2025-26 (Per Cent)



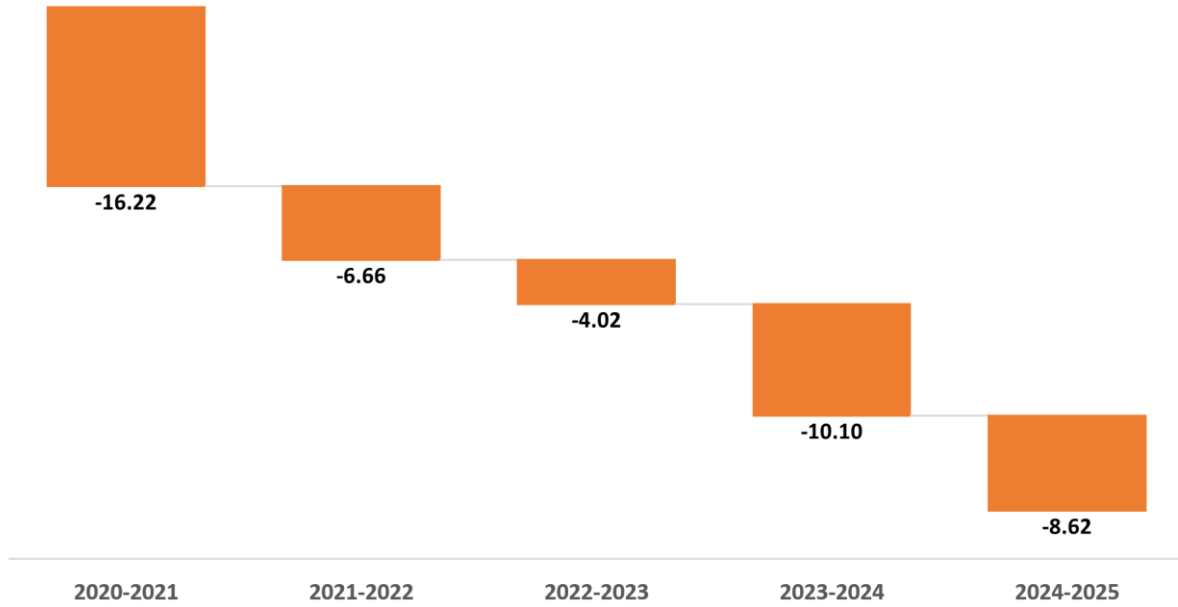
The schemes aimed towards the welfare of children (under Statement 12) observed a total allocation of ₹116132.50 Crores in the Union Budget 2025-26 (BE). This is an increase of 5.65 per cent in terms of absolute allocation against the previous year's allocation. In the Union Budget 2024-25 (BE), children related schemes observed a total allocation of ₹109920.95 Crores. Furthermore, it is to be noted that the allocations for children were reduced by 8.62 per cent at RE stage in FY 2024-25.

There is not much change in the trend of allocation for children as compared to the previous two budgets of the NDA Government's consecutive third term i.e. Union Budget 2024-25 and Union Budget 2025-26. The allocation of financial resources for children in the Union Budget 2024-25 was an increase of 5.51 per cent against the allocations made for children in the Union Budget 2023-24. This year too, the increase in allocation has remained hovering around 5.65 per cent against the Union Budget of 2024-25.

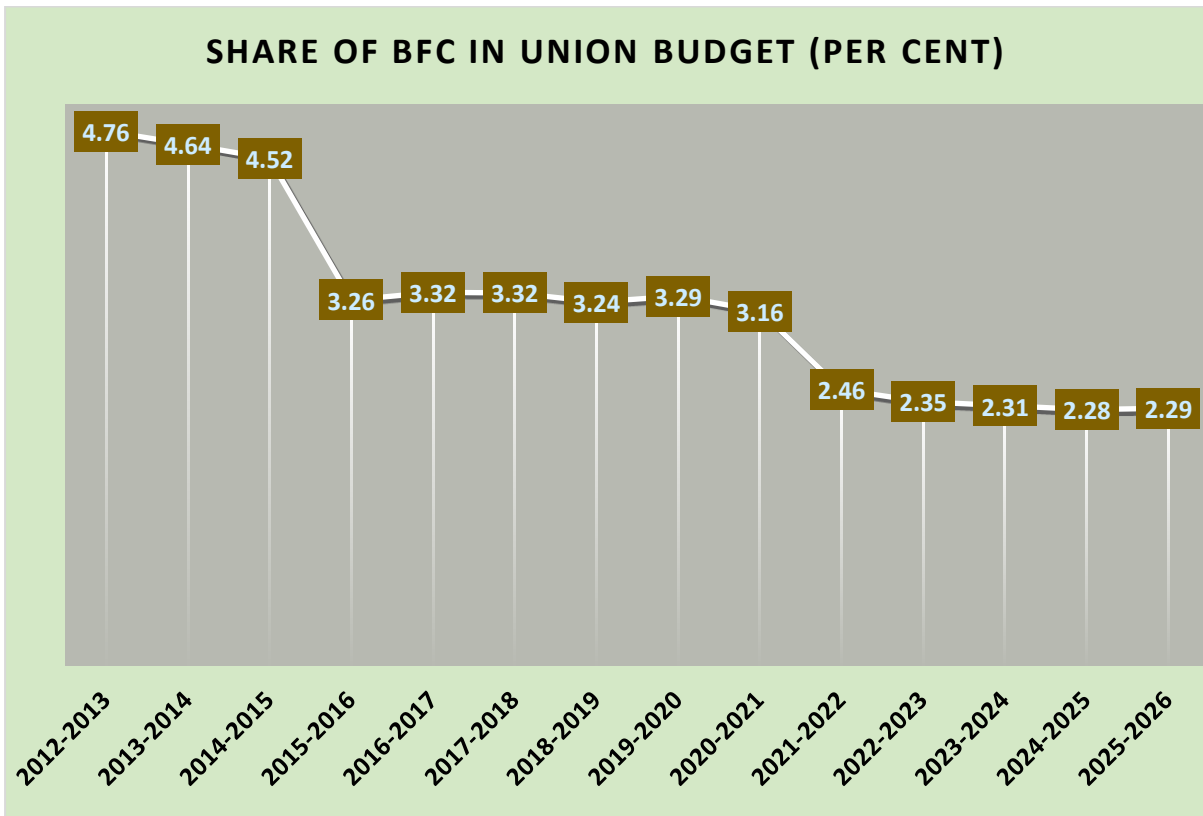
In terms of actual expenditure (AE) for 2023-24, a total of 85.74 per cent expenditure was incurred against the allocations of ₹104179.63 Crores in 2023-24 at BE stage. The allocations for FY 2023-24 were reduced by 10.10 per cent at RE stage and there is a total expenditure of 95.37 per cent against the reduced allocations at RE stage in FY 2023-24.

The trend of allocations at BE and RE stage also reveal that there is a significant reduction of allocations at RE stage every year. These significant deviations also raise concerns and gaps in the planning and implementation of children related programmes.

Variation from BfC Allocations from BE to RE Over the Years (In Per Cent)



When it comes to the share of children in the total Union Budget, the inconsistency and declining trend raises the questions on the idea of *Inclusive Bharat*. In FY 2012-13, the share of children stood at 4.76 per cent (at BE) and since then it has been a downward slope with the current share of 2.29 per cent in FY 2025-26 (at BE).



