



# Gender Responsive Budgeting in 2019-2020 budget - Small Change

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## What does the July 2019 budget tell us?

Every budget is preceded with speculation, but prior to the presentation of the 2019-2020 budget the first budget of the new government, the speculation about the gender implications was intensified as it was being presented by a female Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, only the second woman to do so. Moreover, the fact that as a member of National Commission of Women during the previous NDA government, she had been a strong advocate of gender responsive budgeting added to this expectation.

It is in this context that this article focuses on the analysis of the gender implications of the budget 2019-20. A major question raised is whether the approach in the Budget represents a departure from the past or is it essentially a continuation of the approach of the interim as well as the previous budgets. Some of the questions that are sought to be answered are:

- What is the nature of the commitments?
- How do women enter the discourse?
- What is the likely impact on transformative financing?

This article builds on a previous analysis of GRB in the previous tenure of the government of the interim budget.

## The approach

The Budget speech gave a sweeping overview of the broad thrusts of government policy for 2019-2020 in terms of the budget with, in a departure from the past, no mention of specific allocations. However, figures and provisions of expenditure allocations formed as always part of the accompanying documents, making it difficult immediately to correlate the pronouncements with the nature of prioritisation, and for the common person to understand impacts.

Throughout the speech there were many, almost 29, references to women and recognition of their contribution to the country and the economy. The Speech quotes Swami Vivekananda who in a letter to Swami Ramakrishna said it was important to improve the condition of women as "It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing." It also highlighted the approach of the government to be of "going beyond just women-centric-policy making to building women-led initiatives and movements." "Women's role in the rural economy was lauded as a "sweet story", and that the government wanted to encourage and facilitate this role and more progress could be made with women's greater participation."

The language reflects an overlapping of approaches – instrumentalist, welfarist and also through ‘**women led initiatives and movements**’ suggest an impetus to the process of empowerment. In other words, women’s role is important for growth, rural economy etc. but there is little stated about improving the position of women through enabling them to exercise rights. The Budget talks about women’s leadership but stops short of any discussion on how women’s capacity can be built for leadership. Resource expansion is principally through bank intervention.

At another level, women enter the discourse as housewives who are responsible for the social reproduction of labour, active in household maintenance and care responsibilities. As discussed earlier<sup>1</sup> while the Ujjwala scheme, which ensures a gas connection and gas stove, no doubt has the potential and impact of reducing women’s drudgery where they cook, but to posit this as a women’s empowerment programme is problematic as it does nothing to change the position or role of women in the family. In fact, in positioning itself as a women’s scheme, it stereotypes roles of women in the family. Again Swachh Bharat and the construction of toilets being positioned as to preserve women’s dignity distort the objectives of the scheme which was to make India ODF. Sadly much of the publicity also posits the construction of toilets as “for women” with the result that in rural areas men do not feel that they need to use the toilets. On the other hand, the gender budget statement this year does not reflect the Jal Shakti Budget.

Needless to say after the pronouncements in the speech, there was an expectation of substantial change in provisions and allocations for women led initiatives. However, there is nothing in the programmes of the previous government or any provision in the present budget to suggest how this is proposed to be translated immediately into action - one can only surmise that this is part of a future agenda.

In fact a vibrant programme which had developed processes and methods to empower women and for which there was substantive evidence of making a difference not only in women’s lives,<sup>2</sup> but also in household and communities, Mahila Samakhya was discontinued and merged with the National Livelihoods Mission in 2014, a programme whose ethos and objectives were distinctly different. Some state governments, convinced of the utility of the scheme have supported it despite the withdrawal of support from the centre. Probably time to revive it?

The budget does not take on board some of the glaring issues that impact women’s survival and quality of life, that is, sex ratio at birth, safety and security of women, declining female work force participation rates, access to higher education, and recognition of women as farmers.

