

**RESTLESS  
DEVELOPMENT**

# India's focus on its youth

Analysis Brief of India's  
Union Budget from  
youth perspective  
May 2020



## Context of this study

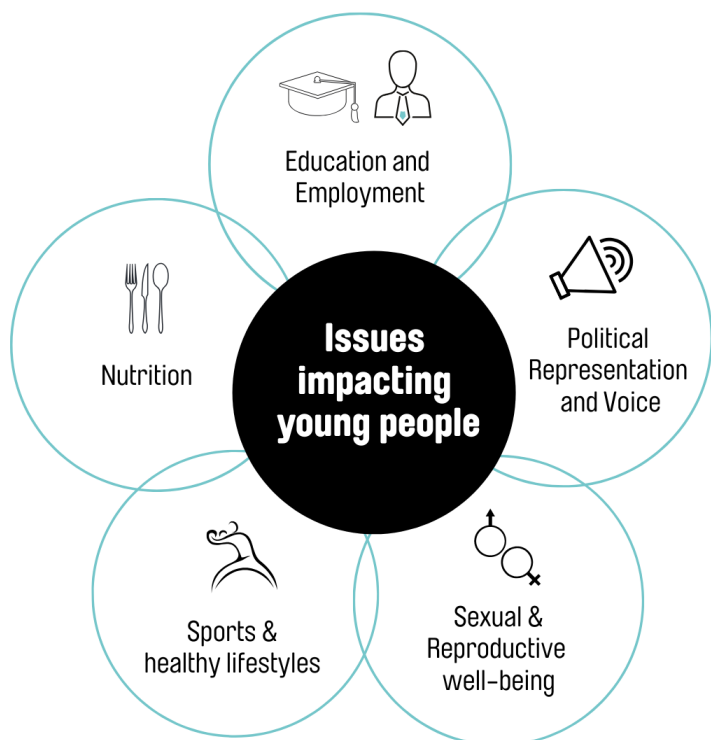
The young people of a country are a valuable human resource for fostering economic, cultural and political development. Their potential, if utilised properly, can usher in significant positive change in the society. India has a relative advantage over other countries in terms of the size of its youth population. While a majority of the countries around the world face the possibility of a workforce that is ageing rapidly, India's demographic profile looks promising. India has the world's highest number of 10 to 24 year olds, despite having a population smaller than China.<sup>i</sup> This suggests that India's youth will play a key role in shaping its development agenda in the coming years, and there is an urgent need to closely examine India's youth development efforts to understand, if and how, they address the challenge of helping prepare our youth for the future.



## Who is the youth?

There is no single definition of 'youth'. *Youth* is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood, thereby rendering its age-related approximation a lot more fluid compared to other fixed-age groups. The definition varies across organizations and Indian policy narratives. For the purposes of our study, we use the age group of 10–34 years to refer to youth, so as to cover both adolescents (10–19 years) and other young adults.

## Status of the youth in India



All throughout the history of India, youth have been instrumental in bringing about meaningful change in the country. Be it in the field of technological innovation or making strides in the fields of art, music and culture, or leading from the front in social reform. Recognizing this, both the government at the central level and in the states as well several civil society organizations have been investing significantly in the development of the youth by focusing on education, skill development, healthcare, sports etc. Yet, several challenges remain.

Despite efforts, countrywide, graduates still face a 17% unemployment rate. According to an estimate, around 5 million people who graduate from Indian colleges every year, lack a strong academic base or any specialized skillset.<sup>ii</sup> Another concern is the low level of youth involvement and representation in the official policy making process in the country. While

the issue is most prominent at the level of the Parliament, participation of young people across leadership positions in the governance hierarchy remains low.<sup>iii,iv</sup> Youth in India also face the burden of reproductive and sexual ill-health, primarily due to erroneous or incomplete sex education.<sup>v</sup> Absence of appropriate infrastructure and problematic lifestyles has led to low participation in outdoor sports and exercise, and sub-optimal health outcomes.<sup>vi</sup> Moreover, almost all adolescents in India have unhealthy or poor diets, leading to one or another form of nutritional deficiency.<sup>vii</sup> For the youth from socially disadvantaged communities, the entire gamut of challenges is compounded by the lack of inclusion in society.

While India’s youthful population can be a demographic boom, without early investment in their learning and overall development, it can become a grave challenge. Therefore, a focused approach towards youth development and empowerment involving all stakeholders is the need of the hour. This would result in the development of an educated and healthy young population that is not only economically productive, but also socially responsible and in a position to contribute positively towards the growth of the nation.

