

An Assessment of UPA-I through a Gender Budgeting Lens

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This article evaluates the United Progressive Alliance government's budgets over the past five years through the lens of gender – both from reviewing the gender budgeting statements in union budgets since 2005-06 and assessing the allocations to major programmes and schemes across various sectors that affect women. First, although the gender budgeting statements still suffer from flaws in methodology, it is clear that women are accorded low priority in government spending on development. Second, the creation of an independent Ministry of Women and Child Development has not resulted in any significant change in priorities for women. Third, a whopping 42% decline in allocations for schemes meant for women's welfare under the MWCD in the union budget 2009-10 puts a big question mark on how serious the UPA is in its stated commitment to women's empowerment.

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Since budgets reflect government's priorities, it is pertinent to ask where women featured in the priorities of the first United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. And as the UPA begins another term, it is important that they consolidate their gains and at the same time do not repeat their mistakes.

Policies and budgets often tend to be perceived as gender neutral, with the result that they are designed and implemented in gender blind formulations. Since they have an impact a society replete with variegated and accentuating inequalities and discrimination, such policies often end up exacerbating gender inequalities. Therefore, equitable considerations require that policies and budgets address women's specific vulnerabilities and needs and there is an emerging body of evidence to prove this. Although one of the six core principles of governance laid down in the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) was dedicated to women, i.e., "to fully empower women politically, educationally, economically and legally", how far did the budgets of the UPA reflect this basic principle is the important question one has to ask. This paper focuses only on the story told by the six union budgets presented by the UPA government in its last term and the recent union budget of 2009-10.

Gender Budgeting Methodology

As regards budgets, a worthwhile effort of the UPA government has been the introduction of "Gender Budgeting" (GB) including a specific Gender Budgeting Statement (GBS) as part of the union budget since 2005-06. Although there is an urgent need to deepen the GB exercise in order to make it more meaningful, it is definitely a step towards greater transparency and accountability. The exercise has the potential of instilling gender consciousness

across all policies, programmes and schemes, in a way very few other instruments can ever do.

The GBS does the difficult task of trying to capture the total quantum of resources allocated for women across the different departments and ministries that report in the statement (since not all ministries and departments are part of this exercise as yet). This statement is divided into two parts, viz, Part A and Part B. While Part A compiles the budget outlays for all schemes meant exclusively for women (or schemes where 100% benefits accrue to women), Part B compiles the shares of budget outlays in composite expenditure schemes which benefit women if that share is at least 30% of the total outlay for the scheme. It is quite easy for the respective ministries and departments to identify the programmes/schemes meant entirely for women or which have visible components that benefit women, and subsequently report the relevant budget outlays in the GBS. However, the challenging task is to identify those programmes/schemes where it is difficult to specify the proportion of funds flowing to women. Such schemes are called composite schemes, which are listed in Part B of the statement. Although different ministries/departments have been reporting in Part B of the GBS, one needs to question the assumptions underlying the proportion of funds stated under specific schemes in Part B.

1 Assessing GBs 2004-05 to 2009-10

If the exact quantum of public expenditure earmarked or spent on women was available, it would have been easy to comment on priorities for women in the budgets in the UPA tenure. However, it is not possible to arrive at an exact figure of the quantum of public spending on women. In the absence of availability of such a figure, one could try to assess resources flowing to women through some approximations.

One way could be to use the figures presented by the government in its GBS which is produced as part of the union budget. This is summarised in Table 1 (p 62).

In assessing this table, some important points need to be kept in mind.

Table 1: Summary of the Allocations on Women as Presented in the GBS (Rs crore)

	No of Demands*	Total Allocations under Part A of the Statement** (RE)	Total Allocations under Part B of the Statement*** (RE)	Total Magnitude of Gender Budget (RE)
2005-06	10	8,273.88	15,966.63	24,240.51 (4.77%****)
2006-07	24	4,618.95	17,632.46	22,251.41 (3.8%)
2007-08	33	8,428.66	13,919.43	22,348.09 (3.3%)
2008-09	33	14,875.15	34,748.20	49,623.35 (5.5%)
2009-10 (BE)	33	15,715.68	41,141.93	56,857.61 (5.5%)

*Those that report in the Gender Budgeting Statement.

** Part A presents women-specific provisions where 100% provisions are for women.

*** Part B presents women-specific provisions under schemes with at least 30% provisions for women.

**** Proportion of total Union Government Expenditure, shown in brackets.

This table reports only the revised estimates (RE) for the years prior to 2009-10, instead of reporting both budgeted estimates (BE) and RE for those years because (a) RE reflects the progress of actual expenditure during the course of the year while BE are budgeted figures presented before the start of the financial year (b) the change from BE to RE figures in case of the GBS would be misleading since the methodology of preparing the GBS has evolved continuously over the years. Source: *Gender Budgeting Statement, Expenditure Budget, Vol I, Union Budget* – various years.

