

Stop Stealing Dalits Share in Union & State Budgets

Although the Scheduled Castes (SCs) constitute the largest social group in India, this community has historically suffered from caste and untouchability based exclusion and discrimination. The problem has got further aggravated because of their physical and social segregation from the rest of the society through the practice of untouchability. During the post-independence era, in spite of decades of planning and a sizable amount of public resources being channelised in the name of welfare of SCs, the actual benefits hardly reached these groups.

Special Component Plan (SCP) for SCs :

In terms of all types of socio-economic indicators (such as, access to income generating assets, poverty, employment, education, health etc.) they have been far below the national average. Realizing this fact, the Government of India took a radical initiative by formulating the “Special Component Plan (SCP) for SCs” during the 6th Five Year Plan. The SCP for SCs was made obligatory for all the State Governments as well as all the Central Government. The SCP for SCs expected “to facilitate easy convergence and pooling of resources from all the other development sectors in proportion to the population of SCs and monitoring of various development programmes for the benefit of SCs”.

Thus, through the implementation of SCP for SCs, both the Central Government and the States were required to ensure regular flow of Plan funds exclusively for the development of SCs, following the proportion of SCs in the total population of the country/ the particular State.

Non Implementation of Special Component Plan (SCP) for SCs :

This Strategy of Component Plan (SCP) for SCs entails targeted flow of funds and associated benefits from the annual plan of States/ Union Territories (UTs) at least in proportion to the SC population i.e. 16 % in total population of the State/ UTs and Central Government.

The extent to which SCP has been implemented by the Central Government ministries/ departments, as measured in terms of the proportion of allocations earmarked for SCs in total plan allocations of the respective ministries/departments in union budget 2006-07 has been very low.

Data of implementation of SCP for SC by Central Government in 2007-08

Total plan allocations by all departments/ ministries of the Centre Government	Rs. 205100 Cr
Plan allocations earmarked for SCs by all departments/ ministries	Rs. 12515.75 Cr
Proportion of total plan allocation of Center Budget Estimated for SC	6.10%
Proportion gap of total plan allocation of Center Budget Estimated for SC	9.76%

Is it surprising then to learn that only 6.10% has been allocated to the said channels? Perhaps not, perhaps the governments own actions mirror the society it governs, one that is inundated with caste discrimination and untouchability.

Plan Outlay for Dalits in Union Budget 2007-08

The only departments or ministries following the guidelines and allocating the correct proportion of funds to the area were the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, the Department of Elementary Education and the Department of Women & Child Development. Two of these, let it be noted have relatively small net budgets. Meanwhile at least five departments allocated less than 2%. Whilst the department for elementary education and literacy has a comparatively large net budget, it can be seen however as a traditional failure in the scope of Indian history and policy; given that most females are illiterate in this country and that almost a third of the population are under the age of 14 one realises that it is also a rather small figure.

There are some particularly glaring short fallings in funding. Most shocking perhaps is the fact that the ministry for Labour and Employment spent only 0.20 of its budget on SCs. Whilst the Department for Rural Development, Ministry of Agro and Rural Industries under spent, as did the Ministry for Agriculture amongst other departments highly relevant to SCs and their uplift.

Department/Ministry	Total Plan Allocation for the Dept./ Ministry in 2006-07 (in Rs. Crore)		Plan Allocation Earmarked for SCs (in Rs. Crore)		Proportion of Total Plan Allocation of the Dept. Earmarked for SCs (in%)	
	2006-07 BE	2007-08 BE	2006-07 BE	2007-08 BE	2006-07 BE	2007-08 BE
Dept. of Science & Technology	1340	1526	2.5	3.0	0.17	0.20
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment	1750	2001	1226.68	1561.7	70.1	78.04
*Department of Rural Development	24025.62	27500	2286	2893	9.51	10.52
*Ministry of Labour & Employment	311.36	325.48	0.53	0.66	0.17	0.20
*Dept. of Women & Child Development	4795.85	5793	635	1464	13.2	25.27
*Dept. of Secondary Education & Higher Education (Ministry of HRD)	3616	6480.5	371.2	769.86	5.9	11.87

*Dept. of Elementary Education & Literacy Ministry of HRD)	17128	22191	2493.5	3747.8	14.6	16.88
*Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports	600	700	16.45	22.5	2.74	3.21
*Ministry of Finance/Payments to financial Institutions	36	00	24	00	00	00
*Ministry of Agriculture	4840	5560	00	96.2	00	1.73
*Ministry of Agro and Rural Industries	967	1112	00	102	00	9.17
*Department of Telecommunications	213.61	340	00	00	00	00
*Department of Information Technology	1090	1500	00	20	00	1.33
*Department of Health & Family Welfare	11289.62	13875	00	1704.72	00	12.28
*Department of Small Scale Industries	466.33	530	00	31.5	00	5.94
*Ministry of Textiles	1349.5	2243	00	88	00	3.92
*Union Territories Without Legislature	1671.96	1791.33	00	10.81	00	0.60

None of the government documents segregate the allocations further to show allocations separately for SCs and STs in these Ministries/Departments. We assume here that following the proportion of SCs and STs in total population of the country (i.e. 16.2% for SCs and 8.2% for STs in Census 2001). Out of the funds earmarked for SCs and STs together, roughly two-third would be spent for SCS.

