

Empowering Women through Gender Budgeting

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Abstract

Gender equality and women empowerment are the key terms that define and determine the direction of diverse discourses on women both nationally and globally. Gender Budgeting has emerged as an important instrument across the globe. It has been well recognized by the policy makers and feminist economists that gender budgeting is imperative for gender equality and engendering development. Women are major contributors to India's economy and important constituent of development. Their empowerment is essential for distributive justice for the nation's growth. In order to promote pro-women inclusive growth, it is imperative to create and strengthen institutional mechanism for addressing the destitute, marginalized, disadvantaged and vulnerable women.

The enhanced budgeting resources besides strong political and bureaucratic will for engendering growth and development will lead to progressive society. However, the shift from 'welfare' to an 'empowerment' approach has remained more in the realm of the rhetoric. Gender budgeting has been internationally recognized as a key tool for empowering women by incorporating gender perspective and women's at all levels and stages of development planning, policy, programmes and delivery mechanism. Government of India has adopted budgeting for gender equity as a mission statement and is widely disseminating tools and strategies across ministers and departments. This paper is a modest attempt to measure the effectiveness of Gender Budgeting as a tool for women empowerment.

Keywords : Gender Budgeting, Gender equality, women empowerment, women's Rights and Government Programmes.

Introduction

Gender equality is central to the realization of Millennium Development Goals. Gender equality, leading to increased work opportunities, enhanced capacities for livelihood developments, enhanced social protection and overall increasing voice may enable women to participate equally in productive employment, contributing to women's development leading to economic growth of the nation.

Gender Budgeting is the way for women empowerment to bridge the gap that exists between men and woman. It directly promotes women's development through allocation of budget any funds for women's opportunities for empowerment of women through budgetary cuts.

Gender Budgeting is a powerful tool for achieving gender mainstreaming so as to ensure that benefits of development reach women as much as men. It is not an accounting exercise but an ongoing process of keeping a gender perspective in policy programme formulation, its implementation and review. GB entails direction of the government budgets to establish its gender differential impacts and to ensure that gender commitments are translated in to budgetary commitments.

The rationale for gender budgeting crises power recognition of the fact that national budgets impact men and women differently through the pattern of resource allocation. Women constitute 48% of India's population, but they lag behind men on many social indicators like health, education, economic opportunities, etc. hence, they warrant special attention due to their vulnerability and lack of access to resources. The way government budgets allocate resources, has the potential to transform these gender inequalities. In view of this, Gender Budgeting, as tool for achieving gender mainstreaming, has been propagated.

Gender budgeting has emerged as an empowerment across the globe. It has been well recognized by the policy makers and feminist economists that gender budgeting is imperative for gender equality and engendering development planning. Gender budgeting refers to the systematic examination of the budget programmes and policies for the impact on women.

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Engendering development and inclusive growth requires an enabling environment in which women's contribution to the economy can be tapped and enhanced in a substantial and holistic way. This environment needs to ensure from conception to death- an environment that provides physical, emotional, economic and political and community security to girls and women. The engendered development also requires addressing the issues of accountability, capacity building and governance that are of utmost importance for gender equity and inclusive growth. Women's role in decision making institutions needs to be enhanced through providing them reservation and enforcement and implementation of all pro-women legislations. It is also imperative to eliminate all forms of violence against women through improving institutional mechanisms and enhanced budgetary resources.

There is also need to redefine poverty through gender lens. In order to promote pro-women inclusive growth, it is imperative to create and strengthen institutional mechanism for addressing the destitute, marginalized, disadvantaged and vulnerable women. The enhanced budgetary resources besides strong political and bureaucratic will for engendering growth and development will lead to progressive society (Government of India, 2013). Women empowerment is the buzzword now-a-days. No country can afford development without considering women. However, development has bypassed women in India despite worshipping and paying respect to women in mythology and historical texts. India is a large country with vast economic and socio-cultural diversity in its varied regions. The development issues related to women in a large country like India will not only be inappropriate but sometimes even misleading. Women specific and women related legislations have been enacted to safeguard the rights and interest of women, besides protecting against discrimination, violence, and atrocities and also to prevent socially undesirable practices. In past, government of India has undertaken a large number of schemes aimed at the socio-economic development of women under various Five year plans.