If the GBS is anything to go by, there is not much room for cheer. It is disappointing to note that not only have the number of demands for grants reported in the GBS remained stagnant for three consecutive years, the total allocations for women as a percentage of total government expenditure has stagnated at 5.5% over the last two years.

For the exact quantum of resources allocated for women, the GBS cannot offer critical insights as these figures are disputed (Das and Mishra 2006; Mishra and Jhamb 2007). There have been several flaws in this methodology in the past, only some of which have been corrected. This year too, several mistakes remain, to name but a few, Indira Awas Yojana – the rural housing scheme continues to figure in Part A of the GBS. This is despite the fact that the Outcome Budget of the Department of Rural Development 2008-09 reveals that till the end of December 2007, 70% of dwelling units constructed under the scheme were solely in the name of women and the remaining 30% were either in the joint name of husband and wife or in the name of the husband alone. Hence it is incorrect to assume that 100% of the allocations of Indira Awas Yojana are exclusively for women.

The Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Yojana – a scheme under the Ministry of Panchayati Raj although slated under Part B (under schemes with at least 30% provisions for women) of the statement, shows its entire allocations (100%) under Part B of the GBS, rather than showing only that percentage of its allocations that flows to women. The same holds true for Merit-cum-Means Scholarships for Professional Technical Courses, Pre-matric Scholarship

for Minorities and Post-matric Scholarship for Minorities of the Ministry of Minority Affairs. Lastly, schemes under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports such as the Nehru Yuvak Kendra Sangathan, National Service Scheme, Scouting and Guiding, Promotion of Youth Activities and Training and many others continue to report their entire allocations in the GBS despite being in Part B of the GBS.

In the framework of transparency, one of the biggest stumbling blocks of such a methodology is that there is very little information available in the public domain about the assumptions made by various ministries in the reviews of their expenditure profiles from a gender perspective. A far more rigorous, transparent and defensible figure would emerge, if the assumptions used in arriving at gender-specific components in the composite expenditure schemes are stated in advance.

Nonetheless, even though the absolute figures given in Table 1 cannot be seen as the exact amount flowing to women, an analysis of the pattern of expenditure over the years gives some indication of the trend on spending for women. What can be said, without any doubt, is that the priority for women continues to be abysmally low. Strangely enough, though this clear message seems to be reverberating from similar researches across the country, in a democratic polity one would have expected some serious efforts to rectify the situation.

Road Map for Gender Budgeting: It can hardly be disputed that the way GB is being done now leaves much to be desired. Interestingly, the government's own road map for gender budgeting envisioned a far more comprehensive exercise including: (1) undertaking a review of the public expenditure profile of relevant union government departments through the gender lens; (2) conducting beneficiary-incidence analysis; (3) recommending specific changes in the operational guidelines of various development schemes so

as to improve coverage of women beneficiaries of the public expenditures; and (4) encouraging village women and their associations to assume responsibility for all development schemes related to drinking water, sanitation, primary education, health and nutrition.

However, even four years down the line, the exercise that we see in the name of GB is essentially the first of the four measures listed above.

2 An Alternative Methodology

Since figures emerging from the GBS are disputed, as has been pointed out, an alternative method of analysis could be to analyse overall sectoral allocations as well as allocations of some major schemes which affect women. This section uses the following framework:

(1) We analyse overall allocations to some critical social sectors. Being the superset, the overall allocations would also have an impact on women. In fact, a broader and more comprehensive understanding of GB warrants this – a look at the larger picture rather than focusing narrowly on certain small gender specific schemes.

(2) We analyse some major schemes with significant components for women in different sectors. The aim is to look at the broad trends in the pattern of allocations over the years, and to look at the larger superset of schemes which will have an impact on various aspects of women's lives. These schemes are not just those that are meant "exclusively" for women (where 100% beneficiaries are women) but also include those schemes which have a significant impact on women (where less than 100% beneficiaries are women).

(3) Where evidence from the field exists, we have tried to complement the budget story with women's ground realities to identify the critical gaps in the implementation of these schemes.

For the purpose of this analysis, we have used revised estimates for the various schemes since the union budget documents brought out by the ministry of finance report only the RE of expenditure in the prior years. The actual expenditure figures for the schemes are neither easily available nor decodable. Moreover, referring to those figures could

affect comparability of the time series data across different ministries.

