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UNION BUDGET

Budget 2021: Reactions from the social sector

By Team SS | 2nd Feb 2021



On February 1, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented India's first-ever paperless Budget. A lot of reforms were announced on migrant labour, renewable energy, and women and child welfare. Experts from the social sector weigh in.

102 CLAPS



The **Union Budget 2021-22** was a first-of-its-kind on many fronts. In addition to being the first paperless Budget, it was also the first since the pandemic forced the country into months of lockdown, which impacted not only the economy, but also the livelihoods of Indians, particularly in lower-income sections. So, it came as no surprise that there were a number of welfare schemes announced. We asked a few experts what they thought of **Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's** roadmap for reviving various sections of India's social sector

Roopa Kudva, MD, Omidyar Network India

"It is great to see the emphasis in the Budget on using technology as an enabler for social impact and inclusion in critical areas like education, urban governance, and provision of benefits to migrant workers. A **45 percent increase in the allocation to e-learning and the launch of a new scheme PM e-Vidya to provide multi-modal access to education for teachers and students** can go a long way in strengthening education delivery, especially post COVID.

The proposal to create a platform for unorganised migrant workers to access benefits under various welfare schemes is an important step, as migrant workers have been left out of the social safety net so far. There is also a new target to digitise 125 civic services across 25 cities through the Smart Cities Mission.

Digital infrastructure should continue to be given importance going forward. In addition to the technology, we will need good data governance and community engagement for the benefits to reach every Indian."

With announcements on emergency credit for the agricultural sector, as well as the concessional credit boost to farmers, the last-mile linkages will be extremely critical to track. Further, we wish to see an increased focus on schemes for street vendors as well as micro entrepreneurs, as the budget towards MSMEs has been increased to over Rs.15,000 crore.

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Sanjay Borkar, CEO and Co-founder, FarmERP

The Finance Minister has proposed to increase the agricultural credit to Rs 16.5 lakh crore, which was the highlight centering the Agricultural Budget. This credit can be used by smallholder farmers for CapEx, be for their vehicles or cold storage and other facilities that they require, and also as working capital during the crop cycle.

Dr Malini Saba, Founder and Chairman, Saba Group and Ananke Foundation

By incentivising the One Person Companies (OPCs) and increasing the thresholds for Paid up capital and turnover will truly help women-led startups ease their compliances requirement and grow without any restrictions. Strengthening of NCLT framework and **e-Courts system through Data Analytics, AI and Machine learning will play a major role in facilitating case proceedings, curbing corruption**, and bringing transparency in the matter.

'Minimum wages', 'Stand up India' schemes and the insurance cover under 'Employees State Insurance Corporation', is a commendable step and will increase the participation of women in all the categories and to set up new businesses.

The household tap connections, under The Jal Jeevan Mission to provide safe and adequate drinking water will definitely help in eliminating the problem of decades old sanitation and health problems.

Tea plantation and production play a noteworthy task in the Indian economy and providing Rs 1,000 crore for the welfare of tea workers especially women and their children in Assam and West Bengal will play an essential role in enhancing the health and efficiency of the plantation workers, generate livelihood and boost the economy."

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