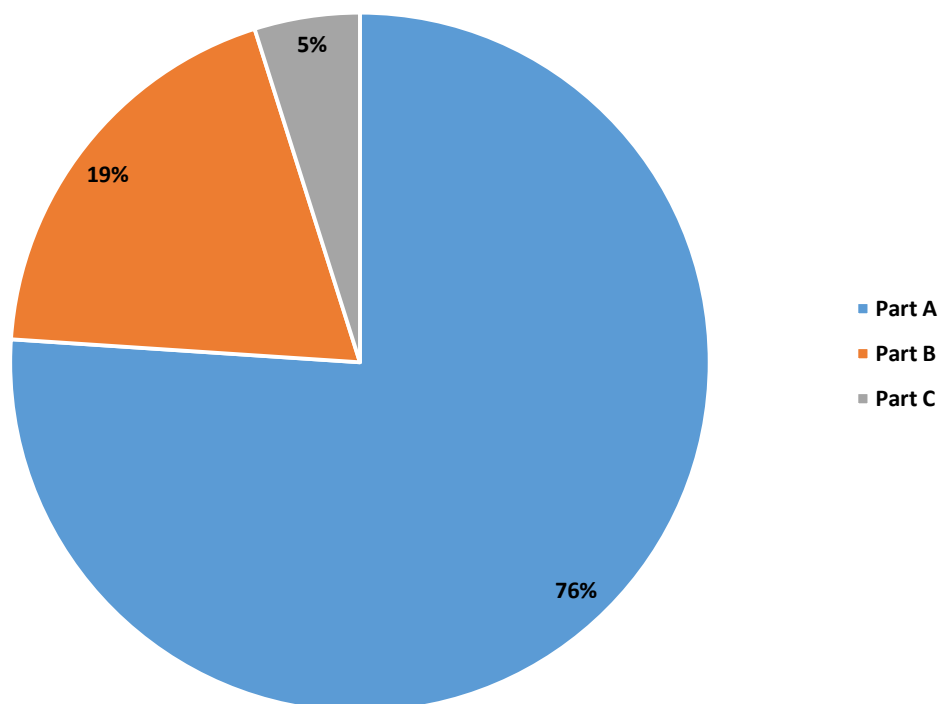
Priority-Wise Classifications of Budget Heads in Statement 12

In the previous Union Budget of FY2023-24, a structural change was introduced in the Statement 12 wherein the schemes were divided into three categories i.e Category A, B & C:

- I. Schemes with 100% provision for children (**Part A**)
- II. Schemes with 30- 99% allocations for children (**Part B**) and
- III. Schemes with allocations for children up to 30% of the provision (**Part C**)

In the Budget for Children 2025-26, the maximum allocation has been directed under Part A, followed by Part B and Part C.

Distribution of Financial Resources Within BfC 2025-26



Distribution of Financial Resources within BfC (₹ Crore)						
Year	PART A		PART B		PART C	
	BE	RE	BE	RE	BE	RE
2024-25	₹83839.51	₹75072.81	₹21422.06	₹20053.28	₹4659.38	₹5319.08
2025-26	₹88318.52	NA	₹22158.86	NA	₹5655.12	NA

Although the distribution of financial resources with the Budget for Children 2025-26 remains similar as to how it was distributed in FY 2024-25, it is noteworthy that some of the key flagship schemes which receive 100% provision from Central Government, have observed reduced allocation. For example, *National Means Cum Merit Scholarship Scheme, Manufacture of Sera and BCG Vaccine, Post Matric Scholarship* (under the aegis of Ministry of Minority Affairs) have observed reduced allocations in the Budget 2025-26. On the other hand, some of the key flagship schemes have also observed significant increase in allocations which needs to be acknowledged as a welcome move by the Government.

Part-Wise Details of Key Programmes with Increased Allocations in FY 2025-26 (₹ Crores)				
Ministry/ Department & Demand No.	Scheme/ Programme	2024-25 (BE)	2025-26 (BE)	Increase (%)
PART A				
Department of School Education & Literacy (Demand No. 25)	Samagra Shiksha	₹37500	₹41250	10.00%
	Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan	₹9302.67	₹9503.84	2.16%
	Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN)	₹12467.39	₹12500	0.26%
	PM Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI)	₹6050	₹7500	23.97%
Department of Health and Family Welfare (Demand No. 46)	Kalawati Saran Children's Hospital	₹180	₹183.16	1.76%
Department of Social Justice and Empowerment (Demand No. 93)	Pre Matric Scholarship for SCs and Others	₹500	₹577.96	15.59%
	Pre Matric Scholarship for OBCs, EBCs and DNTs (Under PM YASASVI)	₹210	₹300	42.86%
Ministry of Tribal Affairs (Demand No. 100)	Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS)	₹5794.78	₹5986.44	3.31%
Ministry of Women and Child Development (Demand No. 101)	Mission Vatsalya	₹1472.17	₹1500	1.89%
Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (Demand No. 102)	National Programme for Youth and Adolescent Development	₹22	₹25	13.64%
PART B				
Department of Social Justice and Empowerment (Demand No. 93)	Post Matric Scholarship for SCs	₹3047.99	₹3052.8	0.16%
Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Demand No. 94)	Scholarship for Students with Disabilities	₹71.34	₹87	21.95%
	Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme	₹66	₹115.5	75.00%
Ministry of Women and Child Development (Demand No. 101)	Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0	₹18020	₹18666	3.58%
PART C				
Department of Health and Family Welfare (Demand No. 46)	Flexible Pool for RCH & Health System Strengthening, National Health Programme and National Urban Health Mission	₹4153.48	₹4330.43	4.26%
Department of Social Justice and Empowerment (Demand No. 93)	Post Matric Scholarship for OBCs, EBCs and DNTs (Under PM YASASVI)	₹184.2	₹250	35.72%

Part-Wise Details of Key Programmes with Reduced or No Change In Allocations in FY 2025-26 (₹ Crores)				
Ministry/ Department & Demand No.	Scheme/ Programme	2024-25 (BE)	2025-26 (BE)	Decrease (%)
PART A				
Department of School Education & Literacy (Demand No. 25)	National Means Cum Merit Scholarship Scheme	₹377.00	₹374.00	-0.80%
	Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti	₹5800.00	₹5305.23	-8.53%
Department of Health and Family Welfare (Demand No. 46)	Manufacture of Sera and BCG Vaccine	₹125.00	₹120.50	-3.60%
Ministry of Minority Affairs (Demand No. 70)	Post Matric Scholarship	₹1145.38	₹413.99	-63.86%
	Education Scheme for Madaras and Minorities	₹2.00	₹0.01	-99.50%
Department of Social Justice and Empowerment (Demand No. 93)	Top Class Schools (Under PM YASASVI)	₹150	₹100	-33.33%
Ministry of Tribal Affairs (Demand No. 100)	Pre- Matric Scholarship for STs.	₹440.36	₹313.79	-28.74%
Ministry of Women and Child Development (Demand No. 101)	SAMARTHYA	₹150.11	₹125.00	-16.73%
	SAMBAL	₹222.00	₹222.00	NO CHANGE
PART B				
Department of Social Justice and Empowerment (Demand No. 93)	Boys and Girls Hostel for OBCs (Under PM YASASVI)	₹20.00	₹20.00	NO CHANGE
PART C				
Department of Health and Family Welfare (Demand No. 46)	Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana (PM AJAY)	₹21.50	₹20.40	-5.12%

In the Budget for Children 2025-26, the allocations for almost all the key Ministries/Departments have observed marginal increase against the allocations made in the previous budget of 2024-25 at BE stage. However, Ministry of Minority Affairs have been given the lease priority with 72 per cent reduced allocation than previous year. The heavy budget cuts in some of the key scholarship schemes and grant for madarsa education under the aegis of Ministry of Minority Affairs are the probable reasons for such reduced allocation for the Ministry of Minority Affairs.