Gender Development in Indian Planning

First Five Year Plan (1951 -56)	Development of women was clubbed with the welfare of the disadvantaged groups like destitute, disabled, aged, etc
Second to Fifth Five Year Plans (1956-79)	Welfare approach, besides giving priority to women's education, improved maternal and child health services, supplementary feeding for children and expectant and nursing mothers.
Sixth Five year Plan (1980-85)	Shift in the approach from 'welfare' to 'development' of women. Multi-disciplinary approach with thrust on health, education and employment.
Seventh Five year plan (1985-90)	Aimed at raising women's economic and social status and bringing them into the mainstream of national development. The thrust was on generation of both skilled and unskilled employment through proper education and vocational training.
Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97)	Emphasis on the development of women.
Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002)	Attempted 'Empowerment of Women'. The Plan also aimed at 'convergence of existing services' available in both women-specific and women-related sectors.
Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07)	Continues with the strategy of "Empowering Women" as an agent of social change and development through Social Empowerment. Economic Empowerment and Gender Justice.
Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007 -2012)	The plan proposes to undertake special measures for gender empowerment and equity. The Ministry of Women and Child Development would make synergic use of gender budget and gender mainstreaming process.

Source: Planning Commission, Govt. of India.

Gender Budgeting

Gender Budgeting is universally acknowledged too for women empowerment. Gender budgeting is not just an accounting exercise. It encompasses incorporating a gender perspective and sensitivity at all levels and stages of development planning, processes and implementation. An important outcome of the application of gender budgeting is the translation of gender commitments to budgetary commitments, as also assessing its gender differential impact and outcomes.

Gender budgeting is the application of gender mainstreaming in the developmental process, to understand how it addresses the needs of women, not only in traditional areas but also in gender neutral sectors. It is universally acknowledged that goals of human development are closely intervened with a development and empowerment of women, who constitute about half of the human resources of a country. Women not only comprise a valuable human resource but their social and economic development sets the pace for sustainable growth in the economy. There are a number of gender specific barriers which prevent women from gaining access to their rightful share of the flow of public goods and services. Women also face disparities, discriminations and exploitation in access to, and control over resources. These disparities get reflected in important parameters like health, nutrition, educational attainment, skills, occupational status and participation in economic activities. Gender budgeting implies incorporating gender sensitivity into all the schemes, programmes and policies of government so that gender responsive budgeting emerges as an outcome. The approach of the Ministry of women and Child Development to gender budgeting has three basic dimensions: (1) Empowerment has to be holistic and it should cover critical, social and economic implications for women. It should be universal in terms of equal opportunity and provide a level playing field. (2) It should be participative and inclusive. This requires that the planning, policy implementation process should have a bottom to top approach, where women have a voice from the grass roots to the highest echelons of power. (3) Women's needs are multi-dimensional, access to health and nutrition, water and sanitation, asset based, marketing, credit, technology, education, skills, political participation, etc. (Government of India, 2007).

Gender budgeting is a dissection of the government budget to establish its gender-differential impacts and to translate gender commitments into budgetary commitments. Thus, gender budgeting looks at the government budget from a gender perspective to assess how it addresses the needs of women in specific areas like, health, education, employment, etc. It is important to note that gender budgets are not separate budgets for men and women, boys and girls. They attempt to disaggregate the government's budget according to its impact on men and women respectively. It puts emphasis on reprioritizing the public expenditure rather than increasing the expenditure.

Gender budgets are referred by several names, like, "Gender Budgets", "Women's Budget", "Gender Responsive Budgets", "Applied Gender Budget Analysis", "Mainstreaming Gender Perspectives into Budgets", etc. All these terms refer to gender budget initiatives. Gender budgeting refers to a method of looking at the budget formulation process. Budgetary policies and budget outlays from the gender lens. Gender Budget, with regard to the government at any level, does not refer to a separate budget for women, rather it is an analytical tool which scrutinizes the government budget to reveal its gender-differentiated impact and advocate for greater priorities for programs and schemes to address the gender-based disadvantages faced by women.