In the above context, the announcement to form a broad-based Committee with Government and private stakeholders to evaluate and suggest action to make gender responsive budgeting more effective is a welcome and long awaited step. It also responds to a long standing demand to revisit the way gender responsive budgeting is being implemented in its present form as it has been reduced to a “computational exercise”.<sup>3</sup> For GRB to become an effective tool in gender mainstreaming and influence the manner in which it is being implemented across Ministries, changes are needed to make the process more responsive to needs of women and transgenders. . These need to be finalized early. Only then can it be incorporated in the next budget call circular. This would mean that the Committee that has been announced needs to be constituted at the earliest - an inclusive body representing not only government but also experts in this area, civil society organisations, academics, sector specialists, with a clear terms of reference.

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1 Mitra, Sona and Sarojini Ganju Thakur, 2019, [http://www.feministpolicyindia.org/documents/resources/Financing%20for%20gender%20equality\\_Sarojini%20Ganju%20Thakur%20&%20Sona%20Mitra.pdf](http://www.feministpolicyindia.org/documents/resources/Financing%20for%20gender%20equality_Sarojini%20Ganju%20Thakur%20&%20Sona%20Mitra.pdf)

2 Jha, Jyotsna and Menon, Nivedita Why it is Important to retain an Independent Mahila Samakhya Program , EPW, March 19, 2016

3 Mitra, Sona and Sarojini Ganju Thakur, 2019, [http://www.feministpolicyindia.org/documents/resources/Financing%20for%20gender%20equality\\_Sarojini%20Ganju%20Thakur%20&%20Sona%20Mitra.pdf](http://www.feministpolicyindia.org/documents/resources/Financing%20for%20gender%20equality_Sarojini%20Ganju%20Thakur%20&%20Sona%20Mitra.pdf) Please also refer to for broad background to GRB in India

## The big picture - the same story

As discussed earlier<sup>4</sup> the overall trends in the allocations for women in the Gender Budget Statement between 2014 and 2019 hovered roughly between 4.5 to 5.5% (although, in previous years it has touched 6.2%). The amount allocated to Part A (the women specific schemes) being between 1 to 1.5%. Is there any visible difference in the overall trend or is business as usual? The latter seems to be the case.

While in absolute terms the budget of 2019-2020 shows an increase of 8.3% from Rs. 1,25,531 crores to Rs 1,36,904 crores, this still represents a decrease of expenditure by 0.2% of the total expenditure (Hindustan Times, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2019) from 5.3% to 5.1%. And this is with the number of demands being reflected increasing from 33 to 39. Part A – women specific schemes - also reflect a decline from 1.4% in 2018 to 1.2% in 2019 with some flagship schemes like Ujjwala also showing a downward trend from Rs 3,200 to 2,725 crores. Part B also registers a decline in overall terms, although enhanced allocations are reflected to Ministries like MHRD and MoHFW.

The budget of Ministry of Women and Child Development had traditionally constituted about 1% of the budget - this year a sum of Rs. 29,000 crores has been set aside which is a substantial increase over last year but of this the major chunk of Rs 19, 834 crores is for ICDS. The amount allocated to schemes that would directly benefit women is limited and less than 10% of the Budget of the Ministry! When this provision is unpacked one would be able to glean that there is no remarkable change and in some cases, there is a reduction of provisions.

## Addressing the safety and security of women – no significant changes

One of the main objectives of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) flagship scheme is to reduce the level of sex selective abortion - female foeticide. The budget provision remains the same as in the interim budget at Rs. 280 crores. Some aspects that were discussed earlier<sup>5</sup> about the need to include features to ensure systemic and structural change need to be acted upon if the awareness raising is to be translated into permanent behavioural change.