Ministry-Wise Allocations in the Budget for Children 2025-26 (₹Crores)				
Department/ Ministry	2024-25 (BE)	2024-25 (RE)	2025-26 (BE)	Increase/ Decrease
Department of School Education and Literacy	₹71523.07	₹65992.22	₹76515.87	6.98%
Department of Health and Family Welfare	₹4488.48	₹4438.83	₹4664.09	3.91%
Ministry of Minority Affairs	₹1517.34	₹347.42	₹424	-72.06%

Department of Social Justice and Empowerment	₹4212.04	₹3696.4	₹4487.8	6.55%
Ministry of Tribal Affairs	₹6608.3	₹4646.73	₹6693.62	1.29%
Ministry of Women and Child Development	₹19989.34	₹18874.87	₹20642.49	3.27%
Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports	₹22	₹45	₹25	13.64%
Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities	₹168.84	₹180.3	₹234.17	38.69%

Ambiguity in Budget Heads of Statement 12

Statement 12 which is a financial statement consolidates the allocations from various Ministries or Departments which are targeted towards welfare of children. The separate annual financial statement for welfare of children is a progressive example of making the budget more accessible for various sections of the society and the GoI is one of the progressive governments across the globe which has made this a regular exercise every financial year. However, in the Statement 12 of Union Budget 2025-26, there are multiple budget heads which are ambiguous and is not clear how they are contributing towards the welfare of children. Moreover, the Statement 12 does not provide any explanation for these budget heads. Most of such budget heads fall under the allocations made by the Ministry of External Affairs. The table below captures some of these budget heads which are ambiguous and need explanation as to how they target the welfare of children. Such ambiguity defeats the whole purpose of a separate financial statement as it is unclear as to how to segregate the budget heads under the various child rights and development indicators.

Ambiguous Schemes/Budget Heads in the Statement 12 2025-26 (₹ Crores)				
Ministry/ Department	Scheme/ Programme	2024-25 (BE)	2024-25 (RE)	2025-26 (BE)
Ministry of Culture (Demand No. 18)	Others	₹3.90	0	0
Ministry of External Affairs (Demand No. 29)	RSDP - Rakhine State Dev prog	0	₹4.20	₹16.80
	Quick Impact Projects (QIP) (USD 50,000 for each project up to 5 projects for each FY)	0	₹1.05	₹2.10
	SDP projects	0	₹2.52	₹8.40
	USD 1.5 million Grant Assistance for providing Demining Equipment to Cambodia	0	₹7.63	₹2.54
	Others	0	₹24.56	₹21.31

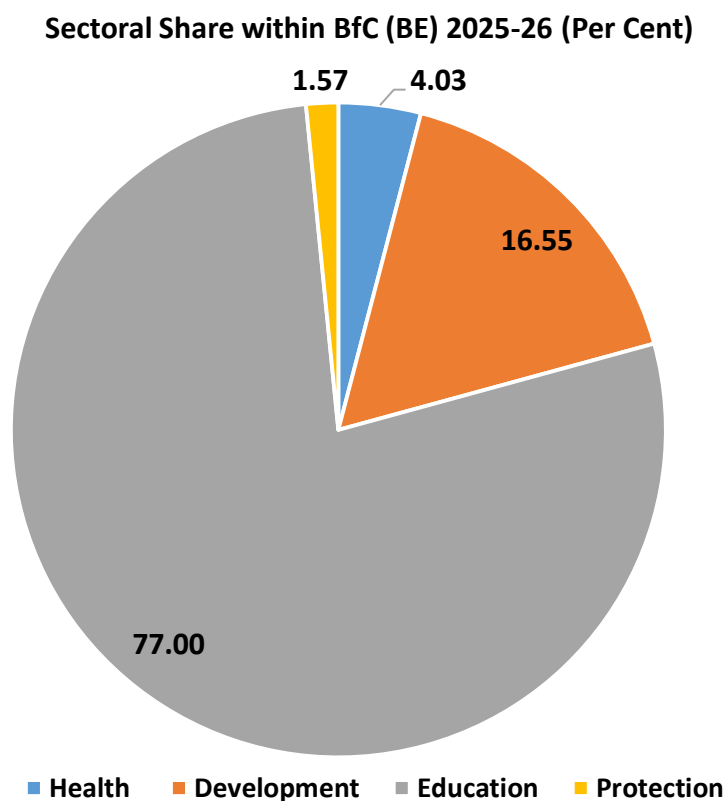
Sectoral Allocations: A Quick Glance

When it comes to sectoral allocations of various child rights indicators, child education received the maximum share of financial allocations with total share of 1.77 per cent of total financial resources. Child Protection, despite being one of the serious concerns in today's times, remains least prioritised in terms of financial allocations with total share of 0.04 per cent of the Union Budget 2025-26. While there has been some significant increase in *Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0*, one of the key schemes aimed towards addressing the nutritional needs of children, the share of child development sector stands at 0.38 per cent. Child health sector and schemes addressing child health concerns have not seen much change against the previous year allocations.

Sectoral Share in Union Budget (In Per Cent)					
Year	Health BE	Development BE	Education BE	Protection BE	Other than BfC
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
2023-2024	0.08	0.40	1.79	0.04	97.69
2024-2025	0.09	0.39	1.76	0.04	97.72
2025-2026	0.09	0.38	1.77	0.04	97.71

Note: Allocations under the Budget Heads which are ambiguous and do not fall under any of the child rights indicators, have not been taken into account for the purpose of this calculation