2.1 Institutional Mechanisms

Before we look at the pattern of allocations for the critical social sectors, let us have a quick look at some of the institutional mechanisms for women during the UPA regime.

Creation of a 'Ministry' of Women and Child Development: The UPA created an independent Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) in 2006, which previously was a department. However, one needs to probe further whether this has enhanced the priorities for women. There

UPA's claims regarding the creation of a separate MWCD must be taken with a word of caution.

Other institutional mechanisms that have been created for women, like the National and the State Women's Commissions, also need to be strengthened and given more teeth. The Eleventh Five-Year Plan has acknowledged the need to amend the NCW Act to give the commission more power – including financial, functional and statutory autonomy.

2.2 Women's Health

First and foremost, one of the biggest concerns even from a gender lens is the abysmally low level of public provisioning for

health services merit more attention due to existing evidence on women's health seeking behaviour, which has highlighted that women are more reluctant in accessing health services. For instance, studies have shown that for women in the reproductive age group, while reported morbidity is more than that amongst males of the same age, medical needs of girls and women are accorded less attention than those of men, a reflection of girls' intrinsically low social value.

Second, it is true that the UPA has come up with several new policies and measures, which have generated huge enthusiasm. The National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) has been launched, National Urban Health Mission is on the anvil, Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (Health Insurance Scheme) has been launched and a new National Drug Policy is being formulated. While these are commendable, the ground reality of health needs of women has hardly changed, whether one looks at output indicators (like the huge shortfall in the primary healthcare infrastructure or shortage of personnel) or outcome indicators (like the unacceptably high levels of maternal mortality or the increasing levels of anaemia, etc).

Third, for women in particular, certain components of the NRHM, such as Reproductive Child Health (RCH), Family Welfare, Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) and Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), etc, need further scrutiny. Some observers have commented that significant portions of NRHM are still rooted in the family planning mould – something that is regressive and coercive in nature and has

Table 2: Comparative Allocations of MWCD in the Years It Was a Department as Compared to the Years When It became a Ministry (Rs crore)

	When It Was a 'Department'		When It became a 'Ministry'			
	2003-04 (RE)	2004-05 (RE)	2006-07 (RE)	2007-08 (RE)	2008-09 (RE)	2009-10 (BE)
Total allocations for WCD	2,203	2,454	4,898	5,853	6,919	7,428
Total expenditure of the union government	4,74,255	5,05,791	5,81,637	7,09,373	9,00,953	10,20,838
Priorities for women and children in total expenditure of the government	0.46	0.49	0.84	0.83	0.77	0.73
Priorities for schemes for women (not including children) within the ministry/department	6.7	9.2	3.0	2.9	3.8	3.7

(1) The figures in the last row have not tried to break up the nutrition component since details of the proportion of women beneficiaries are not available; these figures also exclude the lump sum provision for the north-east region.

(2) In addition to the MWCD/DWCD, several other ministries and departments also spend on women; however, this table captures allocations by MWCD/DWCD only.

Source: *Budgets at a Glance and Expenditure Budget*, Vol II, Union Budget – various years.

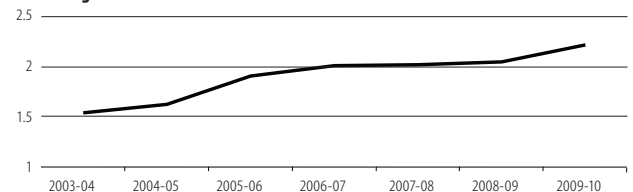
are two grounds to consider – one, if the move of converting the department into a ministry has resulted in any significant increase in the pot of resources available to women and children, and two, what it has meant for priorities for women (not including children) within the ministry. Table 2 compares these allocations in the years when it was a department to those after the creation of the ministry.

The table clearly reveals that the creation of the ministry has not resulted in any significant increase in allocations for women and children compared to when it was a department. Allocations for women and children have gone up in absolute numbers but in relative terms (relative to the total expenditure of the union government), it is still a marginal increase and is still abysmally low, at less than 1%. Worse still, priorities for women, in particular, within the ministry/department have actually gone down from 9.2% in 2004-05 (RE) to 3% in 2006-07 (RE). The union budget 2009-10 brings a further decline in proportional resources for women! So the

health. Although the overall public spending on health has been stepped up over the years, as can be seen in Figure 1, it still continues to be low and the promise in the NCMP of allocating 2-3% of GDP on health has not been fulfilled. Combined allocation of the centre and states on health, the latest available data for which is 2008-09 RE, stands at 1.04% of GDP. This year saw a very marginal increase in spending on health and family welfare in the union budget. The share of health as a proportion of total expenditure gradually increased to 2.2% in 2009-10 (Figure 1) from 1.58% in 2003-04.