With the Nirbhaya Fund too there has been a permanent issue of underutilisation. The corpus transferred to the Nirbhaya Fund till 2018 - 2019 was Rs. 3,600 crore out of which till December 2018 it was only able to release Rs 1513.4 crores (Economic Times, 27 April 2019). The Crime Prevention Fund released to the Ministry of Home Affairs show a nil utilisation and even amounts released to the MWCD towards the One Stop Centres (OSC), and other data compiled by CBGA in the table below reflects a very poor utilisation. The Central Victim Compensation Fund (CVCF) which provides financial support to survivors of crimes especially sexual abuse including rape, acid attacks; human trafficking etc. has been utilised to less than 20 per cent. Help lines have utilized only 43.3% of funds. The year-end review (2018) by Ministry of Women & Child<sup>6</sup> states that 32 States/UTs operationalised the Women Helpline. However, the allocation for effective implementation of this central scheme is reducing every year, especially with a 38% decline in the 2019-20 budget.<sup>7</sup>

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4 Mitra, Sona and Sarojini Ganju Thakur, 2019, [http://www.feministpolicyindia.org/documents/resources/Financing%20for%20gender%20equality\\_Sarojini%20Ganju%20Thakur%20&%20Sona%20Mitra.pdf](http://www.feministpolicyindia.org/documents/resources/Financing%20for%20gender%20equality_Sarojini%20Ganju%20Thakur%20&%20Sona%20Mitra.pdf)

5 Mitra, Sona and Sarojini Ganju Thakur, 2019, [http://www.feministpolicyindia.org/documents/resources/Financing%20for%20gender%20equality\\_Sarojini%20Ganju%20Thakur%20&%20Sona%20Mitra.pdf](http://www.feministpolicyindia.org/documents/resources/Financing%20for%20gender%20equality_Sarojini%20Ganju%20Thakur%20&%20Sona%20Mitra.pdf)

6 <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=187560>

7 CBGA, 2019, Promises and Priorities: An Analysis of Union Budget 2019-20, <http://www.cbgaindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Promises-and-Priorities-An-Analysis-of-Union-Budget-2019-20-2.pdf>

**Table 1: Allocations from Nirbhaya Funds Released (in Rs. crore)**

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	Utilisation
<b>Ministry of Home Affairs</b>							
Emergency Response Support System			218.0	45.3	15.0		59.57 (21.4%)
Central Victim Compensation Fund (CVCF)*			200.0				33.64 (16.82%)
Cyber Crime Prevention against Women & Children			93.1				0
<b>Ministry of Women and Child Development</b>							
One Stop Centre		7.65	40.1	30.0	152.6	58.23	49.5 (17.14%)
Universalisation of Women Helpline Scheme		11.65	0.7	8.5	18.4	8.12	20.5 (43.3%)

Note: \*CVCF has been released as a one-time grant to States/UTs to support and supplement the Victim Compensation schemes in respective States/UTs, allowed only after consuming the non-budgetary resource

Source: Compiled by CBGA using Lok Sabha Unstarred Question no. 1246, 28.06.2019

An immediate priority for GRB should be to review the design, implementation and monitoring of this fund as it is addressed to deal with an issue which affects the daily lives of women.

There is nothing new in the budget in its approach to violence against women. All the schemes that were reflected in the interim budget remain the same - help lines, one stop crisis centres, shelter homes. According to the unstarred Lok Sabha question answer on 28th June 2019, a total of 462 OSCs out of the 728 approved OSCs have been set up. The 2018-2019 (RE) showed an allocation of Rs. 303 crores up from a DE of Rs. 105 crores, and this year, there is a provision for Rs. 274 crores BE.

Schemes like *Swadhar Greh* and *Ujjwala* primarily meant to act as a support and rehabilitation system for women in distress have registered a 47% and 38% decline from 2018-19 (BE) respectively. Against a provision of Rs. 90 crores BE for *Swadhar Greh* last year there is a provision of Rs. 50 crores (2018-2019 BE) in this year's budget, and similarly, provisions for *Ujjwala*, a comprehensive scheme meant to combat trafficking of women have decline from Rs. 50 crores (2018-2019 BE) to Rs. 30 crores in 2019-2020.

## Women and employment

### ***Not such a sweet story – the rural economy***

According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017-2018, 70% of women workers in India are engaged with the agricultural sector. One of the big announcements of this budget was the provision of Rs. 75,000 crores of the Prime Minister Kisan Samaan Yojana which guarantees an income of Rs 6,000 per annum to farmers. The lack of recognition for women as farmers means that they are not able to benefit from this and even take limited advantage of the schemes under the Rashtriya Kisan Vikas Yojana. Many of the mainstream schemes prescribe that 30% of the beneficiaries are women. However, there needs to be an exercise to see how women can be put in the centre. This would require revisiting some of the schemes and also working toward the strict implementation of inheritance laws.