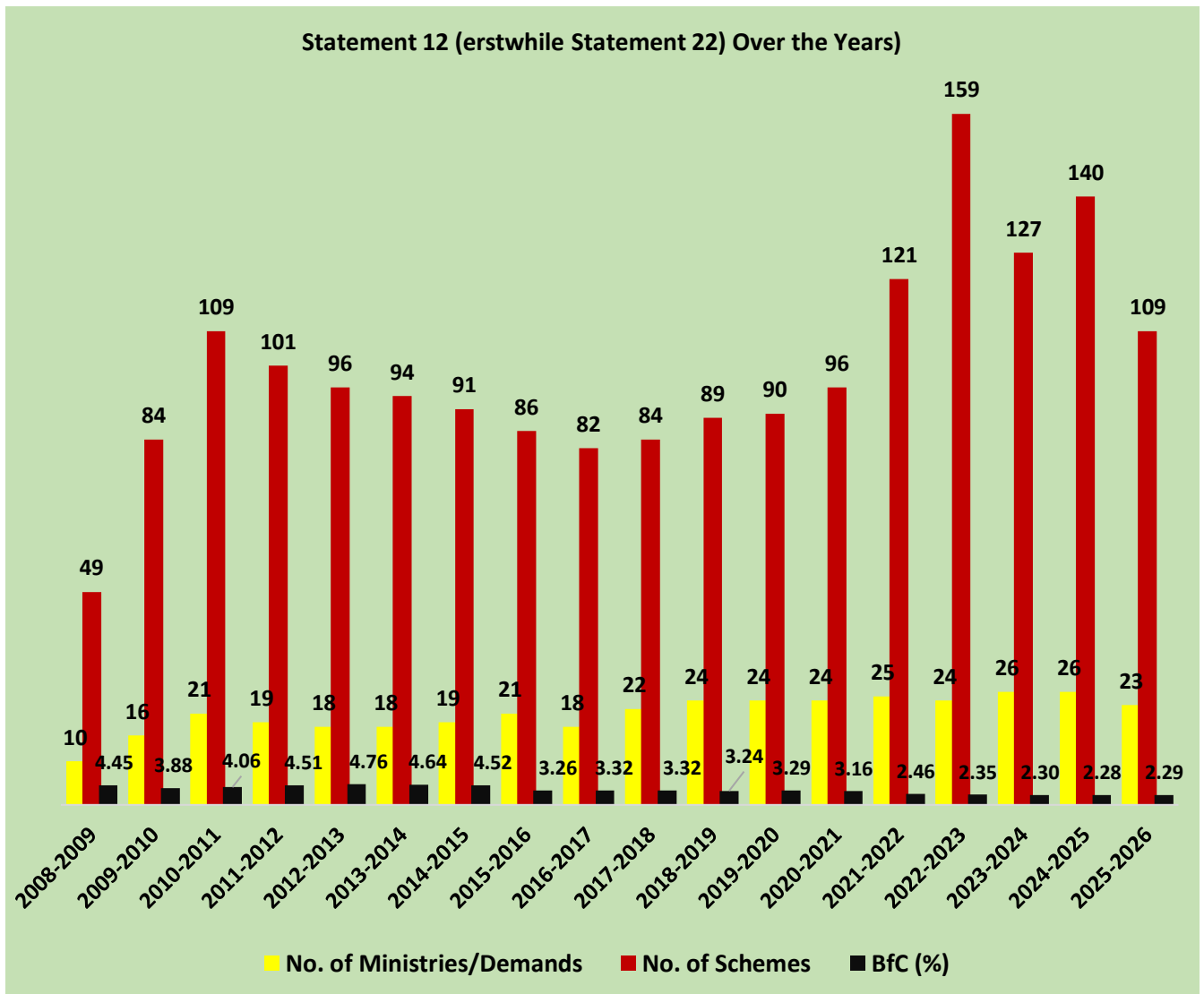
A closer look at the distribution of allocations within the BfC, pose a similar picture wherein child education received the maximum share (77 per cent) followed by child development (16.55 per cent), child health and child protection.



Statement 12 Over the Years

A brief analysis of Statement 22/Statement 12 1 highlights the number of programmes included as a part of the Budget Statement for Welfare of Children. Initially, when Statement 22 was launched in 2008-09, 10 Ministries/Departments sanctioned a total of 49 schemes/programmes for children giving a total of 4.45 per cent of share of financial resources to children. Over the years, the number of Ministries/Departments kept increasing and so the number of schemes/programmes, but the Budget for Children (BfC) did not see much of change.

In 2010-11, a total of 109 schemes featured in Statement 22 by 21 Ministries/Departments, but the BfC remained a menial 4.06 per cent. On the other hand, in 2012-13, with 18 Ministries floating 96 Programmes/Schemes for children, the share of children observed to be 4.76 per cent, which was the highest share in last 7 years. Further in 2020-21, which is the year of unprecedented pandemic, the number of programmes targeted for the welfare of children remained the same as it was in 2012-13 i.e. 96, but the share of children reduced from 4.76 percent in 2012-13 to 3.16 percent. In the Union Budget 2025-26, the number of programmes dropped from 140 programmes in 2024-25 to 109 programmes in 2025-26 with the support of 23 Ministries/Departments, the share of children stood at 2.29 per cent.



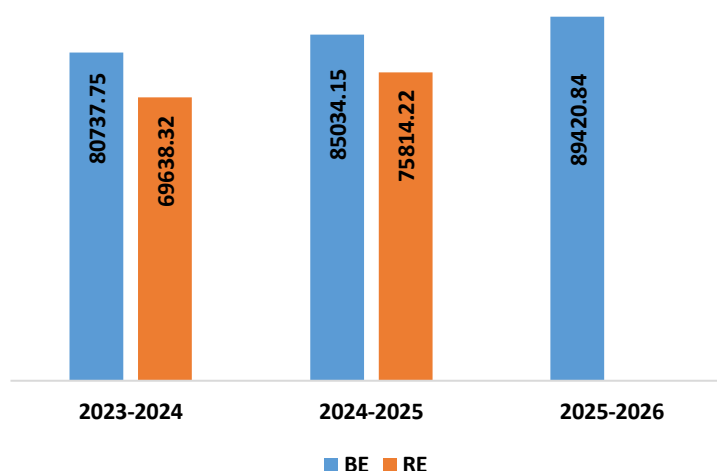
CHILD EDUCATION

Child education remains one of the most prioritised sectors in terms of financial resource allocations. The overall allocation for child education remains at ₹89420.84 Crores in the Union Budget 2025-26, an increase of 5.16 per cent as against the allocation of FY 2024-25.

In the FY 2025-26, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, a key flagship scheme for the implementation of the Right to (Free and Compulsory) Education Act, 2009, received an increased allocation of ₹41250 Crores. Although, an increase of

10 per cent in the allocation of Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan can be acknowledged as a welcome move, but the serious concern remains over the adequacy of allocated funds. The recent ASER survey does not reflect a promising picture of education system in India.

Allocations Towards Child Education (₹ Crores)



ASER Survey: Education Outcomes Pose a Grim Scenario

- Overall, 86.8% of 14-18-year-olds are enrolled in an educational institution. There are small gender gaps in enrollment, but notable differences are visible by age. The percentage of youth not enrolled is 3.9% for 14-year-old youth and is 32.6% for 18-year-olds.
- Most of the young people in this age group were enrolled in the Arts/Humanities stream. In Std XI or higher, more than half are enrolled in the Arts/Humanities stream (55.7%). Females are less likely to be enrolled in the STEM stream (28.1%) than males (36.3%).
- Only 5.6% of surveyed youth report taking vocational training or other related courses currently. Youth at the college level are the most likely to be taking vocational training (16.2%). Most youth are taking short duration courses (of 6 months or less).
- A higher percentage of males (40.3%) than females (28%) report doing work other than household work for at least 15 days during the preceding month. Among both males and females, most youth who are working in activities other than household work tend to be working on family farms.

