

Weaker Sections: Welfare and Development

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The Union Budget 2017-18 has an optimistic outlook for the weaker and vulnerable sections of the society. The overall approach of the Budget is towards rural areas, infrastructure and poverty alleviation. The Budget is based on the principle of “TEC India” i.e. “Transform, Energise and Clean India”. The terms ‘Transforming’ and ‘Energising’ and ‘Cleaning’ have particular relevance for the vulnerable and weaker sections of the society. The budget envisages transforming the quality of the governance which has a direct bearing on the quality life of the people. It aims at energising various sections of the society, especially the vulnerable sections with the larger objective of unleashing their true potential and improving quality of their life.

Social groups like Schedule Castes (SCs), Schedule Tribes (STs), women, children, minorities and the people with disabilities need special focus and attention. The Budget exhibits the intention of the Government to improve the status of these social groups through their socio-economic empowerment. There has been a significant increase in the budget allocation for these groups across the Ministries/Departments. Some major increases in allocations are as follows-

- (i) ‘Allocation for the Welfare of Scheduled Castes’ {earlier known as Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan (SCSP) up to 2016-17}, has been stepped up from Rs 38833 crore (BE) in 2016-17 to Rs 52,393 crore (BE) in 2017-18, showing an increase of about 35 per cent.
- (ii) ‘Allocation for the welfare of STs’ {earlier known as Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP)}, has been increased to Rs 31920 crore (BE) in 2017-18 from Rs 24005.39 crore (BE) in 2016-17 showing an increase of about 33 per cent.
- (iii) Allocation for the ‘Gender Budget’, which has been increased from Rs 90769.80 crore (BE) in 2016-17 to Rs 113326.65 crore (BE) in 2017-18, i.e. an increase by 24.85 per cent.
- (iv) ‘Allocation for the welfare of children’ has been increased from Rs 65758.45 crore (BE) in 2016-17 to Rs 71305.35 crore (BE) in 2017-18 i.e. an increase by 8.44 per cent.
- (v) Enhanced allocation of Rs 4195 crore has been provided to the Ministry of Minority Affairs for BE, 2017-18 as compared to Rs 3827 crore in BE 2016-17 representing an increase of about 8.76 per cent.

With regard to SCs and STs, 26 Central Ministries/Departments

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have made 'Allocations for welfare of SCs' and 32 Central Ministries/ Departments have made 'Allocations for welfare of STs'. While there has been a substantial hike in overall allocation, some schemes that may draw the attention are in the field of agriculture, drinking water supply, housing, health, education etc. and have been shown separately in in Table-1 and 2 respectively for SCs and STs.

'Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)' and 'Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY)' will have 61 per cent and 41 per cent hike in their allocation in 2017-18 over 2016-17. 'Interest Subsidy for Short Term Credit to Farmers' will be new scheme to be launched in 2017-18 with an allocation of Rs 15000 crore out of which SCs will have earmarked allocation of Rs 2430 crore. Other major schemes, which have significant increase in allocation for SCs are 'Swachh Bharat Mission- Rural' (55 per cent), 'Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)-Rural' (50 per cent), and 'Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)' (51 per cent).

The schemes will have similar significant hike in the earmarked allocation for 'Allocation for Welfare of STs'. 'Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)' will have 83 per cent hike, and 'Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY)' will have 45 per cent hike, 'Swachh Bharat Mission- Rural' will 55 per cent hike, 'Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)- Rural' will have 39 per cent hike and 'Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)' will have 51 per cent hike in their allocation in 2017-18 over 2016-17. 'Interest Subsidy for Short Term Credit to Farmers', a new scheme to be launched in 2017-18 will have an allocation of Rs.1200 crore for the STs as shown in table-2 below-

The Budget also exhibits a very favourable expenditure profile of the nodal Ministries/Departments which deal with SCs, STs, Other Backward Castes (OBCs), Minorities and Person with Disabilities (PwDs) etc. Table-3 is about the budget allocation of the Ministries/Departments dealing with these social groups.