The declining work force participation rate is applicable both to urban and rural areas. Existing wage employment programmes such as the MGNREGA, which had high rates of women's participation, instead of being expanded to urban areas, is experiencing marginalisation as evidenced in the declining rate of allocations. Allocation for Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)<sup>8</sup> has been decreased to Rs. 60,000 crores in 2019-20 (BE) from Rs.61,084 crores in 2018-19 (RE), which was also the case in the Interim Budget for 2019-2020.

8 <http://www.cbgaindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Promises-and-Priorities-An-Analysis-of-Union-Budget-2019-20-2.pdf>

## **Women as entrepreneurs**

The thrust in this budget remains on women's economic empowerment through self employment and focussing on women's entrepreneurship. One of the Budget speech announcements was of allowing every verified member of SHGs with a Jan Dhan account an overdraft of Rs 5,000. The latest NABARD data show that there are 85.31 exclusive bank-linked women SHGs of which about 53 lakhs are under the Ajeevika - National Rural Development Mission.<sup>9</sup> The financial implication for banks of the implementation of the overdraft is colossal, and one waits to see the manner in which and the extent to which it can be implemented. The overdraft of 5,000 is more likely to be used towards daily expenditure items rather than establishment of enterprises.

The Budget has also provided for a loan of one lakh to be given to one member of an SHG under the Mudra scheme. However, no additional funds have been provided for this scheme. It is within the overall limit for the MUDRA scheme.

There has been a 60% increase in the budgetary allocations for NRLM. The target for the first 100 days of the recently elected government is to bring more nano enterprises into micro and small enterprises through bank linkages and bank loans. A recent IRMA study shows the positive impact of areas covered by NRLM SHGs in terms of 79% greater existence of enterprises, enhanced monthly income by 22% compared to non NRLM areas, and greater stock of livestock assets. The aspect of augmentation of incomes, access to new technologies, moving out of stereotyped business – enterprises need still to be addressed. Budgetary allocation for the scheme is stagnant at Rs.510 crores since 2017-18.

Other schemes such as the Skill Development Program have a 30% target for women, provisions for which are at similar levels compared to interim budget 2019-20. The *Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana* (PMKVY), the flagship scheme instituted by MSDE under its flagship program called Skill India has been facilitated by access to credit under the MUDRA yojana. Allocations for Kaushal Vikas Yojana has fallen from Rs. 2,931.7 crore in Interim Budget, 2019-20 to Rs. 2,676.6 crore in the main budget for 2019-20 (BE).<sup>10</sup> Moreover, entrepreneurship among women through Skill India initiatives are still restricted to beauty parlours, tuition centres, pickle making, papad making etc which are small in scale and with no adequate supply chains. There is a need for building the new skills and entrepreneurships for women under the Make in India and Skill India initiatives to take up newer start-ups which may have had the potential for breaking the rigid occupational barriers which women workers persistently face in the context of Indian labour markets.

## **Education**

This budget had failed to meet the aspirations of young girls and women in accessing secondary and higher education. Allocations to National Scheme for Incentive to Girl Child for Secondary Education<sup>11</sup> (was discontinued from 2015-16 for two years and was restarted in 2017-18 with reduced allocations from Rs. 320 crore in 2017-18 (BE)) has seen a major dip from Rs. 256 crores in 2018-19 (BE) to Rs. 100 crore in 2019-20 (BE). The new scheme Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan launched in 2019 budget, incorporating the components SSA, RMSA and Strengthening of Teachers Training Institutions with an allocation of Rs. 36322 crores in 2019-20 (BE), indicates that the allocations to BBBP were actually at the cost of siphoning off some of the older programmes, which neither augurs well for BBBP nor does it indicate any radical initiative for securing women's rights to live and get educated. Although BBBP is also viewed as an education intervention the focus on this aspect has been very limited.