Source: https://asercentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/ASER-2023-press-release1_English_16-Jan.pdf

The funds under the scheme of Samagra Shiksha are released based on the fulfillment of certain conditions prescribed by Ministry of Finance, such as pace of expenditure, receipt of commensurate State share, audited accounts, statement cumulative State share, statement on outstanding advances, up-to-date expenditure statement, furnishing of information as prescribed in the Manual on Financial Management & Procurement and audited utilization certificate of previous year. There is a disparity in release of Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan funds released to States. Moreover, it is not only the release of funds which creates the obstacle in implementation of the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, even States are

not able to spend the allocated amount. In 2023-24, a gross amount of ₹15843.23 Crores remained unspent by the States/UTs.¹




Details of State/UT-wise Unspent Balances from 2018-19 to 2022-23 under Samagra Shiksha

(Rs. In Crore)						
Sl.No	State	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
1	Andaman And Nicobar Islands	13.01	15.29	18.17	17.15	18.86
2	Andhra Pradesh	157.07	492.39	682.09	451.17	1243.52
3	Arunachal Pradesh	23.09	39.13	91.61	53.40	152.81
4	Assam	497.69	435.39	328.25	206.37	734.13
5	Bihar	2544.82	2662.62	2218.55	2776.42	2132.79
6	Chandigarh	34.71	23.59	16.18	8.88	16.09
7	Chhattisgarh	1161.91	1930.59	1530.70	940.79	364.68
8	DNH & DD	11.07	14.62	18.33	17.18	4.52
9	Delhi	78.82	106.83	62.76	21.16	77.57
10	Goa	10.87	7.30	13.48	4.90	12.65
11	Gujarat	450.64	698.24	633.05	307.37	672.42
12	Haryana	252.89	230.76	203.15	163.96	585.61
13	Himachal Pradesh	196.84	223.18	343.28	243.73	380.92
14	Jammu And Kashmir	837.62	1340.05	612.19	744.08	680.53
15	Jharkhand	172.42	629.01	479.31	384.58	526.86
16	Karnataka	105.23	185.07	217.75	149.89	35.53
17	Kerala	96.60	83.02	7.80	60.29	118.53
18	Ladakh	0.00	40.64	78.28	108.06	48.65
19	Lakshadweep	0.72	2.90	2.83	1.56	2.90
20	Madhya Pradesh	1068.09	830.51	692.99	259.17	465.36
21	Maharashtra	164.75	9.03	67.57	526.78	919.84
22	Manipur	151.49	107.23	123.53	25.27	218.19
23	Meghalaya	93.81	92.47	61.47	54.41	71.22
24	Mizoram	48.13	80.12	138.04	128.02	33.70
25	Nagaland	133.60	145.54	201.33	116.11	146.72
26	Odisha	139.32	208.40	103.74	334.05	759.72
27	Puducherry	3.77	8.43	9.76	11.61	11.11
28	Punjab	98.22	55.54	152.62	265.75	266.12
29	Rajasthan	690.18	1779.55	1230.70	643.19	419.58
30	Sikkim	6.14	19.89	23.20	11.54	24.97
31	Tamil Nadu	9.53	10.67	412.67	117.31	156.06
32	Telangana	367.29	576.29	410.27	401.16	540.74
33	Tripura	67.01	10.40	157.71	21.98	185.26
34	Uttar Pradesh	857.16	1823.41	3286.42	2156.05	2535.60
35	Uttarakhand	338.29	366.24	388.39	182.84	340.00
36	West Bengal	868.58	945.22	940.82	735.37	939.47
Total		11751.38	16229.56	15958.99	12651.55	15843.23

¹ ANNEXURE REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PART (b) OF LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 268 FOR ANSWER ON 05.02.2024 ASKED BY SHRIMATI PRAMILA BISOYI, HON'BLE MP REGARDING ALLOCATION AND UTILIZATION OF FUNDS UNDER SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN

Another ambitious scheme, PM School for Rising India (PM SHRI) observed a significant increase of 23.97 per cent from allocations going from ₹6050 Crore in FY 2024-25 to ₹7500 Crore in FY 2025-26. Under the scheme, there is a provision of setting up of more than 14500 PM SHRI Schools by strengthening the existing schools from amongst schools managed by Central government/State/UT Government/local bodies out of which 12,084 PM SHRI Schools have been selected so far.²

ALL STATES

 Number of Districts	670	
 Number of Blocks	8001	
 Number of PM SHRI Schools	11919	
Primary Schools	Up. Primary Schools	Secondary Schools
1328	3391	2872
Hr. Sec. Schools	KVS	NVS
2821	884	619

Source: <https://pmsfri.education.gov.in/>

A central share of Rs. 1,216.71 crore has been released to 6,207 PM SHRI schools selected in the first phase during FY 2023-24 for implementation of the scheme. Further, a total of ₹7,107.56 Crore has been approved for 12,084 PM SHRI schools selected up to 4th phase of selection in 32 States/UTs and KVS & NVS by the Project Approval Board (PAB). A total of ₹5,097.05 Crore has been approved as central share for FY 2024-25 out of which ₹1345.28 Crore has been released in FY 2024-25 to States/UTs/KVS/NVS till date for the implementation of the scheme.³

Status of Funds Approved and Released under PM SHRI (₹ Crores)					
Financial Year	Funds Approved	Central Share	Funds Released	% Funds Released Against Central Share	% Funds Released Against Approved Funds
2023-24	₹3395.16	₹2520.473	₹1216.71	48.27%	35.84%
2024-25	₹7107.56	₹5097.05	₹1345.28	26.39%	18.93%

Source: ANNEXURE REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PART (b) OF RAJYA SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1781 ANSWER ON 11.12.2024 ASKED BY SHRI SANT BALBIR SINGH, HON'BLE MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT REGARDING "PM SHRI SCHEME"

² LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO – 158; ANSWERED ON – 25/11/2024

³ RAJYA SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO – 1781; ANSWERED ON – 11/12/2024

Another significant scheme towards securing education of tribal students is Eklavya Residential Model Schools, which has received an increased allocation of ₹5986.44 Crores in FY 2025-26, which is a mere increase of 3.31 per cent as against the allocations of previous year. Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) was started in the year 2018- 19 to provide quality education at par with Navodaya Vidyalaya to the tribal children in their own environment. Under the new scheme, Government decided to establish 440 EMRSs, one EMRS in every block having more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons (as per census 2011). With 288 schools sanctioned under Article 275(1), Ministry has set the target to set up total of 728 EMRSs across the country. As on date, 715 schools have been sanctioned, out of which 476 EMRSs are functional benefiting about 1,33,929 students. An amount of ₹6,399 Crore has been allocated for Central Sector Scheme of Eklavya Model Residential Schools in the Budget Estimate for the year 2024-25. The progress made in establishing new Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) during the last three years is as under:⁴

- Locations Approved for EMRS (2021-22 to 2023-24) for setting up new EMRSs: 111.
- Operational EMRSs: 48 EMRSs have been made functional during this period
- Construction Progress: 119 buildings have been completed.

