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Union Budget 2007-08: what does it offer to women?

A Quick Response

This note presents a brief analysis of Union Budget 2007-08 from the perspective of women. Instead of trying to quantify the budget allocations meant for women in the various ministries, the present analysis takes a more comprehensive approach in assessing the possible implications of budget 2007-08 for women. The note is structured as follows:

Section I: The macro perspective on Union Budget 2007-08

Section II: How far does Union Budget 2007-08 address the needs of women?

Section I: The Macro Perspective on Union Budget 2007-08

Union Budget 2007-08 is significant from the point of view of women. First, because 2007-08 is the first year of the Eleventh Five Year Plan and therefore the Union Budget should reflect the changes in priorities for women. Second, Union Budget 2007-08 is the fourth of the five budgets that the UPA Government will present. Thus, this is the second last chance for the UPA Govt. to allocate resources for the promises made under the National Common Minimum Programme, wherein one of the six basic principles of governance spelt is a commitment to empower women politically, educationally, economically and legally and ensure equality for them.

It has been accepted by the Government of India that there is an urgent need to ensure that resources reach women. A gradual shift in policies has been seen over the decades, and since the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) onwards there has been explicit attention given to allocations for programmes/ schemes which directly benefit women. The efforts at Gender Budgeting in the recent years is also a significant step forward and the *Statement on Gender Budgeting* presented in Union Budget in the years 2005-06, 2006-07 and 2007-08 is a manifestation of the growing consciousness of gender based disadvantages faced by women in India.

The first Gender Budgeting statement in the Union Budgets 2005-06 included 10 demands for grants. In the year 2006-07, this was expanded to 24 demands for grants under 18 ministries/departments of the Union Government and 5 Union Territories. **This year's Gender Budgeting statement covers 33 demands for grants under 27 ministries/departments and 5 Union Territories. The total magnitude of the Gender Budget has also gone up from Rs. 22,251.41 crore for 2006-07 (RE) to Rs. 31,177**

crore in 2007-08 (BE). As a percentage of total Union Government Expenditure, this constitutes is a rise from 3.8% to 4.8%.¹

The table below presents the summary of the allocations on women as presented in the Gender Budgeting Statements over the past three years:

	No. of Demands in Union Budget covered	Total Allocations under Part A of the statement**	Total Allocations under Part B of the statement***	Total magnitude of Gender Budget
Gender Budgeting in 2005-06	10	Rs. 7,905.08 crore (BE)	Rs. 16,126.92 crore (BE)	Rs. 24,032.00 crore (BE) (4.67%*)
		Rs. 8,273.88 crore (RE)	Rs. 15,966.63 crore (RE)	Rs. 24,240.51 crore (RE) (4.77%*)
Gender Budgeting in 2006-07	24	Rs. 9,575.82 crore (BE)	Rs. 19,160.71 crore (BE)	Rs. 28,736.53 crore (BE) (5.10%*)
		Rs. 4,618.95 crore (RE)	Rs. 17,632.46 (RE)	Rs. 22,251.41 (RE) (3.8%)
Gender Budgeting in 2007-08	33	Rs.8,795.47 crore (BE)	Rs.22,382.49 crore (BE)	Rs. 31,177.96 crore (BE) (4.8%*)

* Proportion of total Union Government Expenditure

** 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.

Source: Gender Budgeting Statement, Expenditure Budget Vol. I, Union Budget, various years

Acknowledging the mistakes made in the Gender Budgeting statement of 2006-07, the BE figures for 2006-07 have been revised in this year's statement to Rs. 4942.50 crores (under Part A), Rs. 17,910.24 core (under Part B), and the total now stands at Rs. 22,852.74 crore. This is surely a step in the right direction. Furthermore, with more ministries and departments taking on this exercise, one can hope that Gender Budgeting will not remain confined to just a few ministries and departments that have been historically perceived as "women-related".

Although from 2006-07 to 2007-08 there has been a one percent increase in the total magnitude of the Gender Budget as a proportion of total Union Government Expenditure (from 3.8% to 4.8%), the figures still reveal the low priorities accorded to women in the Union Budget. If the Union Budget 2007-08 indeed reflects the priorities as per the 11th

¹ For 2007-08 BE, Total Expenditure of Union Government has been taken as Rs. 6,40,521 crore, excluding the Rs. 40,000 crore of non-plan transaction to be undertaken in 2007-08 relating to transfer of RBI's stake in SBI to the Government.

Five Year Plan, it gives rise to the apprehension that even in the 11th Plan priorities for women could be grossly inadequate.