Since public health is a state subject, majority of the responsibility regarding its expenditure lies with the states. Unfortunately, since 2002-03 there has been a gradual decline in spending on health and family welfare by all states as a proportion of GDP. Women's access to

Figure 1: Share of Health and Family Welfare in Union Budget as a Percentage of Total Budget



The figures for 2003-04 to 2008-09 are RE while 2009-10 is BE.

Source: Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (2009), *Is the New Government Committed or Complacent? Response to the Union Budget 2009-10*.

been opposed by the women's movement for years together now. This is evident from the component wise break-up of expenditure of NRHM. Although until last year, the UPA government did increase the allocations on some of the plan schemes

addressing issues of women's health, for instance, the RCH programme, the overall impact of such schemes cannot be expected to be significant as systematic investments are required to build capacity in the backward states to implement a significantly scaled up RCH programme. A study done by the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) reveals that out of the total resources available under RCH, only 29% of the funds were utilised in Chhattisgarh and only 37.6% were utilised in Uttar Pradesh in the year 2005-06. There is evidence that there have been minor improvements in the recent years. The union government should have taken strong measures for capacity-building of the programme, implementing staff for RCH at the district and sub-district level in the backward states which would have enabled them to implement the programme effectively and utilise higher magnitudes of budget outlays. For JSY too, there is evidence that although it has increased institutional deliveries, the ill-equipped institutions have not been able to cope with the increased demand and the main incentive for reaching the institution is not safe delivery but cash benefit.

Union budget outlays for Rural Family Welfare Services and Urban Family Welfare Services provide the salaries of auxiliary nurse midwife (ANMs) in the health sub-centres in the rural and urban areas. As can be seen in Table 3, there is no denying that since 2003-04, allocations have been stepped up. However, the lack of any substantial increase in the outlays for these schemes in the UPA's budget 2009-10 shows the neglect of human resource component of healthcare delivery in the country. This has to be seen in the context of the huge shortfall in the infrastructure and personnel of the primary healthcare (PHC) facility in our country. Only 38% of the total PHCs have the critical staff and only 3% of PHCs have 80% of the critical inputs required.²

Lastly, our health policies for women seem squarely focused on reproductive health and are not premised on a holistic understanding of women's health needs through a life cycle approach. The Eleventh Plan has recognised the need to move beyond the traditional focus on family

planning and reproductive health, to adopt a holistic perspective on women's health so that other health needs of women are not neglected. Is not this overemphasis on women's reproductive and maternal health and a neglect of their overall health also a gender issue?

2.3 Women's Education

In education too, one of the primary concerns continues to be the low overall public spending on education, which is around 3.3% of the GDP, an amount grossly inadequate to strengthen the public sector education system in the country. In addition, the public spending on education is much less than the 6% promised in the NCMF. There has hardly been any progress in terms of union government spending on education as a proportion of the GDP from 0.42% (2004-05) to 0.76% (2009-10). It is likely that women would be more affected by the persistence of the weaknesses in the education system since they face a historical neglect and the institutionalised hegemony.

The UPA government took steps towards increasing the outlay for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Mid Day Meal (MDM) schemes until last year, which was indeed appreciable. However, even with these increases, outlays for both the schemes remained inadequate to address the requirement of resources in elementary education in the backward states. The allocation for

SSA and the MDM scheme have remained almost stagnant in this year's budget.

Other women and girl specific schemes like Mahila Samakhyia (MS), Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) and National Programme for Education of Girls at the Elementary Level (NPEGEL), the latter two now a sub-component of SSA, have continued to get low and stagnating magnitudes of budget outlays (Table 4). The allocation for National Scheme for Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education has gone down from Rs 1,305 crore to Rs 45 crore in 2008-09 and has been given a measly Rs 45 crore this year also. The allocation for MS remained the same as last year, which in real terms is a decline. However, it is not just the low allocations for such schemes that constrain addressing gender gaps in education. The design and conceptualisation of many of the schemes specifically for the girl child, also lack a long-term vision for addressing the gaps in education. NPEGEL, for instance, has drawn flak for looking like "...a loosely packaged bag in which ideas have been clubbed without any consolidated vision" (Kumar and Gupta 2008). Secondary evidences have shown that KGBV, which tries to give a second chance for mainstreaming rural girls belonging to deprived social backgrounds who could not study beyond class V, is severely limited by its very conceptualisation and budgetary planning. An interesting comparison of KGBV schools