Education Cess Vs. Actual Expenditure on Education

As per Statement 12, the overall education budget stands at ₹89420 Crores but on the other hand, a closer look at the cess collected also highlight that a major chunk of expenditure is done through the cess collected. From the F.Y. 2018-19, a composite cess is levied on Corporate Tax and Income Tax in the name of 'Health and Education Cess', replacing the erstwhile cesses called 'Primary Education Cess' [imposed by the Finance (No.2) Act, 2004] and 'Secondary and Higher Education Cess' [imposed by the Finance Act 2007]. The proceeds from the cess so collected as part of the principal taxes are deposited in Consolidated Fund of India in terms of the Article 266 of the Constitution of India. For the education sector, the utilization of the proceeds is put through reserve funds viz. Prarambhik Shiksha Kosh (PSK) and Madhyamik and Uchchatar Shiksha Kosh (MUSK). The cess levied for specific purposes under any law made by Parliament is levied and collected by the Government of India and does not form part of the divisible pool of taxes and accordingly not distributed between the Union and the States in terms of Article 270 of the Constitution of India.⁵

Details of Expenditure Incurred Through Collection of Cess (₹ Crores)			
Financial Year	Collection of Health & Education Cess	Actual Expenditure Primary Education Cess	Actual Expenditure Secondary & Higher Education Cess
2019-20	₹39,240.55	₹26,848.35	₹12,882.10
2020-21	₹35,894.82	₹30,168.33	₹20,370.44
2021-22	₹52,750.27	₹31,788.25	₹23,954.23
2022-23	₹61,813.92	₹38,000.00	₹24,323.49
2023-24 (RE)	₹73,000.00	₹28,400.00	₹12,000.00

Source: ANNEXURE REFERRED TO IN PARTS (a) & (b) OF LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1131 FOR 02.12.2024 ASKED BY HON'BLE MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT SHRI THIRU ARUN NEHRU REGARDING "AMOUNT COLLECTED AND SPENT UNDER EDUCATIONAL SCHEME".

⁴ LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO- 2858 TO BE ANSWERED ON- 12/12/2024

⁵ LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-1131; ANSWERED ON-02/12/2024

Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN)

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) cleared the PM POSHAN Scheme for providing one hot cooked meal in Government and Government-aided schools from 2021-22 to 2025-26, earlier known as 'National Programme for Mid-Day Meal in Schools' popularly known as Mid-Day Meal Scheme. This is a Centrally-Sponsored Scheme which covers all school children studying in Classes I-III in Government, Government-Aided Schools. The scheme covers about 11.80 crore children studying in 11.20 lakh schools across the country. During 2020-21, Government of India invested more than ₹24,400 Crore in the scheme, including cost of about ₹11,500 Crore on food grains.⁶

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by the Hon'ble Prime Minister has approved the continuation of the national scheme of PM POSHAN in Schools for the five-year period 2021-22 to 2025-26 with the financial outlay of ₹54061.73 Crores from the Central Government and ₹31733.17 Crore from State Governments & UT administrations. Central Government will also bear additional cost of about ₹45000 Crore on food grains. Therefore, the total scheme budget will amount to ₹130794.90 Crore.⁷

In the FY 2025-26, PM POSHAN has received a mere increase of 0.26 per cent with allocations raising from ₹12467.39 Crores in FY 2024-25 to ₹12500 Crores in FY 2025-26. Such a slow growth in allocation goes completely contrary to the vision of the scheme. In fact, during Financial Year (FY) 2021-22, in order to ensure adequate provision during the COVID-19 pandemic, GoI had announced an increase in PM POSHAN allocations to ₹12,700 Crore from ₹11,500 Crore in the Budget Estimates (BE). Revised Estimates (RE) for the year, however, stood at ₹10,234 crore or 19 per cent less than those initially proposed.⁸ Therefore, as we are moving closer to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the allocations for PM POSHAN made in FY 2025-26 is much lesser than that of what the scheme was allocated in the FY 2021-22. Such fluctuations in the allocations raise a serious concern over the planning process of the Government which goes completely contrary to the situation of children on the ground as well as the very spirit of the scheme.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

For various schemes aimed towards securing the nutritional growth of children, the child development sector has been allocated a total amount of ₹19216.08 Crores, a mere 3.1 per cent increase than the allocations of FY 2024-25.

The increase of 3.1 per cent can be attributed to increase in the Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 scheme which received an increased outlay of ₹18666 Crores in FY 2025-26. This

Allocations Towards Child Development (₹ Crores)



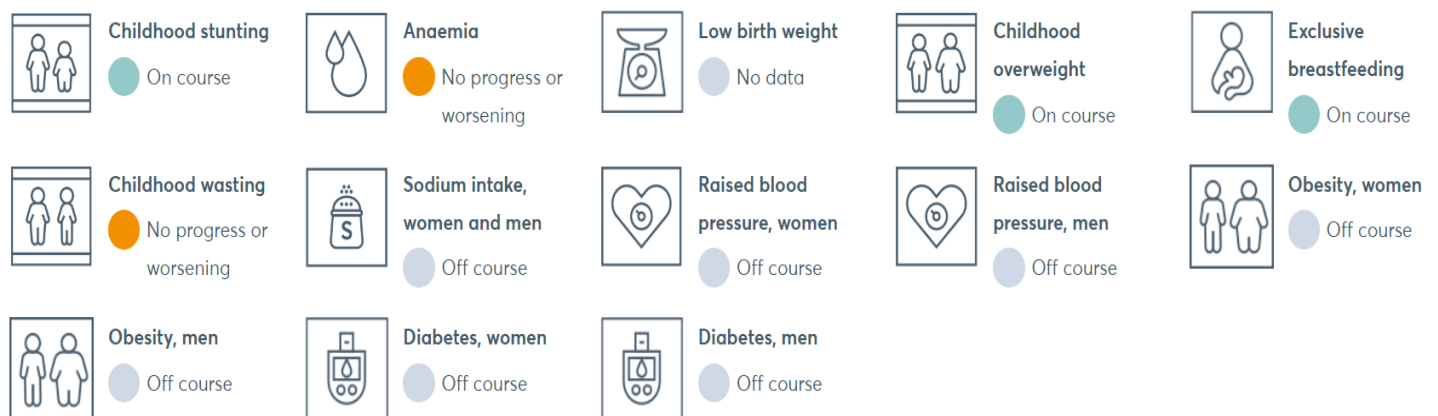
⁶ <https://pmposhan.education.gov.in/>

⁷ Ibid

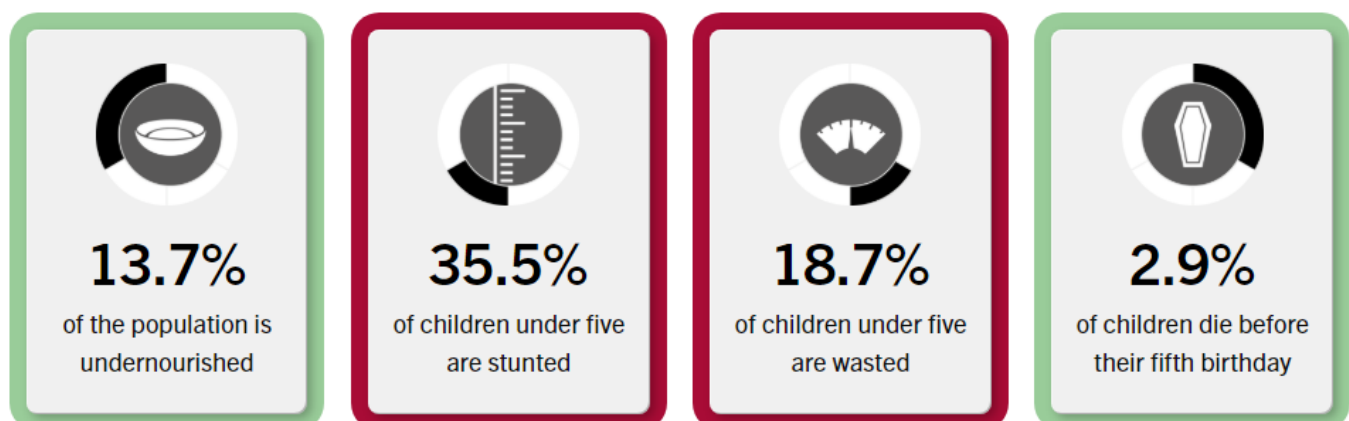
⁸ BUDGET BRIEFS Vol 14/Issue 3; PRADHAN MANTRI POSHAN SHAKTI NIRMAN (PM POSHAN) GoI, 2022-23; https://cprindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Pradhan-Mantri-Poshan-Shakti-Nirman_2022-23.pdf