It is worth pointing out though that Gender Budget Statement that is being presented by the GoI reflects a narrow interpretation of the concept. Gender Budgeting is not just about looking at specific schemes for women. Identifying and listing allocations for women, important though it is as an exercise, it is just a starting point for Gender Budgeting. It is important to take the understanding beyond that since Gender Budgeting cannot be seen in isolation from the overall political-economy scenario. How overall public policies impact on social sectors, agriculture, employment generation and poverty alleviation is far more critical from the point of view of women and thus any assessment of the impact of budgets on women has to be positioned in this context.

For instance, the high rate of inflation witnessed recently would have harsh implications for women. The lack of concerted efforts to strengthen the PDS in the context of growing agrarian crisis as well as the declining per capita availability of food grains, does affect women. The sharp increase in open unemployment rates in rural and urban areas as shown in NSS data is also an important indicator of the adversities confronting women. Therefore, in the proposals made in the latest Union Budget we need to look at the policy interventions in several social as well as economic sectors which directly affect the well being of women in India.

Section II: How far does Union Budget 2007-08 address the needs of women?

2.1.School Education

(All figures in Rs. Crore)

	2006-07 BE	2006-07 RE	2007-08 BE
Total Allocation for Department of School Education and Literacy	19076.79	19101.04	23142.22
Women-specific Allocation (as per the Gender Budgeting Statement 2007-08)	8110.3	8106.3	9238.71
% Share	42.51	42.43	39.92

Source: Compiled from Expenditure Budget Vol. I&II, Union Budget, various years

The percentage share for women in the schemes run by the Department of School Education and Literacy seem to have been arrived at on the basis of the proportion of girls in total enrolment in school education. However, this makes an assumption that the unit cost of provision of public education is the same for boys and girls, which is questionable. In order to take more girls to schools, adequate infrastructure provision for them is a must. For instance, several studies have pointed out that if separate toilets for girls are not provided for in school campuses, there are much greater chances for girls to drop out of schools. Thus, the unit cost for provision of public education for girls could

be higher. This should be seen as affirmative action if one has to ensure that state's provisioning of education reaches girls.

Therefore, the government needs to take strong measures for strengthening educational infrastructure for girls and the specific schemes targeted for girls need to be expanded. In Union Budget 2007-08, the *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya* scheme has been merged with the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, which makes it very difficult to track the outlays for this specific scheme. The allocation for Mahila Samakhya scheme has been increased only marginally from Rs. 30 crore in 2006-07 BE to Rs. 34 crore in 2007-08 BE. However, the share of women-specific allocation within the total allocation for the Dept. of School Education & Literacy shows a decline from 43.4 % to around 40 %.

2.2.Higher Education

(All figures in Rs. Crore)

	2006-07 BE	2006-07 RE	2007-08 BE
Total Allocation for Dept. of Higher Education	5038.2	5147.96	9209.5
Women-specific Allocation (as per the Gender Budgeting Statement 2007-08)	1162.32	896.07	1369.97
% Share	23.07	17.41	14.88

Source: Compiled from Expenditure Budget Vol. I&II, Union Budget, various years

The low priorities for women in the overall allocations under Department of Higher Education is a matter of serious concern. Moreover, the share of women-specific allocation in the total allocation for University & Higher Education registers a decline in 2007-08 BE.

Thus, while the increased allocation for education appears to be one of the very few creditable features of the Union Budget 2007-08, in terms of priorities for women in the allocations for education, there is nothing to cheer about.

2.3.Health and Family Welfare

(All figures in Rs. Crore)

	2006-07 BE	2006-07 RE	2007-08 BE
Total Allocation for Dept. of Health and Family Welfare	12545.88	11366	15291
Women-specific Allocation (as per the Gender Budgeting Statement)*	3383.95	3362.16	6705.88
% Share	26.97	29.58	43.86

* A quick perusal of the Gender Budgeting Statement 2007-08 reveals that the allocation for RCH-II Flexible Pool has been counted twice in it. In the figures presented above, the allocation for RCH-II Flexible Pool shown in Part B of the Statement has been included.

Source: Compiled from Expenditure Budget Vol. I&II, Union Budget, various years

Most of the health indicators for India, especially the maternal and child health indicators show the poor record of the country in key aspects of human development. Very low level of public spending on health in the country, at slightly above 1 % of the GDP, has

often been cited as a major reason behind such a dismal state of affairs with regard to health. The National Common Minimum Programme of the UPA has also stressed that total public spending on health should be stepped up to 3 % of the GDP. Given the fiscal crisis of the States, it was expected that the Centre would take the lead in raising total public spending on health. In this regard, however, the allocation on health and family welfare in Union Budget 2007-08 is quite inadequate.