## How has the government been focusing on the youth?



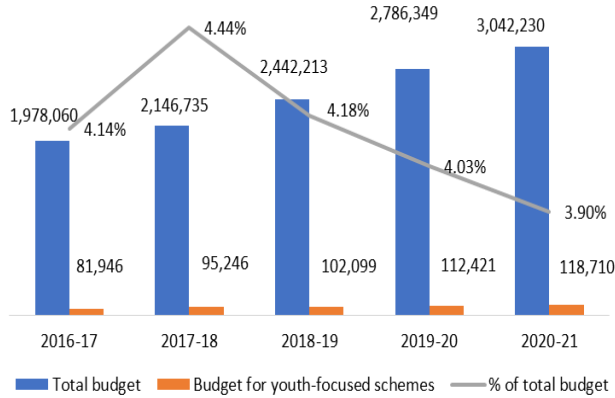
One of the key challenges in advocating for a greater focus on the youth is that there has been no systematic review of the universe of youth-specific policies. While assessments have been done, most of the work has been done in silos with focus on specific issues such as reproductive rights or employment, separately. To support advocacy for the concerns of the youth, in this note, we have specifically focused on analysing the Union Budget of India from a “youth development” lens. This exercise is along the lines of other budgetary exercises such as gender budgeting that looks at the budget from the perspective of gender. More information on the methodology as well as a detailed evaluation of the budgetary trends can be found in our main report.

The analysis suggests that despite a wide variety of schemes and initiatives in the government’s policy arsenal, a strong focus on the youth still seems to be lacking. The budgetary allocation on youth-focused interventions is a mere 3.9% of the total budgetary outlay in 2020–21. Even the allocations specifically meant for youth are concentrated in areas of education and employment, with not enough focus on other critical areas such as mental health or civic participation and leadership that are required for a well-rounded, meaningful and healthy life.

### The percentage of funding allocated to youth-focused schemes has declined in recent years

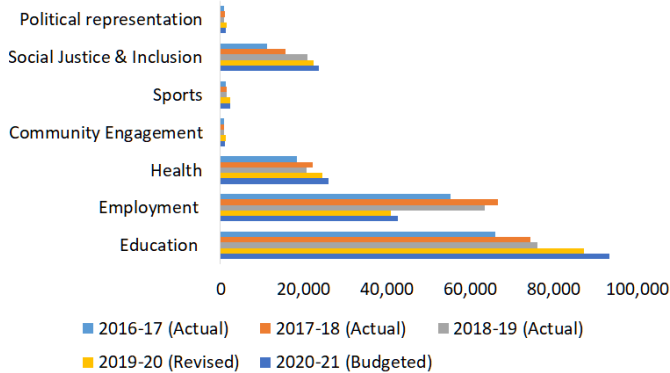
- The proportion of funding allocated to youth-focused schemes has declined in recent years; in fact, it is at its lowest in the 2020–21 budget. This year, only 3.9% of the budget was set aside for youth-focused schemes.





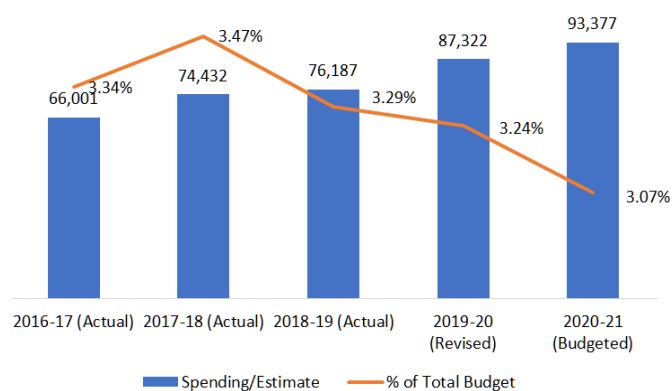
- However, actual spending has largely been in line with budgeted estimates, which means that the government has managed to fulfil spending commitments.
- It is important to highlight here that the *youth-focused allocation* identified above does not include schemes that are also available to other members of the community. For instance, while the Ayushman Bharat scheme is available to the youth, it is not targeted at the youth only and can be accessed by everyone in the community. As such, it is difficult to delineate the spending on youth and therefore, such non-targeted schemes have not been included in our analysis.

### Youth-focused allocations over the years are mostly concentrated in areas of education and employment



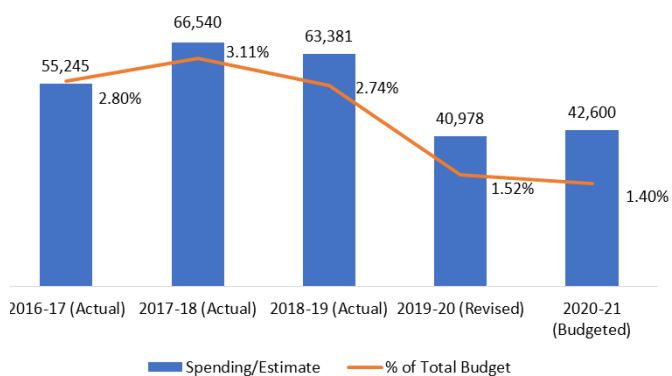
- The youth-focused allocations highlighted above span the different priority areas identified under the National Youth Policy, 2014, namely education, employment and skill development, sports, health and healthy lifestyle, social justice/inclusion, community engagement and political representation. Having said that, education and employment/skilling see a much larger emphasis than the other areas.
- Some schemes cut across themes. For instance, scholarships for tribal students are both a part of education, as well as social justice and inclusion. As such, they have been included under both categories.