scheme was allocated ₹18020 Crore in FY 2024-25. Let's look at some numbers which reflect the nutritional status of children in India. As per the Global Nutrition Report 2022, India is 'on course' to meet three targets for maternal, infant and young child nutrition (MIYCN). No progress has been made towards achieving the target of reducing anaemia among women of reproductive age, with 53.0% of women aged 15 to 49 years now affected. Meanwhile, there is insufficient data to assess the progress that India has made towards achieving the low birth weight target, nor is there adequate prevalence data. India is 'on course' for the exclusive breastfeeding target, with 58.0% of infants aged 0 to 5 months exclusively breastfed. Similarly, India is 'on course' to meet the target for stunting, but 34.7% of children under 5 years of age are still affected, which is higher than the average for the Asia region (21.8%). India has made no progress towards achieving the target for wasting, with 17.3% of children under 5 years of age affected, which is higher than the average for the Asia region (8.9%) and among the highest in the world. The prevalence of overweight children under 5 years of age is 1.6% and India is 'on course' to prevent the figure from increasing.⁹

Progress towards the global nutrition targets



In the 2024 Global Hunger Index, India ranks 105th out of the 127 countries with sufficient data to calculate 2024 GHI scores.¹⁰



⁹ Global Nutrition Report, 2022; <https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/asia/southern-asia/india/>

¹⁰ <https://www.globalhungerindex.org/india.html>

As per the Poshan Tracker dashboard, by December 31, 2024, a total of 8,43,90,976 children between birth and six years underwent growth monitoring, with 38% identified as stunted. Stunting, which refers to low height-for-age, is a sign of chronic undernutrition and can have lasting effects on a child's physical and cognitive development.¹¹ As per NFHS-5, 67.1 per cent of children aged 6-59 months were anaemic in 2021 against 58.6 per cent in 2016 and highlighted a very high increase in anaemia.¹²

While the global reports do not reflect the promising picture, the Government's efforts need to be acknowledged to deal with the nutritional status of children in the country. While presenting the Budget 2025-26, the Finance Minister Ms. Nirmala Sitaraman informed the august house on the commitment of the government to alleviate the nutritional situation. She said:

The Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 programme provides nutritional support to more than 8 crore children, 1 crore pregnant women and lactating mothers all over the country, and about 20 lakh adolescent girls in aspirational districts and the north-east region. The cost norms for the nutritional support will be enhanced appropriately.

As per the data of Poshan Tracker of the Ministry of Women & Child Development, for the month of October 2024, around 7.31 crores children up to 5 years were measured on growth parameters of height and weight. Out of whom, 38.9% were found to be stunted, 17% were found to be underweight and 5.2% children were found to be wasted. The levels of underweight and wasting in children as obtained from Poshan Tracker data are much less than those projected by NFHS-5.¹³

Under Mission Poshan 2.0, 2 lakh Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) @ 40,000 AWCs per year are to be upgraded as Saksham Anganwadis for improved nutrition delivery and for early childhood care and education (ECCE). Saksham Anganwadis are to be provided with infrastructure better than the conventional Anganwadi Centres including internet/Wi-Fi connectivity through Bharat Net (wherever possible), LED screens, water purifier/installation of RO Machine, Poshan Vatika, ECCE books and learning material etc. A total of 92108 AWCs have been approved for upgradation to Saksham AWCs across the country.¹⁴

Details of Approved AWCs Vs. Allocated Fund		
Year	No. of AWCs approved for upgradation	Fund allocated (₹ In Lakh)
2022-23	41192	21273.63
2023-24	50916	31402.4
Total	92108	52676.03

Source: LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO: 2031 TO BE ANSWERED ON 02.08.2024

On the other hand, while addressing the supplementary nutrition needs for adolescent girls, under the Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0, an amount of Rs.12554.53 Crore has been approved under Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP) and Rs. 535.16 Crore under Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG) during the current financial year 2024-25. In the current FY 2024-25, an amount of Rs. 2153.05 crore under SNP and Rs. 26.50 crore under SAG has been already released to various States/UTs.¹⁵

¹¹ <https://www.poshantracker.in/statistics>

¹² <https://www.nfhsiips.in/nfhsuser/index.php>

¹³ LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3111 TO BE ANSWERED ON 13.12.2024

¹⁴ LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO: 2031 TO BE ANSWERED ON 02.08.2024

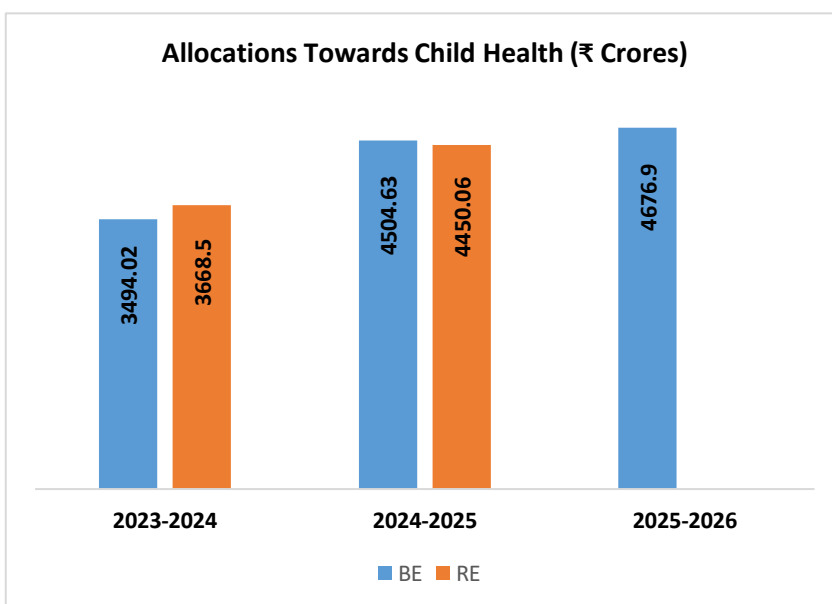
¹⁵ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseFramePage.aspx?PRID=2036466>

Child Health

The allocation for child health allocations did not see much attention in terms of financial resource allocations with overall allocation of ₹4676.90 Crores at BE stage in FY 2025-26. It is a mere 3.82 per cent increase as against the allocation of previous year.