Allocations for some of the important schemes are presented in the table below:

(All figures in Rs. Crore)

	2005-06 RE	2006-07 BE	2006-07 RE	2007-08 BE
Allocation for National Rural Health Mission	6075.17	8141.90	7190.37	9839.00
Allocation for Rural Family Welfare Sub-Centres	1259.43	1494.56	982.46	1824.00
Allocation for Reproductive and Child Health	1814.27	1765.83	1338.22	1672.2

***Note: The Union Budget allocations for the schemes given above do not include the lump sum provisions for North Eastern areas and Sikkim.**

****Source: Expenditure Budget Vol. II (Notes on Demands for Grants), Union Budget, various years.**

Allocation for the **Rural Family Welfare Sub-Centres** scheme has important implications for health of women in rural areas. Therefore, the increase in allocations for Rural Family Welfare Sub-Centres is welcome. Likewise, the increase in allocations for NRHM is also a positive step.

However, the lower Revised Estimates for 2006-07 (than the BE for 2006-07) for each of these schemes raises another concern as it shows that the present Union Government has not been able to address the institutional bottlenecks in the crucial sector of health and family welfare.

One of the biggest disappointments of Union Budget 2007-08 has been the reduction in allocations for **Reproductive and Child Health** programme when compared with 2006-07 BE. Furthermore, what is worse is that even what is allocated is showing poor utilization as between 2006-07 BE and RE, there is a decline of more than 24%. Likewise, RE figures have declined even between 2005-06 RE and 2006-07 RE by more than 26%. No doubt the government needs to pay serious attention to the problems of maternal and child health, especially when the results of National Family Health-III (2005-06) have pointed out the persistence of huge deficits in this area.

2.4. Housing

Allocations for some of the important schemes as regards housing can be seen in the table below.

(All figures in Rs. Crore)

	2005-06 RE	2006-07 BE	2006-07 RE	2007-08 BE
Allocations for Indira Awas Yojana (IAY)	2475.00	2625.05	2625.05	3636.00
Allocations for Valmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojana (VAMBAY)	182.62	75.01	49.34	...
Allocations for Interest Subsidy Scheme for Housing for Urban Poor	-	-	-	30.00

***Note: The Union Budget allocations for the schemes given above do not include the lump sum provisions for North Eastern areas and Sikkim.**

Source: Expenditure Budget Vol. II (Notes on Demands for Grants), Union Budget, various years.

The Gender Budgeting Statement presented in Union Budget 2007-08 has shown 100 % of allocations under Indira Awas Yojna (IAY) as women-specific. However, the *Performance Budget 2006-07* of the Dept. of Rural Development says that in 2004-05, of the 15.16 lakh houses constructed, 7.38 lakh were allotted to women, 4.32 lakh were allotted jointly to husband and wife and 2.72 lakh were allotted to men. Similarly, for the following year (figures available for until Dec 2005), 4.95 lakh houses have been allotted to women, 2.55 lakh in joint names and 1.47 lakh to men. Therefore, it cannot be claimed that entire allocations for IAY scheme are women-specific. But greater priorities for rural housing are certainly required for provision of housing to women, and in this regard IAY scheme is important.

The *Valmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojna (VAMBAY)* was the only major scheme run by the Union Government for provision of housing to urban poor, which has been discontinued. A new scheme, *Interest Subsidy Scheme for Housing for Urban Poor* (under the Min. of Housing and Urban Poor) is proposed to be started in 2007-08. However, the overall allocations for provision of housing to urban poor are quite small. Hence, with regard to provision of housing to poor women in urban areas, Union Budget 2007-08 is clearly a disappointment.

2.5. Water Supply and Sanitation

Total Union Budget allocation for water supply and sanitation is shown in the following table.

(All figures in Rs. Crore)

	2005-06 RE	2006-07 BE	2006-07 RE	2007-08 BE
Total Allocation on Water Supply and Sanitation	2120.96	2451.08	2233.01	3093.5
As % of GDP	0.06	0.062	0.054	0.067

*Source: Annual Financial Statements of the Central Government – for various years

Water Supply and Sanitation sector has still not found a mention in the Gender Budgeting Statement presented in the Union Budgets. This is a cause for disappointment as it is well known that much of the roles around ensuring water in households (fetching water, management of water in a household, etc.,) are deeply gendered. However, the total Union Budget allocation for Water Supply & Sanitation as a proportion of GDP (at current market prices) shows a very small increase from 0.062 % in 2006-07 BE to 0.067 % in 2007-08 BE.

