

Children's Share in West Bengal State Budget

Highlights from the Child Budget Analysis of West Bengal for the period 2004-05 to 2008-09

Success of any development planning primarily depends on the budgetary allocation and the rate of expenditure on total allocation. The Budget document of the government thus, by providing information on the allocations and spending on human development, is an important database to understand and analysis the state success in human development. The government of India, in the year of 1992, by ratifying United Nation's Declaration on Child Rights (UNCRC), promised in the international arena to ensure and protect all the rights of all the children of this country. The



government also constitutionally obligated to provide certain rights to the children and to protect them from certain heinous exploitations. In spite of that, after seventeen long years of ratifying UNCRC, India is the home of largest number of child labour in the world, could not ensure even primary education for all of the children and trafficking of the children is in full swing in the country.

The Plight of Children in West Bengal at a Glance

- 42 percent of the state population is children.
- 44 per cent children of less than 6 years old are malnourished.
- 36 per cent children of less than 13 months old are not fully immunized.
- Around 7 lakh children of 5-13 years age group are out of school.
- 8 lakh 50 thousand children are working as labour.
- 11 thousand children were missing from the state between 2004 and 2006.

Why this? Among the Indian states, in respect to the performances on ensuring child rights West Bengal State is not an exception. The state is one of the worst performers in elementary education, one of the prominent transit, source and destination points of child trafficking, it has high rate of early marriages and nine percent of its children (5-14 years age group) work as labour. While the government has no dearth of policies, programs, schemes and legislations at least in terms of number, why this miserable situation of children persisting for the years in this country. There the need of Child Budget analysis felt. Child budget is not any separate budget. It is the segregation of the schemes and allocation related to the children from the state or Union Budget and to analysis the allocations and expenditures on those schemes in terms of need and in terms of results achieved. The State Budget of West Bengal for the period of 2004-05 to 2008-09 has been

analysed to understand that how much amount was allocated for children in the state budget and how much of the allocated amount was actually spent. Followings are the highlighted findings from the analysis.

Only 13 percent of the total state budget was allocated every year for 42 per cent of the total state population

Over the five-year study period on average 13.48 per cent of the total state budget was allocated for the children of west Bengal every year while the children in number was 42 per cent of the total state population according the 2001 census data.

Around Seven Lakh children are out of school in the state while child education was holding the lion's share of child budget allocation.

In spite of average 90 per cent of budget for children was allocated on education during the last five years, according to the child census of West Bengal 7,05,723 number of children of age group 5-13 are 'Out-of-School' in the state as on 1st October 2007. The number of Out of School Children was 8,96,000 in 2006-06 and thus in the last 2 years the number of out-of-school children in the state decreased only by 1,90,277

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which shows only 21.23 per cent of decrease. Why a large number of children persistently staying out of school? Is there a need to increase allocation for education? Or is that the amounts allocated were not spent fully? May be there is major lacuna in the education system!

10 per cent student of Primary Schools are not getting Mid-Day Meals during last six years!

If we looked into the allocation of different schemes and programs under the child education other than SSA we would find that maximum allocation is for 'National program of Nutritional Support to primary education (Mid-day meal) and the allocation has regularly increased. But unfortunately that huge allocation is still unable to provide mid-day meal to all students of Class I to Class V. 9.39 per cent of the eligible institute of West Bengal (School, SSK and EGS) and around 10 per cent of the eligible student for the scheme are still deprived from the benefit violating the directives of the apex court of India that all children studying between class I and Class V must be provided with cooked mid-day meal in schools. Provision of cooked mid-day meal was started in the primary schools of West Bengal from the year 2002. Since then, in the last six years, why the budget allocation could not be made in such a way that all children could have the benefit of mid-day-meal in their schools which was their rights.

63 lakh children of the state stay out of the coverage of the Integrated Child Development services (ICDS) only for the less allocation in budget.

The Integrated Child Development Scheme is operational in the state for the last thirty years to provide supplementary nutrition to the children of less than 6 years old group and pregnant mothers, to provide pre-primary education to the children and also to ensure the Reproductive and child health. While in the last five years total 1250 crore rupees was allocated in this scheme for the state but according to the government statistics of the year 2006 63 lakh children of less than 6 years old are out of the coverage of this scheme in the state.