A notable boost of **4.26%** has been observed for the **Flexible Pool for Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) & Health System Strengthening**

program, which has seen its budget allocation rise to **₹4,330.43 Crore** from **₹4,153.48 Crore** in 2024-25. Under the flagship National Health Mission, Maternal Mortality Ratio reduced from 103 per 100,000 live births in 2017-2019 to 97 per 100,000 live births in 2018-20 (against target of 100 by year 2020), Infant Mortality Rate reduced from 32 per 1000 live births in 2018 to 28 per 1000 live births in 2020 (against target of 28 by year 2019) and Total Fertility Rate is reduced from 2.2 in 2015-16 as per NFHS-4 to 2.0 in 2019-21 as per NFHS-5 (against target of 2.1 by year 2025).¹⁶



Details of Expenditure Incurred under National Health Mission (₹ Crore)	
Year	Expenditure
2019-20	43408.98
2020-21	45161.39
2021-22	47107.53
2022-23	58226.14
2023-24	59740.7
2024-25	24993.43

Source: <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2085208>

Unfortunately, the allocation for manufacture of BCG and Sera Vaccine has observed a reduced allocation with total allocation of 120.50 Crores (reduced by 3.60 per cent against the previous FY 2024-25).

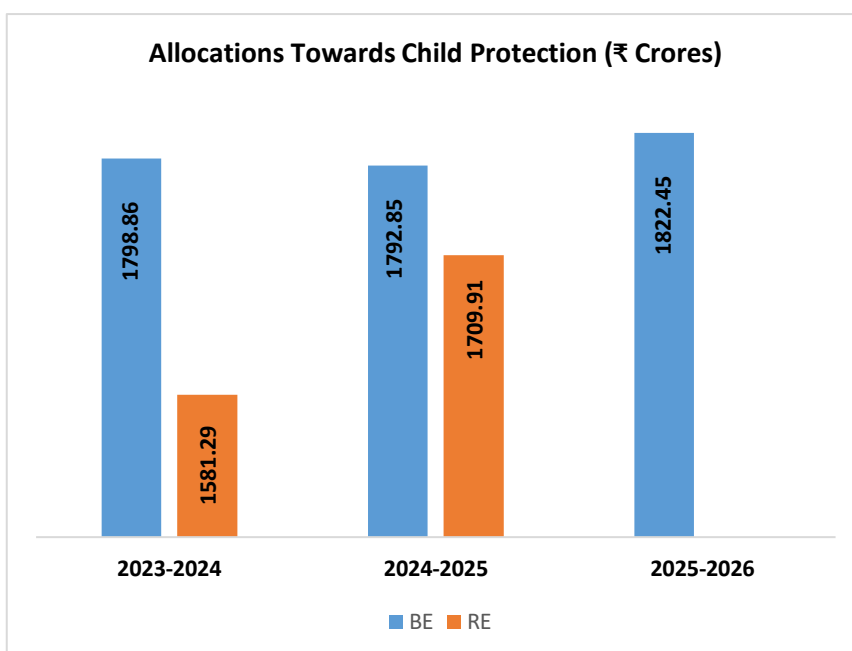
The **2025-26 Union Budget** has allocated a total of **₹98,311 crore** to the healthcare sector, marking an increase from the **₹89,287 crore** allocated in the previous fiscal year. A key focus area is the **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY)**, which has been allotted **₹4,200 crore** to further extend health coverage to vulnerable populations. In addition, to improve cancer care accessibility, the government plans to establish **200 daycare cancer centers** in district hospitals over the next three years. This initiative aims to make cancer treatment

¹⁶ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2085208>

more accessible and efficient, particularly in rural and underserved areas, thereby enhancing overall healthcare services for those in need.

Child Protection

Child Protection sector has remained least prioritised over the years and this year too, child protection has received a mere 0.04 per cent of total financial allocation in FY 2025-26. The absolute allocation for child protection remains at ₹1822.45 Crores in FY 2025-26 which is just 1.3 per cent increase than that of previous year’s budget. In FY 2024-25, child protection sector had received the total allocation of ₹1792.85 Crore at BE Stage.



Unfortunately, the National Child Labour Programme (NCLP) has been discontinued in the 2025-26 Budget, which raises a serious concern. The **National Child Labour Project** had a BE of 200 crores in 2013-14, which fluctuated over the years, dropping drastically in 2019-20 (0 crores) and receiving minimal allocations thereafter. India is home to about 1.01 crore working children between the age five and fourteen years as per 2011 census. Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra employ over half of India’s child labour. As per 2001 Census, there were about 1.26 crore working children. While the incidence of child labour declined between 2001 and 2011, it is more visible in rural areas due to migration. Child workers might have actually increased in urban areas cross all sectors and age categories due to the economic woes brought about by the Covid-19 induced crises.¹⁷ Since there was a policy decision to merge NCLP with Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, a complete disruption to the scheme will be detrimental to all the efforts to eradicate child labour in the country over the years.

Mission Vatsalya, the flagship scheme to address the child protection needs in the country has received an increased allocation of ₹1500 Crores, a mere increase of 1.89 per cent. It is to be noted that the erstwhile Integrated Child Protection Scheme, which now has been merged under the Mission Vatsalya, had received the total allocation of ₹1500 Crore in the Union Budget 2020-21. Now after five years, when the cost norms of Mission Vatsalya has been revised in the year 2024 with enhanced financial commitments, the allocation for Mission Vatsalya has remained just ₹1500 Crore. This raises

¹⁷ STANDING COMMITTEE ON LABOUR, TEXTILES AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT (2023-24) (SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA) MINISTRY OF LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT NATIONAL POLICY ON CHILD LABOUR – AN ASSESSMENT FIFTY-SECOND REPORT;
https://eparlib.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/2963576/1/17_Labour_Textiles_and_Skill_Development_52.pdf#search=child

the concern over the genuine efforts of the Government to address the child protection concerns in its totality.

The Government of India launched 'Mission Shakti' - an integrated woman 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. SAMARTHYA and SAMBAL are two significant components of this umbrella Scheme. The components of SAMARTHYA sub scheme consists of erstwhile schemes of Ujjwala Homes, Swadhar Greh and Working Women Hostel, National Creche Scheme for children of working mothers and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY).

On the other hand, in 'Sambal', existing schemes of One Stop Centres (OSC), Universalisation of Women Helpline (WHL), Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) have been included and a new component of Nari Adalat has been added. In the Union Budget 2025-26, SAMARTHYA received reduced allocation of 125 Crore in FY 2025-26 (reduced by 16.73 per cent against BE of 2024-25). On the other hand, SAMBAL has seen no change in allocation this year too with a total allocation of 222 Crore at BE Stage. In FY 2023-24, the allocation for SAMBAL was 222 Crore and it is to be noted that there is no change in allocation for SAMBAL for the consecutive second year.

Assistance for victims of sexual violence below 16, a scheme being funded by the Ministry of External Affairs has been discontinued in the Statement 12 of FY 2025-26.

We, the Child Rights community, alongwith children of this country, have asked this before and today, as we are already living in the *AMRIT KAAL*, are asking again:

**The question that needs to be asked here is the following:
are the lower expenditures on children-related schemes due to the lack of political will or the inability to garner adequate resources, or perhaps, both?**