Table 3: Allocations for Some Major Schemes on Women's Health (Rs crore)

Scheme	Year						
	2003-04 RE	2004-05 RE	2005-06 RE	2006-07 RE	2007-08 RE	2008-09 RE	2009-10 BE
Rural family welfare services	1,561	1,722	1,259	982	1,947	2,228	2,335
Urban family welfare services	119	121	122	72	129	158	157
RCH programme	442	486	1,814	1,338	1,629	2,737	3,148
Development of nursing services	10	—	13	18	13	15	15

The figures exclude the lump sum provision for the north-east region.
Source: *Expenditure Budget*, Volume II, various years.

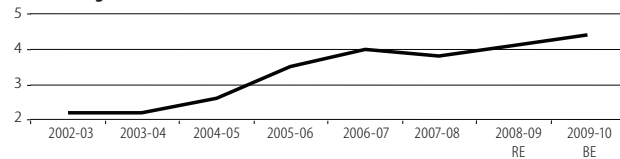
Table 4: Allocations for Some Major Schemes That Impact Women's and Girls' Education (Rs crore)

Scheme	Year						
	2003-04 RE	2004-05 RE	2005-06 RE	2006-07 RE	2007-08 RE	2008-09 RE	2009-10 BE
Mahila Samakhyia	14	15	24	26	34	38	38
KGBV	1	90	25	13	—	—	—
Condensed courses for women's education	4	5	5	5	6	6.3	6.3
Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan*	0.15	224	1143
Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan	2,732	4,754	7,166	10,146	12,020	11,940	11,934
Mid Day Meal scheme	1,375	1,507	3,011	4,813	6,004	7,200	7,214
Access and equity	16	5	6	6	0.90	0.27	0.01

* Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan is the re-modelled Scheme for Universal Access and Quality at the Secondary Stage (SUCCESS).
The figures exclude the lump sum provision for the north-east region.
Source: *Expenditure Budget*, Volume II, various years.

with Navodaya Vidyalaya (NV) schools, shows that not only does KGBV receive less money under every head, but its teachers are para-teachers with no stability, who get poor salaries and sporadic in-service training inputs which are mostly so generalised

Figure 2: Union Government's Expenditure on Education as a Percentage of Total Budget



The figures for 2003-04 to 2008-09 are RE while 2009-10 is BE.

Source: Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (2009), *Is the New Government Committed or Complacent? Response to the Union Budget 2009-10*.

that they cannot be expected to enhance their understanding of the girls' pedagogic and developmental requirements (Kumar and Gupta 2008).

It is important to recognise that enrolling and retaining girls in schools requires a far more serious and focused approach on the part of the state, which must go beyond the physical presence of girls within the school boundary walls, to address deep-seated mental blocks that bind girls to limited traditional roles. This requires concerted efforts on part of the state – designing better programmes, including addressing concerns around pedagogy and ensuring that these translate into better outcomes.

2.4 Employment Schemes

The National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) data clearly shows that the unemployment rate among rural males has increased from 5.6% in 1993-94 to 8% in 2004-05, and among rural females it has increased from 5.6% to 8.7% during this time period. In this scenario, concerted efforts need to be made to improve women's participation in the workforce as well as the productivity of their work, especially in the light of the global recession which might aggravate the situation.

However, Table 5 shows that in the 2009-10 budget, there has been a reduction in allocation for many schemes and a near stagnation in others. Swayamsidha, the integrated scheme of MWCN, aimed at holistic empowerment of women, which under its ambitious second phase was to be launched as a countrywide programme covering all blocks and with a larger coverage, has seen a reduction in allocation

in even absolute terms from Rs 180 crore in 2008-09 (BE) to Rs 20 crore in 2009-10 (BE), (a reduction of 89%) which is shocking. In the union budget 2009-10, the finance minister announced that the corpus of the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) be

increased “in recognition of its role as an instrument of socio-economic change and development” from Rs 100 crore to Rs 500 crore over the next few years, but allocations for RMK have declined from Rs 32 crore to Rs 20 crore. Likewise, allocations for Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP) have gone down by 64% and allocations for Hostels for Working Women have gone down again by 64% (from 2008-09 BE).