Gender Budgeting is an important tool for women's empowerment. Budgetary allocations are required for creating basic infrastructure, economic empowerment and gender mainstreaming. Social and political empowerment is also imperative in order to ensure gender equality in decision making and opportunities for socio-economic development. The strategy is also required that entails tapping the economic potential of collective power of women and their due share in resources. Thus, it is clear that empowerment of women cannot be successfully achieved till all aspects, social-economic and political are addressed and public expenditures and policy is ensured to treat women as equal citizens in the country. Similarly, participation of women in decision making is necessary while societal attitudes towards women have to be changed.

Purpose of Gender Budgeting

Gender budgets can have several purposes, some of the important ones are:

1. Improving the allocation of resources to women-specific programmes.
2. Supporting gender mainstreaming in macroeconomic policies
3. Enhancing the linkages between economic and social policy with gender perspective.

4. Tracking public expenditure on gender and development policy commitments.
5. Contributing to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals with special emphasis on gender.

Significance of Gender Budgeting

According to the World Economic Forum, gender inequality is inefficient and costly to women, men, girls and boys). These costs are manifested by lower levels of productivity, competitiveness and reduced levels of well-being. Diane Elson is of the view that "if women themselves have more control over resources there will be gains for society as a whole" (Elson, 2002). A national budget that is gender responsive recognizes the underlying inequalities between women and men and redresses them through the allocation of public resources". (Helena, 2003) It also views women not as "a vulnerable group who are beneficiaries of government assistance but rather as right holders. Whose governments are under obligation to empower and protect them'. In order to understand the significance of gender budgeting and why gender budgeting is needed it is necessary to learn how women are faring in different areas such as, life expectancy, adult literacy rate and labour force participation.

Steps in Gender budgeting

The five step framework for gender budgeting

- Step 1 : An analysis of the situation for women and men and girls and boys and the different sub-groups) in a given sector.
- Step 2 : The step should include an assessment of the relevant legislation, policies, programmes and schemes. It includes an analysis of both the written policy as well as the implicit policy reflected in government activities. It should examine the extent to which the above meet the socio-economic and other rights of women.
- Step 3 : An assessment of the adequacy of budget allocations to implement the gender sensitive policies and programmes.
- Step 4 : Monitoring whether the money was spent as planned, what was delivered and to whom. This involves checking both financial performance and the physical deliverables.
- Step 5 : Developing gender- sensitive policies to integrate into the next budget.

Rationale for Gender Mainstreaming

- * Women and men contribute to city development and have a right to equal access to basic services and resources;
- * Women and men access urban services in different ways;
- * Infrastructure development is not gender neutral;
- * In NURM is an opportunity to integrate gender into urban policy, programme, planning and development;
- * More men than women use the motorized road. More women use smaller roads. Similarly, women are more dependent on public transport while men are usually own their personal vehicles for city transport;
- * Women have less access to technology such as mobile phones and need to be able to move around safely in cities;
- * Women are accompanied by children and aged and carry bags while using footpath and public transport and thus inadequacy of public transport facility severally affects them;
- * Women are primarily responsible for water collection and storage. The public services based on user charges must be made gender friendly;
- * Capacities of women must be enhanced to engage with local governments so that they can contribute meaningfully to planning for water supply and sanitation;
- * Women in slum settlements need access to toilets as the absence of toilet facility to them creates problems of security, safety and environmental health hazards;
- * Without access to toilets, women are forced to defecated in open which results in serious health problems and insecurity;
- * A very few women own houses and eviction of slums adversely affects women both in terms of loss of livelihood ad shelter;
- * Women use home for productive activities besides performing their household activities thus housing

- conditions matter more for women than for men;
- * A few women own properties hence property tax regime tends to be male oriented. Women headed households may find it difficult to pay property taxes unless there are gender friendly provisions;
 - * Women have low level of education and knowledge of computers therefore their access to e-Governance will be critical;
 - * Women councilors need more orientation and capacity building regarding different issues of urban development and governance in order to enhance their role in urban governance and management;
 - * Women's groups engaged in thrift and credit activities and self employment may be given opportunity to share the responsibility of urban sanitation and managing solid wastes;
 - * Self help group based micro financing is an effective instrument for empowering poor women living in slum and low income groups;
 - * Gender analysis of policies, programmes, schemes and projects in urban sector oriented towards women empowerment is imperative.