## Education: Allocations to both school education and higher education have increased at a similar rate



- Although the total spending on education has increased, its proportion relative to the total budget has reduced.
- Allocations to both school education (primary and secondary) and higher education have increased at a similar rate ~9% CAGR, and therefore, the share of school education in total spending on education has remained constant, at 65%.
- Within education, a large share of funding goes towards the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyaan (now merged), and the Mid-day meal schemes.
- Majority of the higher education funding goes towards autonomous institutes. However, the Rashtriya Uchhatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) that aims at providing strategic funding to higher educational institutions has seen a steep fall in allocations, from 1,380 cr. (2019-20 RE) to 300 cr. (2020-21 BE).

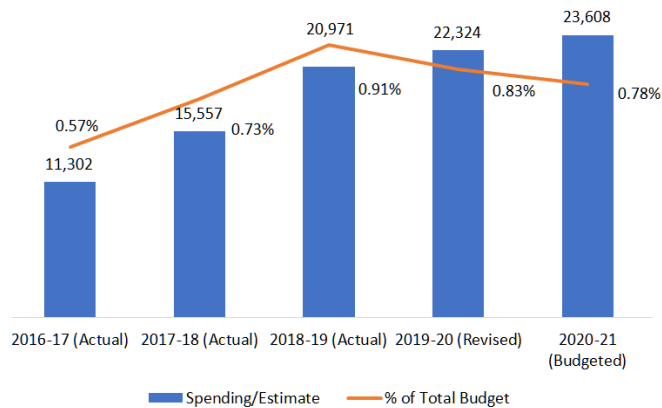
## Employment: While overall skilling budget has declined, allocation for flagship schemes has increased



- The spending on skilling as a percentage of the total budget has also declined over the years.
- However, allocations for some specific skill development schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) have shown steady increase. PMKVY has received an allocation of 2,726 crores in this year's budget.
- There is increase in focus on innovation and entrepreneurship through schemes such as the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM). After witnessing a significant increase in spending (from 139 cr. in 2017-18 to 314 cr. in 2018-19), the budget for this mission has largely remained stable.
- Social security for workers in the

unorganized sector is also getting attention through the Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan (PM-SYM) Scheme. This scheme targets workers in the unorganized sector who are in the 18–40 age bracket and creates a pension fund for those who earn less than Rs. 15,000/- a month. The scheme was launched in 2019 and has been allocated an amount of Rs. 500 crores for this year.

### Social Justice and Inclusion: The spending on minority-related schemes has largely remained constant



- Spending on minority-related schemes has largely remained constant, except for a recent jump in allocation to the Education Scheme for Madrasas and Minorities in this year’s budget, from 100–120 cr. over the last couple of years to 220 cr. (BE) this year.
- However, as is evident from the adjacent figure, over the previous two years, there has been a steady decrease in youth-focused minority schemes as a proportion of the total budget.
- Seekho aur Kamao, a placement-linked skill development program for minorities, ceased to receive separate allocations after 2018. This change is probably linked with the consolidation of skilling schemes under PMKVY.

## LIST OF REFERENCES

---

- <sup>i</sup> Youth in India, Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, 2017, [http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication\\_reports/Youth\\_in\\_India-2017.pdf](http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Youth_in_India-2017.pdf)
- <sup>ii</sup> Budget 2020: India's Youth Want Jobs, Not Another Speech, Mitali Mukherjee, The Wire, 8/01/2020, <https://thewire.in/economy/budget-2020-youth-jobs>
- <sup>iii</sup> Why Lok Sabha needs more young faces, Economic Times, 02/04/2019, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/elections/lok-sabha/india/why-lok-sabha-needs-more-young-faces/articleshow/68597530.cms>
- <sup>iv</sup> Youth and Panchayat: A synergy to promote participation, Participatory Research in Asia, March 2007, [https://www.pria.org/knowledge\\_resource/1547725635\\_Youth%20and%20panchayat.pdf](https://www.pria.org/knowledge_resource/1547725635_Youth%20and%20panchayat.pdf)
- <sup>v</sup> Sexual health largely neglected, reproductive health not a priority in policy discourse, Kalpana Apte, YourStory, 27/06/2019, <https://yourstory.com/socialstory/2019/06/sexual-health-reproductive-health-policy-discourse>
- <sup>vi</sup> Almost all adolescents in India are malnourished: UNICEF, Neetu Chandra Sharma, Livemint, 31/10/2019, <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/almost-all-adolescents-in-india-are-malnourished-unicef-11572524523471.html>
- <sup>vii</sup> Almost all adolescents in India are malnourished: UNICEF, Neetu Chandra Sharma, Livemint, 31/10/2019, <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/almost-all-adolescents-in-india-are-malnourished-unicef-11572524523471.html>