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) is a major scheme for women's employment as more than 48% of the total person days of work generated has been by women and the increase in allocation of NREGA from 2008-09 BE to RE reflects the potential of this programme. However, probing further, many concerns of women participating in the NREGS still remain unaddressed. The study by the Indian School of Women's Studies Development in 2006 reported several challenges including lower wages being the prime reason for huge participation of women, denial of female-headed households and old women to access the scheme and absence of childcare facilities. A recent survey in 10 districts of six states has also revealed that the tenacious social norms against women working

outside the home, lack of childcare facilities, continued illegal presence of contractors, too exacting productivity norms and delayed payments – all contribute to limited participation of women in some states (Dreze and Khera 2009). Given the overall significant participation of women in NREGS, efforts should be made to immediately address women's concerns.

What must also be questioned when the government's schemes for women's employment is being discussed is the overwhelming focus on self-help groups (SHGs) as a vehicle for women's empowerment and which almost seems like a panacea for addressing all concerns of women. However, there is a growing body of literature on SHGs that suggests otherwise – that bookkeeping and maintaining financial records have overshadowed the critical issues of women's empowerment, equity and justice; and there are evidences of even exclusion of Muslim, dalit and tribal women from many such groups, etc. Furthermore, in the hullabaloo of SHGs, it is important to remind ourselves that women, especially poor women, are increasingly excluded from formal sources of finance and, as a result, have to resort to borrowing from moneylenders at high interest rates (Chavan 2007). Financial inclusion requires increasing women's access to all types of credit sources, especially from commercial banks and cooperatives and not just microfinance institutions. Further, schemes for women need to be conceived more creatively to cater to different dimensions of women's vulnerabilities.

The introduction of the Anganwadi Karyakartri Bima Yojana, a group social security scheme that covers anganwadi

Table 5: Allocations for Some Major Schemes on Women's Employment and SHGs (Rs crore)

Scheme	Year						
	2003-04 RE	2004-05 RE	2005-06 RE	2006-07 RE	2007-08 RE	2008-09 RE	2009-10 BE
STEP	8	16	13	13	18	23	12
Swayamsiddha	8	16		27	22	45	20
Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for working mothers	–	–	41	94	100	91.8	91.5
Hostels for working women	4	6	4.5	4	4	9.9	9
Rashtriya Mahila Kosh	–	–	0.01	10	12	31	20
NREGS	–	–	–	10,170	10,800	30,000	39,100
Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana	9,640	4,590	7,650	2,700	3,420	6,750	–
Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana	720	900	899	1,080	1,620	2,113	2,114
Swarnajayanti Shahri Rozgar Yojana	94	122	160	250	344	515	515
Priyadarshini scheme	–	–	–	1	10	23	27

The figures exclude the lump sum provision for the north-east region.

Source: *Expenditure Budget*, Volume II, various years.

workers and helpers, could go a long way in addressing social security concerns of anganwadi workers, especially since they are not even paid the minimum wages.

2.5 Most Marginalised Women

Women are not a homogeneous group and acknowledging the fact that the discrimination women face is intersectional, it is important to assess how far budgets and policies have tried to address specific needs of the most marginalised women, including (though not limited to) dalit women, tribal women, Muslim women, disabled women, HIV positive women, etc. The commitment in the Eleventh Plan for revision of Women's Component Plan (WCP) to prioritise needs of the most vulnerable women must be implemented.

Plan allocations earmarked for SCs and STs in the union budget continue to be very low and far below what was promised in the Special Component Sub-Plan and Tribal Sub-Plan norms of 16% and 8% respectively as can be seen in Table 6 (p 67).

It is difficult to assess what percentage of this goes to women. The Outcome Budget of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment notes that the proportion of women beneficiaries of this Special Central Assistance to SCs to the total number of beneficiaries was 15%, although the rationale for making this assumption is not given. Likewise, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs initiated the Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Plan to supplement the efforts of the state governments and places 25% of the provisions of the scheme in the GBS, again for which no rationale is given.

Table 7 (p 67) shows allocations for some major schemes likely to affect dalit, tribal and Muslim women. The allocations for most schemes have gone up from 2003-04 levels but in the recent years, especially with the interim budget, they have stagnated. Moreover, the Ministry of Minority Affairs set up in 2006 has begun reporting in the GBS from this year. The allocation for the pilot scheme for Leadership Development of Minority Women

promised in the Eleventh Plan has been placed in the GBS. The Annual Report 2007-08 of the ministry claims that the National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation catered to around 85% women beneficiaries and the scholarship schemes run by the ministry earmark 30% scholarships for girls.

2.6 Women in Difficult Circumstances

Women across India face serious violations of their civil and political rights. Worse still, violence against women has been increasing (National Crime Records Bureau). The kind of institutional structure that is required across the country to address the needs of women in difficult circumstances cannot be developed with such meager allocations as can be seen in Table 8. The inadequacy of the institutional structure to provide relief to women is particularly acute in parts of the country affected by armed conflicts like the north-east and Kashmir.