Allocations for some of the important schemes as regards water supply and sanitation can be seen in the table below.

(All figures in Rs. Crore)

	2005-06 RE	2006-07 BE	2006-07 RE	2007-08 BE
Allocations for Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (Dept of Drinking Water Supply)	3654.07	4680.08	4050.01	5850.00
Allocations for Rural Sanitation (Dept of Drinking Water Supply)	630.00	720.00	720.00	954.00
Allocations for Urban Water Supply and Sewerage (Dept of Urban Development)	45.49	50.00	50.00	32.30

*Note: The Union Budget allocations for the schemes given above do not include the lump sum provisions for North Eastern areas and Sikkim.

Source: Expenditure Budget Vol. II (Notes on Demands for Grants), Union Budget, various years.

The increase in allocations for Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme and Rural Sanitation is a welcome step. However, there is a decline in allocation for Urban Water Supply and Sewerage and the decline is significant (more than 35%).

2.6. Welfare of Women Labourers

The NSSO data reveal that the informal economy constitutes 93 % of total workforce in India. Moreover, women constitute a large proportion of the workers in this unorganized sector. Women workers in the informal sector constituted about 91.38 % of the total women workers. Their specific needs thus require special attention. In certain specific industries, like the Beedi industry, women workers are found in very high numbers. Therefore, the Union Budget allocations for schemes addressing the needs of workers in the informal sector and specific industries need to be tracked in Union Budget 2007-08.

Allocations for the some of the important schemes as regards women labourers can be seen in the table below.

(All figures in Rs. Crore)

	2005-06 RE	2006-07 BE	2006-07 RE	2007-08 BE
Allocations for Labour Welfare Schemes	160.26	167.22	162.32	263.79
Allocations for Social Security for unorganized sector workers	...	4	0.10	5.00
Allocations for Improvements in Working conditions of Child/Women Labour	115.76	127.46	121.46	171.06

*Note: The Union Budget allocations for the schemes given above do not include the lump sum provisions for North Eastern areas and Sikkim.

**Source: Expenditure Budget Vol. II (Notes on Demands for Grants), Union Budget, various years.

While the increase in the allocation for *Labour Welfare Schemes* in 2007-08 BE is a step in the right direction, the delay shown by the present Government in addressing the problems of the workers in the unorganized sector (as reflected in the meager allocation of Rs. 5 crore for **Social Security for unorganized sector workers**) is a matter of concern.

2.7. Food Supply and PDS

Food security is another critical issue that has a strong bearing on women. Even if there is an overall household food security, this is no guarantee for the food security of the woman in the household. Ensuring food for the family is a responsibility that falls largely on women and yet this does not ensure food security for them as individuals. Most certainly, if food security is hit, the most direct consequence of that is that woman in the household will get lesser food.

There was no measure for expansion of PDS in 2006-07, and this year's budget does not offer anything significant in this regard. The allocation for food subsidy in 2007-08 BE is only 6 % higher than that of the previous Budget, which would fail to account for even the rise in prices of food grains and other essential commodities of late. Hence, Union Budget 2007-08 causes another disappointment in terms of the lack of sufficient additional resources for food subsidy.

(All figures in Rs. Crore)

	2005-06 RE	2006-07 BE	2006-07 RE	2007-08 BE
Allocations for Food Subsidy	23,200.00	24,200.00	24,203.92	25,696.20

Source: Expenditure Budget Vol. II (Notes on Demands for Grants), Union Budget, various years.

2.8. Employment Generation

Allocations for the some of the important schemes as regards employment generation can be seen in the table below:

(All figures in Rs. Crore)

	2005-06 RE	2006-07 BE	2006-07 RE	2007-08 BE
Allocations for National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS)	...	10170	10170	10800
Allocations for Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojna (SGRY)	7650	2700	2700	2520
Allocations for National Food for Work Programme	4050	0

*Note: The Union Budget allocations for the schemes given above do not include the lump sum provisions for North Eastern areas and Sikkim.

**Note: NREGS has a non-lapsable fund. So unspent balance from 2005-06 (Feb-March 2006) and 2006-07 are being carried forward to 2007-08.

***Note: NFWP merged with NREGS in 2006-07.

Source: Expenditure Budget Vol. II (Notes on Demands for Grants), Union Budget, various years.