Source: Expenditure Budget Vol. I and Vol. II, Union Budget- 2006-07 and 2007-08

Total Plan Allocations by All Departments/Ministries of the Central Gove. (in Rs. Crore)		Plan Allocations Earmarked For SCs by all Departments/ Ministries (in Rs. Crore)		Proportion Of Total Plan Allocation of the Central Govt. Earmarked for SCs	
2006-07 BE	2007-08 BE	2006-07 BE	2007-08 BE	2006-07 BE	2007-08 BE
172728	205100	7055.86	12515.75	4.08	6.10

It is certainly welcome that the proportion of total plan allocation of the Central Gove. Earmarked of SCs has increased from 4.08% (BE) in 2006-07 to 6.10% (BE) in 2007-08. But considering the demand, the proportions of these Plan allocations earmarked for SCs are far below the proportion of SC population in total Population of the country, i.e. roughly 16%, which is in violation of the strategy of Special Component Plan (SCP) for SCs.

It is also striking and from here at least it seems obvious that development budgets and plans should be decided upon the basis of real need (one thing not in short supply), what areas or who *need* improvement or development. It would not take a genius to tell you that India's lowest castes suffer the most from the country's pervasive poverty. Is this not reason enough to invest *more* than their proportion on the SCs?

Granted other channels of funding may 'trickle down' to these dregs of the economic and social hierarchy, but this government is currently opening the door for wholesale subsidization of India's plump and growing billionaires (as it happens worth more than any other nations billionaires apart from the U.S.) through the notorious SEZs. Whilst the much 'maligned' policy of reservation, so feared by pampered university students, is becoming further eroded by an increase in privatization and no firm policy that will ensure equity in the growing private sector. A sector that is growing and prospering, without looking over its shoulder boldly bringing India shinier products and dreams. If this adventure with neo-liberalism is going to bring equitable and sustainable benefits or at least meritocratic benefits for the nation, the minimum requirement is for the state to offer those at the bottom a chance to participate.

These findings not only betray a woeful habit of not putting their 'money where their mouth is', it also betrays what one can only describe as institutional 'casteism' at the highest level. India was shamed by its distribution of resources after the tragedy of the tsunami in which segregation and preferential treatment were widespread amongst government institutions and now it seems that three years into the Congress lead government the core is as rotten as its fringes. Lip service is it seems all that this current government is able to muster from its duplicitous, casteist centre for the most deprived and needy of its citizens.

*The article was submitted by Tanveer Kazi, National Secretary, National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR). Email : tanveer@ncdhr.org tankazi@gmail.com
Website: www.dalits.org*

Recommendation:

1. Stop Sealing Dalits' Share in Union & State Budgetst
2. From 1980 (6th Five Year Plan) when Special Component Plan came into force, only less than 5% of the budget provision has been allocated for Special Component Plan and Tribal Pan and the rest of the money, funds has been diverted.
3. Out of plan outlay of Rs. 2, 00,000 Crore estimated, that is being prepared for union budget 2007-08 as per the established guidelines Rs. 32,000 Crore to be allocated for schedule caste sub- plan.

4. A Separate Ministry for development of SCs- 'Ministry of Progression of Scheduled Caste' be formed at the Central Level as well as in the States/ UTs for the welfare and development of SCs. In the Planning Commission also, a separate Deputy Chairperson be created, who will be dedicated to bridge the gap between the SCs and rest of the populations within the next 10 years.
5. The unspent provisions, if any, in any sector will automatically be credited to a Revolving Fund. This gross diversion of funds, on an average Rs. 15,000 Crore annually for the last 25 years (Rs. 375,000 crore), is nothing but an extension of 'untouchability' and 'exclusion' of SCs from the resources which rightfully belongs to them.
6. There are clear and categorical data that out of 75 Departments /Ministries 22 Departments/Ministries have unilaterally decided that their schemes are indivisible, i.e., there will not be any special Component for the weaker sections especially for the SCs/STs. This goes against the Constitutional Provisions for SCs/STs. Hence; we demand that the Departments/ Ministries also be directed to allocate the funds for the special provision for the SCs/STs.
7. In the economy sphere women are also contributing equally, we demand in all areas in proportion to the populations of women, budgetary allocations be made in a special way. Special focus to be made for Entrepreneurship, Health, Education, Skill Development, Land and Resource management and Social Security of women.