The number of functional Swadhar homes which are meant for women in

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distress remains terribly low. As per the Annual Report of the MWCD, 2007, number of such homes was 208 across the country, implying that there is not even one per district. Likewise is the case with Short Stay Homes, the number of which is much lesser than what a country as huge as India requires. An assessment of these two schemes – Short Stay Homes and Swadhar Homes, meant to provide shelter for women in distress – offers useful insights.³ First, in terms of coverage, these homes are concentrated in very few states and are not distributed evenly across the states. States such as Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh have the highest number of Short Stay Homes, while majority of the Swadhar Homes are concentrated in Andhra Pradesh and Orissa. Secondly, issues around irregular and untimely release of government grants, cumbersome procedures for release of funds for the homes, etc, further stifle the functioning of these homes. There is an urgent need for simplification of procedures for timely release of grants, revision of the dated financial norms and better and more effective monitoring. Another important finding was that the training imparted to women living in these homes is squarely focused on tailoring and cooking (traditionally seen as “women-related” activities) and women are not being taught other skills. Further, very little or no convergence was found in the present government-run self-employment generation programmes with these homes run by the ministry.

New Schemes for Women in the Union Budget 2009-10: Some new schemes for women that interested organisations should monitor and track include the Conditional Maternity Benefit Scheme which aims to provide cash directly to pregnant and lactating women. This is an important step towards recognising reproductive health needs of poorer women of this country. This scheme has been started although with a meagre allocation of Rs 3.6 crore. The much-hyped “National Mission for Empowerment of Women” also finds mention in the budget document, though with just a token outlay of Rs 1 crore and so is the case with the Scheme for Leadership Development of

Minority Women for which an allocation of Rs 0.9 crore is set aside from MWCD and Rs 7 crore from the Ministry of Minority Affairs. Although it is understandable that these schemes are in their nascent stages, one hopes that in the next year, allocations for these schemes would be stepped up significantly, if the government is serious about improving outcomes for women.

3 Challenges That Remain

While the government’s attempts towards Gender Budgeting is a welcome step, it will serve the larger goal of promoting gender equality only if it is understood more holistically and is done with the larger vision in mind rather than as a mere accounting exercise of identifying flows from the budget meant for women. The recent economic downturn notwithstanding, we must recognise that India’s much celebrated growth saga has been premised on

women’s paid, underpaid and unpaid labour. Yet women’s larger concerns as economic agents have seen adverse trends, and statistics bear these out. In this context, some specific areas of concern have been summarised below:

(1) Social Sector Allocations Continue to be Abysmally Low: Social sector allocations in India, despite some progress in recent years, continue to be abysmally low, whether you look at them in comparison with other countries or in relation to the low development indicators or even in relation to the targets set out in the NCMP (6% of the GDP to be allocated for education and 3% for health). Social sector allocations have a significant impact on women. For the budgets to be more gender sensitive, social sector allocations must be increased and at the same time the quality of spending must also improve. Even the progress made on the legislative front for women will

Table 6: Plan Allocation Earmarked for SCs and STs from the Union Budget (Rs cr)

	2004-05 RE	2005-06 RE	2006-07 RE	2007-08 RE	2008-09 RE	2009-10 BE
Total Plan Exp for SCs from union budget	3,611	6,578	8,473	12,367	14,727	15,831
Total Plan Exp for STs from UB	2,381	4,175	5,564	7,446	8,771	9,995
Total Plan Exp of union government (excluding Central Assistance to State and UT Plans)	85,061	1,09,900	1,29,804	1,52,313	2,08,252	2,43,893
Proportion of total plan allocation earmarked for SCs (%)	4.25	5.99	6.53	8.12	7.07	6.4
Proportion of total plan allocation earmarked for STs (%)	2.80	3.80	4.29	4.89	4.21	4.10

Source: Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (2009), *Is the New Government Committed or Complacent? Response to the Union Budget 2009-10*.

Table 7: Allocations for Some Major Schemes for Dait, Tribal and Muslim Women (Rs cr)

Scheme	Year						
	2003-04 RE	2004-05 RE	2005-06 RE	2006-07 RE	2007-08 RE	2008-09 RE	2009-10 BE
For scheduled castes							
Special assistance to SCP	377	374	398	440	487	578	469
Machinery for implementation of PCR Act and Prevention of Atrocities Act	31	35	37	37	39	43	42
Self-Employment Scheme for Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers	–	–	–	–	50	100	97
For scheduled tribes							
SCA to TSP	461	497	689	817	817	860	900
Upgradation of merit	51	77	188	222	162	195	218
Construction of boys/girls hostels for STs	19	13	16	28	34	60	59
For Muslim women							
Scheme for leadership development of minority women*	–	–	–	–	–	–	7

The figures exclude the lump sum provision for the north-east region.