The state is lagging behind in elementary education

Despite of crores of rupees allocation for Sarba Shiksha Aviyan (SSA) in the state, West Bengal is lagging behind in elementary education among the states of India. In last three years (2005-2008) around four thousand crore rupees was allocated for the implementation SSA in the state. In spite of that the government statistics shows around seven lakh out-of-school children in the state in the year of 2007. according to the government survey based on the number of upper-primary schools, pupil-teacher ratio, rate of school drop-outs, etc. the state is on 33rd position in elementary education among the 35 states of India. The Sarba Shiksha Aviyan (SSA) initiated in the year of 2002 in West Bengal aimed for universal enrolment of 6-14 years age group in elementary education within 2005 and universal completion of elementary education (up to class VIII) within the year 2013 and both the aim in present situation is almost non-achievable in the state.

54 lakh of less than six years old children of West Bengal don't have FOOD SECURITY – Inadequate allocation for Supplementary Nutrition in the state budget!

55 per cent of the children of less than six years old not received Supplementary nutrition for a single day in last five years in the state of West Bengal. The state budget in last five years (between 2004-05 and 2008-09) has allocated 180 crore rupees in total for Supplementary Nutrition. This much of amount can provide Supplementary Nutrition to only 63 lakhs children of the state for 300 days in a year. But the number of children who are eligible for supplementary nutrition in state are 1 crore 14 lakhs. So rest of the 54 lakhs children were deprived from their right to supplementary nutrition for last five years due to the less allocation in the state budget.

State government failed to spend fully the budget allocation – Lots of children are deprived from their legitimate rights!

While the backward classes of the state are far behind in literacy and other human development indicators the West Bengal government is failing to spend the allocated fund for the education of the children of backward classes (Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Other Backward classes). For example in the period of 2006-07 the government failed to spend 41 per cent of the allocated fund for the "Book Grant and Examination Fees" for the backward classes children which deprived 14 lakh children of the state.

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Protection of the children was shamefully neglected in the state budget!

The state of West Bengal has been allocated only 14 crore rupees on an average annually for the protection of children in the state budget during the last five years. The allocation for child protection is only 0.03 per cent of the state budget while the Chief Minister of West Bengal himself announced in the State Assembly that in the last three years 30 thousand of women and children of the state were trafficked and very few of them were rescued. While the state allocate average 5500 crore rupees annually for child education than how the same state could allocate only 14 crore in average annually for child protection! Why the protection of the children has the lowest priority in the state budget?

State failure in SSA caused by the negligence in budget allocation and spending

During the last two years state failed to provide its share of total allocation for SSA, which is 35 per cent. The state could only provide 12-14 per cent of the total allocation and hence received less amount of union government's share. The state of west Bengal also received fewer amounts for SSA from Union government because it failed to spend the fund released by the union government earlier.

Thus in spite of approved budget of 4000 crore in last three years the state could only release 2600 crore for the implementation of SSA. The sufferers of this governmental failure are the children especially who are from the backward classes, who are child Labourers and who are disabled.



The state budget of West Bengal NEGLECTS children

- In adequate allocation in budget
- Failure in spending of whatever amount is allocated
- In those schemes, where budget allocation is the joint responsibility of state and union government, the state failed to allocate the required amount – one of the examples is Sarba Shiksha Aviyon.
- The health and protection of children in severely neglected in the state budget.
- The state failed to allocate required fund to ensure food security of all the children of less than 6 years old – which was one of the Supreme Court's directives.
- The state of West Bengal failed to plan its budget to ensure holistically and equally all the rights of children related to survival, Development, Protection and Participation.

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We like to draw everybody's attention towards the severe economic neglect to children in the state budget of West Bengal during the last five years. We want that the legitimate demands of the children are recognized in state budget and we want to gather mass support to the rights of the children.

We strongly put our following demand for consideration at the time of planning of the state budget:

- The state budget must be planned to ensure all the right to all the children as declared in the United Nation's Child Rights Convention (UNCRC).
- Budget allocation for the health, nutrition and protection for the children, especially allocation on the protection must be considerably and adequately increased.
- The allocated fund for each and every scheme must be fully and optimally utilized.
- In the case of joint financial responsibility both the state and central government must carry out their commitment in full.
- The state must take special care in the allocation of fund for the development of girl children, children of backward classes, disabled children, child labourers and street children.
- The state must take honest initiatives to organize social audit of the schemes related to children.



HAQ:Centre for Child Rights has initiated the work of child budget analysis of Union Budget . Later 'HAQ' in collaboration with different NGOs started the work of child budget analysis of the budget of seven states of India. Society for Peoples' Awareness (SPAN) together with 'HAQ-CRC' in working on the analysis of State budget of West Bengal for the last five years (2004-05 to 2008-09) on the basis of recognized rights of the children. All the information of this handout is taken from that budget analysis.

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