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9 Mitra, Sona and Sarojini Ganju Thakur, 2019, Financing for Gender Equality – an agenda for change, [http://www.feministpolicyindia.org/documents/resources/Financing%20for%20gender%20equality\\_Sarojini%20Ganju%20Thakur%20&amp;%20Sona%20Mitra.pdf](http://www.feministpolicyindia.org/documents/resources/Financing%20for%20gender%20equality_Sarojini%20Ganju%20Thakur%20&amp;%20Sona%20Mitra.pdf)

10 CBGA, 2019, <http://www.cbgaindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Promises-and-Priorities-An-Analysis-of-Union-Budget-2019-20-2.pdf>

11 <https://openbudgetsindia.org/dataset/department-of-school-education-and-literacy-2019-20-budget/resource/bed500fd-bc64-4872-b6b7-6f96ae32d5f6>

## Social Protection and addressing care work

*Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana* (PMMVY) is a maternity benefit scheme, which was launched in 2017 in a truncated form covering on the first live birth. The budgetary allocations for this scheme also have been insufficient as pointed out in a letter to the Finance Minister from 60 Indian economists before the interim budget of 2019. The provision of Rs. 2500 crores in the current budget is still inadequate to meet the demands of all pregnant and lactating mothers. There has also been a decline in the allocations on National Crèche Scheme from Rs.128 crores (BE) in 2018-19 to Rs. 50 crores (BE) in 2019-20. Working Women's Hostel scheme has also seen a decline in allocations from Rs. 50 crores (BE 2018-19) to Rs. 165 crores. Allocations on Mahila Shakti Kendras has reduced from Rs. 267 crores (BE) 2018-19 to Rs.150 crores (BE) in 2019-20.

The government has announced a the new pension scheme, namely Pradhan Mantri Karam Yogi Maandhan Scheme, for three crore retail traders & small shopkeepers whose annual turnover is less than 1.5 crore enrolment into the Scheme is to be kept simple requiring only Aadhaar and a bank account and rest will be on self-declaration. This scheme has a potential to benefit women entrepreneurs and given that for women it is much more difficult to set up enterprises, should be ensure that women entrepreneurs can also easily avail this pension benefit.

In India the Budget of 2019-2020 did not reflect any radical departure from the past, and many issues that impact on women's lives remained unaddressed. The hope lies in the recognition of the need to revamp and revisit the way in which gender responsive budgeting is being implemented. This may also result in a concerted and holistic effort to prioritize certain issues which could lead to change. Even current interventions may need a different approach to make them 'empowering'. There are certain issues that need immediate prioritisation:

- Constitution of the GRB committee with the views that its recommendations can be taken into account at the next budget;
- Creation of a separate Ministry of Gender Equality which also has a coordinating/ clearing house role;
- Prioritising women's Employment creation through focussed interventions in addition to the existing skill development and entrepreneurship thrusts; and
- Increase coverage of Social Protection for women in unorganised sector, especially the migrant women, provision of childcare facilities at worksites, and provision of quality crèches

In the previous article on "Financing gender equality – an agenda for change" one of the foremost stated concerns was the need to revise the manner in which GRB is being implemented in the country. In the budget of 2019-2020 this has been acknowledged and now early action is awaited in the matter. As stated earlier GRB is an effective tool for transformative financing for gender equality, and is critical to meet our commitments in the SDGs, "and pave the way forward for a 'feminist financing architecture'."<sup>12</sup>

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12 Mitra, Sona and Sarojini Ganju Thakur, 2019, Financing for Gender Equality – an agenda for change, [http://www.feministpolicyindia.org/documents/resources/Financing%20for%20gender%20equality\\_Sarojini%20Ganju%20Thakur%20&%20Sona%20Mitra.pdf](http://www.feministpolicyindia.org/documents/resources/Financing%20for%20gender%20equality_Sarojini%20Ganju%20Thakur%20&%20Sona%20Mitra.pdf)

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