Lack of education is the major reason of backwardness of SCs and STs. It has been observed that the dropout rate of SCs students is higher than national average. One of the reasons for this is the poor economic condition of the families. The students in many cases drop out from the school either due to parents being not able to support their study or to support the family by way of an additional working hand to supplement the family income. The Budget addresses the issue with greater focus. For instance, there has been a significant increase in the allocation on scholarship schemes for the students from the weaker sections in the Budget. Allocation under Post Matric Scholarship (PMS) for SCs student is Rs 3348 crore in 2017-18 in comparison to Rs 2791 crore provided in 2016-17 which is an increase by 20 per cent.

Distance of the home from the school is another important reason for children from weaker section dropping out of the schools, especially girl children. This problem has also drawn attention in the Budget 2017-18. The allocation for construction

Table-1: Allocation for Welfare of SCs under Major Schemes

(Rs In crore)

In-line Ministries/ Departments	Scheme	BE 2016-17	BE 2017-18	Percentage Increase
Agriculture, Cooperation and farmers' Welfare	Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana	921.00	1484.67	61.20
Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers' Welfare	Interest Subsidy for Short Term Credit to Farmers	-	2430.00	New Scheme
Agriculture, Cooperation and farmers' Welfare	Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY)	391.32	550.80	40.75
Drinking Water and Sanitation	Swachh Bharat Mission- Rural	1980.00	3068.62	54.98
Drinking Water and Sanitation	National Rural Drinking Water Mission	1100.00	1331.00	21
Health and family Welfare	National Rural Health Mission	3931.02	4272.93	8.69
Rural Development	Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)- Rural	5116.74	7652.72	49.56
Skill Development	Pradhan Mantri kaushal Vikas Yojana	311.00	470.00	51.12
School Education and literacy	Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti	380.00	418.27	10.07

Table-2: Allocation for Welfare of STs under Major Schemes

(Rs In crore)

In-line Ministries/ Departments	Scheme	BE 2016-17	BE 2017-18	Percentage Increase
Agriculture, Cooperation and farmers' Welfare	<i>Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)</i>	392.86	719.04	83.02
Agriculture, Cooperation and farmers' Welfare	Interest Subsidy for Short Term Credit to Farmers	-	1200.00	New Scheme
Agriculture, Cooperation and farmers' Welfare	<i>Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY)</i>	187.20	272.00	45.29
Drinking Water and Sanitation	<i>Swachh Bharat Mission- Rural</i>	900.00	1394.83	54.98
Drinking Water and Sanitation	National Rural Drinking Water Mission	500.00	605.00	21
Health and Family Welfare	National Rural Health Mission	2125.22	2332.28	9.74
Rural Development	<i>Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)- Rural</i>	3823.43	5318.28	39.09
Skill Development	<i>Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)</i>	157.75	238.15	50.96
School Education and literacy	<i>Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti</i>	203.00	223.81	10.25

of hostels for boys and girls from SC communities has been increased from Rs 45 crore (BE) in 2016-17 to Rs 155 crore (BE) in 2017-18. There are also other schemes to facilitate higher education among the SCs like National fellowship for SC students allocation for which has been increased from Rs 200 crore (BE) in 2016-17 to Rs 230 crore (BE) in 2017-18.

'PM Research Fellowship' is a new scheme to be implemented by the Department of Higher Education. The scheme will have the SC component of Rs 12 crore in 2017-18. Protection of Civil Rights of the SCs who are generally very vulnerable to

various forms of atrocities by the people from the so called higher castes is also a priority area of the Government which is appropriately reflected in the Union Budget 2017-18. The allocation under the scheme 'Strengthening of Machinery for the Enforcement of Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1995 and Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989' has been increased 100 per cent i.e. from Rs 150 crore (BE) in 2016-17 to Rs 300 crore (BE) in 2017-18.

Similar major initiatives for STs include provision of increased allocation under Post Matric Scholarship Scheme (PMS). The

BE of 2017-18 under PMS for ST students is Rs 1347 crore against Rs 1200 crore provided in 2016-17 i.e. an increase by 12.25 per cent. Under the scheme 'National Fellowship and Scholarship for Higher Education of ST Students', allocation has been increased from Rs 50 crore in 2016-17 to Rs 120 crore 2017-18 i.e. by 140 per cent. The Budget also shows the intention of the Government to promote Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs) as primary and effective sources of inputs for formulation of policies and programmes for tribal development. Allocation for TRIs has been increased from Rs 21 crore

Table-3: Expenditure Profile of Social Ministries/Departments 2017-18

(Rs. In crore)

Ministries/Departments	2016-17 (BE)	2017-18 (BE)	Percentage Increase
Department of Social Justice and Empowerment	6566.95	6908.00	5.20
Ministry of Tribal Affairs	4827.00	5329.00	10.39
Ministry of Minority Affairs	3827.00	4195.00	9.61
Department of Empowerment of Person with Disabilities	784.00	855.00	9.05

in 2016-17 to Rs 80 crore in 2017-18 i.e. by nearly five-fold.