Proper implementation of NREGS is very important from the point of view of women. In 2006-07, the utilization of funds in NREGS has been slow; however, this is likely to pick up over time with greater awareness among people and better implementation by states. In this context, it may be noted here that as the number of districts under NREGS

are being increased from 200 to 330 in 2007-08, the per-district allocations for NREGS has not been increased adequately.

Moreover, the Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) is important for women in the non-NREGS districts. The sharp reduction in allocations for SGRY in 2006-07, since the launch of NREGS, would have adversely affected employment generation in the non-NREGS districts.

2.9.Special Interventions under MWCD

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has a few schemes for special interventions for working women and women in distress. Allocations for some of the important schemes under MWCD can be seen in the table below.

(All figures in Rs. Crore)

	2005-06 RE	2006-07 BE	2006-07 RE	2007-08 BE
Allocations for Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers	41.40	94.00	93.80	103.00
Allocations for Hostels for Working Women	4.50	4.50	4.50	13.50
Allocations for Short Stay Homes	15	15.90	15.72	15.90
Allocations for Schemes for Rescue of Victims of Trafficking	0.25	0.45	0.45	9.00

*Note: The Union Budget allocations for the schemes given above do not include the lump sum provisions for North Eastern areas and Sikkim.

**Source: Expenditure Budget Vol. II (Notes on Demands for Grants), Union Budget, various years.

While the increased outlay for schemes like **Rescue of Victims of Trafficking** and **Hostels for Working Women** is welcome, a substantial increase in outlay in the Union Budget 2006-07 was also needed for **Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers** and **Short Stay Homes**.

Many women's groups would be disappointed to note that there is no allocations even in this years Budget towards the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act (i.e., 'Protection from Domestic Violence Act, 2005), despite the passing of this Act as well as the finalization of the Rules and Regulations of the Act. The passing of this act has been a historic achievement for women of this country and the result of a long struggle. The lack

of any allocation for this act puts a question mark on the government's commitment to ensure that this Act becomes a reality for women and does not remain confined to the law books.

2.10. Self Help Groups

Allocations for the some of the schemes, important from the point of view of women's SHGs, are shown in the table below:

(All figures in Rs. Crore)

	2005-06 RE	2006-07 BE	2006-07 RE	2007-08 BE
Allocations for Rashtriya Mahila Kosh* (MWCD)	0.01	10.00	10.00	12.00
Grants through NABARD for Strengthening Cooperatives Credit Structure (Min.of Finance)	400.00	1500.00	1500.00	1500.00
Allocations for Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojna (SGSY) (Ministry of Rural Development)*	899.84	1080.00	1080.00	1620.00

***Note: The Union Budget allocations for the schemes given above do not include the lump sum provisions for North Eastern areas and Sikkim.**

****Source: Expenditure Budget Vol. II (Notes on Demands for Grants), Union Budget, various years.**

While the increase in the outlay for SGSY is welcome, there has been no increase in the Union Budget outlays for **Strengthening Cooperatives Credit Structure through NABARD Grants**.

2.11. Minority Women

The total allocations to the Ministry of Minority Affairs can be seen in the following table:

(All figures in Rs. Crore)

	2005-06 RE	2006-07 BE	2006-07 RE	2007-08 BE
Allocations for Ministry of Minority Affairs	...	2.00	143.52	512.83

***Source: Notes on Demands for Grants, Ministry of Minority Affairs, various years.**

It is common knowledge today that some religious minorities, especially the Muslims bear the brunt of discrimination and non-inclusion. The Sachar Committee Report has highlighted a dismal picture of the social, educational and economic conditions of Muslims in India. Using the framework of intersectionality of discrimination, Muslim women face double discrimination and are more vulnerable. Thus, targeted interventions for Muslim women is essential. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Minority Affairs, as of now, has no schemes targeted specifically towards women. It is therefore imperative that

the Government formulate a sub-plan for minorities, and earmark specific allocations for women.

The significant leap in the allocations for Ministry of Minority Affairs is a positive step. Disappointingly though, all the allocations/schemes under this ministry are gender neutral and there is not even a singly scheme/allocation targeted at minority women. The gender blindness of the Sachar Committee report is also reflecting in the allocations for this Ministry.

Thus, perhaps the only significant measure taken for women in Union Budget 2007-08 is the inclusion of a few more Ministries/ Departments in the Gender Budgeting exercise of the Union Government, and a consequent increase in the size of the Gender Budget. With regard to most sectors, Budget 2007-08 maintains the status quo of women in India. Moreover, in terms of priorities for women in the first year of the 11th Five Year Plan, Budget 2007-08 presents a disappointing picture.

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