*Allocation as mentioned in *Expenditure Budget*, Volume II, Ministry of Minority Affairs.

Source: *Expenditure Budget*, Volume II, various years.

Table 8: Allocations for Some Major Schemes for Women in Difficult Circumstances (Rs cr)

Scheme	Year						
	2003-04 RE	2004-05 RE	2005-06 RE	2006-07 RE	2007-08 RE	2008-09 RE	2009-10 BE
Swadhar	0.80	3.69	5.5	13.5	13.5	13.5	13.5
Short Stay Homes	15.35	14.40	15	15.72	15.9	15.9	15.9
Scheme for Rescue of Victims of Trafficking*	–	–	0.25	0.45	4.50	5.4	4.5

The figures exclude the lump sum provision for the north-east region.

* Modified to Comprehensive Scheme for Combating Trafficking in 2008.

Source: *Expenditure Budget*, Volume II, various years.

mean nothing unless backed by adequate resources to bring these laws into reality.

(2) Capitalising on Women's Underpaid and Unpaid Work: Many of the UPA's flagship programmes continue to capitalise on and exploit women's underpaid work. The SSA hires "para" teachers, who are usually class VIII pass and largely women; and pays them monthly wages as low as Rs 1,000 to Rs 3,000 and these account for approximately 16% of all schoolteachers in the country. Likewise, under the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), allocations for which account for more than 95% of MWCDS budgets, essentially depends on the work of anganwadi workers and helpers, who were until recently paid around Rs 1,000 and Rs 500 per month respectively. Although this has seen some upward revision, the amount paid to them is still less than the minimum wages in most states. The argument for not paying them minimum wages is that these are "social workers" or "volunteers" and therefore they are not paid "wages" but are paid an "honorarium" since anganwadis are open for only a few hours in the day and hence the work is not supposed to be full-time. However, anyone with any sense of ground reality knows that the work expected from anganwadi workers is probably more than full-time work. The NRHM too relies on women's unpaid work. The ASHA who is the most important component of the programme is expected to perform a formidable list of tasks and is also supposed to be an honorary volunteer. Although some states are making an effort to pay them, what they are paid is grossly inadequate. It is important that the state pays women at the very least for the work it gets out of them, let alone supporting women's larger care work.

(3) Recognition of Women's Centrality across All Sectors: Women's location and centrality in all sectors needs to be recognised and policies for all sectors need to be gender responsive. For instance, given the changing demographics of feminisation of agriculture (since three-fourths of all women workers and 85% of rural women workers are in agriculture), the achievement of targets of agricultural growth targets will depend on whether or

not agricultural policies are gender responsive. To increase their productivity and economic contribution, women cultivators need land titles, credit, irrigation water, and infrastructure (technology, extension, and marketing support). Likewise, women's employment in the formal sector has shown paradoxical trends with simultaneous increases in work participation rates, unpaid labour, migration for work and open unemployment (Ghosh 2009). It is important to bear in mind that the largest increase in the regular employment of urban women has been in domestic service. Women's employment in the textiles and garments industry is growing but is often at much lower wages than men and with poorer working conditions. At the same time, the gender gap in the regular work, even in the formal sector, has gone up. In addition to proactive policies for encouraging greater women's participation in formal work, it is important to focus on creating enabling conditions for women, education, training, childcare facilities, timing of work and ensuring safety and health of women workers.⁴

Today, after more than 60 years of independence and state intervention and despite the myriad programmes, policies and schemes for women, persistence of gender-based disadvantages is evident in any output or outcome indicator that one

might choose to pick. What is needed is a critical reflection on why these have not worked. Greater priority for women in budgets and policies, coupled with greater efficiency and effectiveness of resources for women is an absolute necessity if substantive equality for women is to be achieved.

NOTES

- 1 As stated in Gender Budgeting Statement, Union Budget for 2005-06, GoI, based on the recommendations of the expert group on "Classification System of Government Transactions" (July 2004).
- 2 Health Information of India, 2008, Central Bureau of Health Intelligence, GoI.
- 3 Study by the Centre for Market Research and Social Development, New Delhi in July 2007 and the report was submitted to the ministry in 2008.
- 4 "Towards Inclusive Growth: The Gender Dimension", Submitted to the Planning Commission by the Committee of Feminist Economists during the formulation of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan.

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