For minorities, the Budget 2017-18 focuses on their educational and skill development. Allocation for the Minority Affairs Ministry has been increased to Rs 4195 crore for 2017-18 which is 9.6 per cent more than allocation of Rs 3827 crore (BE) provided in 2016-17. The overall allocation for 'Educational Empowerment of Minorities' has been increased from Rs. 1949 crore in 2016-17 to Rs 2054 crore in 2017-18 i.e. by Rs 105 crore. Similarly for 'Skill Development and Livelihoods' the allocation increased is from Rs 542 crore in 2016-17 to Rs 635 crore in 2017-18 i.e. by 17 per cent.

The 'Divyangs' dealt by the nodal Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities are other social groups which have special focus of the Government. The Department will have an increment in its allocation by 10 per cent, i.e. from Rs 784 crore in 2016-17 to Rs 855 crore in 2017-18.

Government is dedicated to the cause that every individual household should have roof over its head. Towards realisation of the same, works are already in progress under *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana* (PMAY)-Rural for affordable housing. As mentioned shown in table-1 and 2 there has been 50 per cent increase in earmarked allocation for SCs and 39 per cent increase in earmarked allocation for STs under PMAY.

Free LPG connections to poor households is a very important and successful initiative taken by the Government. In order to sustain the initiative, the allocation for the *Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana* (PMUY) has been increased by Rs 20 crore i.e. from Rs 500 crore in 2016-17 to Rs 520 crore in 2017-18. The target is to cover upto 5 crore households in two years.

Providing employment and entrepreneurship opportunities to youths from SCs, STs and other social groups is also one of the target area of the Budget. The initiatives taken to increase employment are-

- Inculcating entrepreneurship skills among Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes is of Stand-Up India. The Budget allocation for this scheme has been increased to Rs 520 crore in 2017-18 from Rs 500 crore in 2016-17.
- Launching of next phase of Skill strengthening for Industrial value Enhancement (STRIVE) in 2017-18 at a cost of Rs 2,200 crore to improve the quality and market relevant vocational

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training in ITIs and to strengthen the apprenticeship programmes through industry cluster approach.

- Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion programme (SANKALP) will also be launched in 2017-18 with corpus of Rs 4,000 crore to provide market relevant training to 3.5 crore youth.
- A Dairy Processing and Infrastructure Development Fund would be set up in NABARD

with a corpus of Rs 8,000 crore over 3 years to promote dairy development in the country by creating adequate processing and infrastructure facilities. Initially the fund will start with a corpus of Rs 2000 crore.

Some other important initiatives for the marginalised sections of the society in the Budget are as given below-

- i. Introduction of Aadhar based Smart Cards for senior citizens containing their health details and to make a beginning to that effect through a pilot in 15 districts during 2017-18.
- ii. To undertake the 'Mission Antodaya' to bring one crore households out of poverty by 2019 and to make 50,000 Gram Panchayats poverty free by 2019 on the occasion of 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The Mission will have focused micro plan for sustainable livelihood for every deprived household.
- iii. Under the *Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana*, the Budget envisages to double the lending target of 2015-16. Target for 2017-18 is set at Rs 2.44 lakh crore, with priority lending to *dalits*, tribals, backward classes, minorities and women to start small scale businesses/enterprises.

In sum the overall focus of the Union Budget 2017-18 is on all basic and priority areas like education, affordable housing, developing skills, financial assistance, etc. The Budget allocation is a hint of the Government's agenda. With focus on an effective mechanism for output and outcome monitoring, which is already a priority area of the Government, the weak and vulnerable sections of the society can expect a substantive improvement in the quality of their life. □

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