Gender Budgeting- An Effective Tool for Women

There are a number of 'tools' that can be used for gender responsive budgeting. Some of these are mentioned below. Either one or a combination of two or more of these 'tools' can be used at a time (Chart-1)

Chart 1
Tools of Gender Budgeting

S. No.	Type of Tools	Aim of the Tool	Questions the tool tries to answer
1.	Gender-Aware Budget Statement	To review the budget using some of the other tools and to summarize its implications for gender equality with different indicators	Does the budget statement of the government give an account of the progress in reducing gender disparities?
2.	Sex-Disaggregated Beneficiary Assessment of Public Service Deliver and Budget priorities	To collect and analyze the opinions of men and women on how far current forms of public service delivery meet their needs and how far current patterns of public expenditure fit in with their priorities.	Are effects and outcomes of policies in line with the political intention? Are needs of women and men addressed equally?
3.	Sex-Disaggregated public Expenditure Benefit incidence Analysis	Analyze the extent to which men and women, girls and boys, benefits from expenditure on publicly provided services.	How are the benefits of public spending distributed among women and men, girls and boys?
4.	Sex-Disaggregated Revenue Incidence Analysis	To analyze the impact of the kind of revenues raised by the government on women and men.	What percentage of government's revenues is paid by men and women respectively? What kinds of tax/user fees reforms are more beneficial for the poor/poor women? Which sources of revenues have progressive and which a regressive nature? Does the tax system provide labour market incentives for women?
5.	Gender-Aware Medium-Term Economic models and to incorporate gender variables into models on which medium-term	The question gender-blind assumptions of macro-economic models and to incorporate gender variables into models on which medium-term public expenditure planning are based.	Which realities do assumptions of macro-economic models reflect? Are gender-specific constraints in behaviour of economic actors considered in the model? Are sex-disaggregated data included in the model/ Are gender-

The tools of gender budgeting that have been disseminated by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India are shown below:

1. Guidelines for Gender Sensitive Review of Public Expenditure and Policy
2. Gender Based profile of Public Expenditure
3. Beneficiary Needs Assessment
4. Impact Analysis through monitoring, Evaluation and Field level Surveys
5. Participative Budgeting
6. Spatial mapping-macro level planning for macro level needs.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India as the Nodal Agency for gender budgeting has been undertaking several initiatives for empowerment of women. A strategic framework of activities has been evolved by the Ministry to implement the mission-budgeting for gender equity of the Ministry. The critical activities constituting the gender budgeting exercise include:

1. Addressing gaps between policy commitment and allocation for women through adequate resource allocation and gender sensitive programme formulation and implementation
2. Mainstreaming gender concerns in public expenditure and policy
3. Gender audit of public expenditure, programme implementation and policies.

Conclusion

Gender Budgeting is an important tool for women's Empowerment. It has been well recognized by the policy makers and feminists economists that Gender Budgeting is imperative for gender equality and engendering development. Gender budgeting refers to the systematic examination of the Budget Programmes and policies for the impact on women. Gender Budget are not separate Budget for women or for men. It tries to determine collective actions that are required so that Government Policies, Plans, Programmes, Schemes and Budgets meet the needs of women and girls as well as men and boys. Gender responsive budget (GRB) is government planning, programming and budgeting that contributed to the advancement of gender equality and the fulfillment of the Women's right. An important aim of Gender Budgeting is to allocate funds so as to improve the Position of women, hence contributing to gender equality.

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