3.Gender Budgeting 2026-27- Economy

Allocation of Rs. 5.01 lakh crore reported for welfare of women and girls in the gender budget statement of FY 2026-27,an increase of Rs. 11.55% over the GBS allocation of Rs. 4.49 lakh crore in FY 2025-26. India's Gender Budget 2026-27 reached a record ₹5.01 lakh crore (9.37% of total expenditure), pivoting toward "Women-led development" through strategic pillars like SHE-Marts for entrepreneurs and a "Care Economy" framework to reduce time poverty. While the allocation is a milestone, challenges remain in moving beyond notional accounting to ensure tangible outcomes in urban infrastructure, safe mobility, and gender-neutral sectors.

1. Fiscal Composition of the 2026-27 Gender Budget

The budget is categorized into three distinct parts based on the intensity of the gender-specific focus-

Category	Allocation Share	Description & Key Initiatives
Part A- Direct Empowerment	21.49% (~₹1.07 Lakh Cr)	100% Women-specific. Includes *Mission Shakti*, *Lakhpati Didi*, and the revitalized *LPG Scheme* (₹9,200 Cr).
Part B- Majoritarian Impact	72.56% (~₹3.63 Lakh Cr)	30–99% Women-specific. Includes *Jal Jeevan Mission* (additional ₹12,500 Cr) and *PMAY-G (Rural Housing)*.
Part C- Fringe Benefits	New Category	Below 30% Women-specific. Tracks secondary benefits like female mobility and safety in rural road projects.

2. Key Strategic Pillars of the 2026-27 Budget

From Credit to Ownership (SHE-Marts)- * Transitioning 10 crore SHG women from micro-credit users to professional business owners.

1. Bridging the "last-mile" marketing gap through digital marketplaces.

The Care Economy (Reducing "Time Poverty")-

2. Funding for Palna (crèche) scheme expansion.
3. Training 1.5 lakh caregivers for geriatric services to free women from unpaid domestic labor.

STEM Inclusion and Digital Parity-

1. Establishing girls' hostels in every district, focusing on Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.
2. Reducing commuting barriers to encourage laboratory-intensive study hours.

Rural Resilience and Asset Ownership-

1. PMAY encouraging sole or joint house ownership for women to provide financial collateral.
2. Linking women to the "Blue Economy" through fisheries and reservoir development.

3. About Gender Budgeting

Definition- A tool for gender mainstreaming that applies a gender lens to the entire policy process.

Core Principles-

1. It is not a separate budget but a separate statement (Statement 20).
2. It does not mean spending exactly the same on men and women, but ensuring equitable outcomes.

Rationale- Equality and Efficiency- Efficiency gains through targeted resource allocation.

1. **Addressing Systemic Differences-** Customizing policies to address women's specific concerns.

4. Women-led vs. Women-centric Development

Feature	Women-centric Development	Women-led Development
Focus	Acknowledging women as a force in society.	Women taking leading roles in shaping progress.
Approach	Integrating women into existing programs.	Women as active participants and decision-makers.
Primary Goals	Reducing hardship and building capacity.	Promoting entrepreneurship and bridging the digital divide.

5. Evolution and Institutional Framework

Global Origins- First introduced in Australia (1984). The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and SDG 5 (2015) further solidified global adoption.

India's Journey-

1. 1993- Ratification of CEDAW.
2. 2004- MWCD recognized it as a tool for empowerment.
3. 2005-06- First Gender Budget Statement (GBS) published in the Union Budget.
4. 2025- Launch of the Gender Budgeting Knowledge Hub, a digital repository for gender-responsive governance.

6. Significance and Challenges

Significance

SDG Alignment- Directly supports Goal 5 (Gender Equality).

Resource Optimization- Bridges gaps in education, health, and employment.

Transparency- Ensures accountability in the implementation of women-specific laws like the *Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act (2013)*.

Structural Challenges

The "Accounting Trap"- Over-reliance on Part B, where flat percentages (e.g., 30%) are applied without empirical proof of benefit.

Sectoral Concentration- 90% of the budget is limited to Rural Development, Health, and Education. "Neutral" sectors like Power and Transport lack accountability.

The "Hardware-Software" Gap- Building houses (PMAY) without functional water (Jal Jeevan) or fuel (LPG) connections increases women's "Time Poverty."

Urban Neglect- Most schemes are rural-centric; urban areas lack childcare and safe female-only housing.

7. Way Forward- Moving from Outlays to Outcomes

Refine Accounting- Standardize Part B reporting based on actual beneficiary data rather than notional percentages.

Mandatory GIA- Link future budget increases to Gender Impact Assessments (GIA) of existing schemes.

Urban Pivot- Scale the Palna (Crèche) scheme by integrating them into metro stations and industrial hubs.

Professionalize GBCs- Staff Gender Budgeting Cells with economists and gender experts instead of general administrators.

Digital Suraksha Fund- Establish a fund under Mission Shakti to combat AI-driven cybercrimes and harassment.

Conclusion

The ₹5.01 lakh crore allocation is a bold milestone. However, the ultimate success depends on dismantling the structural barriers of "time poverty" and ensuring that every rupee spent translates into a tangible increase in female labor force participation and social agency.

Source- https-//www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2229460&reg=3&lang=1