

Gender Responsive Budgeting: A Lesson Learned and Way Forward

Madhusudhanan S¹

¹Independent Policy Analyst, New Delhi, India.
Email: economicmate@gmail.com

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Abstract

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) creates a direct link between two different issues which are not associated with each other – i.e. Budget and Gender Equality. GRB is an important mechanism in order to maintain a greater balance between economic and social goals. GRB are used in order achieve Gender Equality and to close Gender gap. In order to address this issue Government has taken various steps towards women empowerment in the recent past. Women's Equality and empowerment is one of the important goals of the Government. India should emphasize more on strengthening of gender focused institutions, effective implementation, coordination and investment on gender based schemes.

1. Introduction

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) creates a direct link between two different issues which are not associated with each other – i.e. Budget and Gender Equality. GRB emphasis the principles of Gender Equality should be applied at every stage of the budget process. In other words, Gender Budget means that the budget based on gender specific in order to promote gender equality.

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) is an important and recognised tool to achieve gender equality. The concept/ tool were first pioneered by Australia in 1984, with a Federal Government assessment of the Budget's impact on women during 1984.

In 1995, UN during its Fourth World Conference on Women, which held in Beijing, endorsed the tool. At present, more than 90 countries in the world pursue different GRB initiatives by Governments, Civil Society, and International Organisations.

2. Why Gender-Responsive Budgets Needed?

GRB is an important mechanism in order to maintain a greater balance between economic and social goals. GRB are used in order achieve Gender Equality and to close Gender gap.

GRB helps Government to understand their priorities and use their resources more effectively in order to achieve Gender Equality and women empowerment.

The purpose of GRB also includes

- i) To maintain the balance of Public Expenditure between Gender and Developmental goals;
- ii) To improve allocation of resources to women;
- iii) To bring the gender in the mainstream economy;
- iv) To achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
- v) To support participation of Gender in various important policy and Decision making of the economy.

3. GRB in Other Countries / International Experiences (UNICEF, 2003)

We take two countries as an examples for International Experience and they are i) Australia and ii) South Africa

Many may have question why we are taking Australia and South Africa as an example for International experience.

It is because Australia and South Africa are among the First Countries which had taken Gender Responsive Budget initiatives. That's one of the main reasons to choose these two countries.

Let us the story of GRB in these two countries and what are the different initiatives they are using the same goals.

Australia

As we have seen earlier, Australia was the first country to implement a GRB (called their Women's budgets). The Governments (all 3 Federal, State and Local) have assessed the impact of their budget on women and Girls. This study took place for twelve years, from 1984 to 1996.

The Governments has asked their agencies to audit their achievements, every year, in relation to Women and girl child. The procedure of audit/ analysis was carried on entire Government expenditure not just to those which is directly related to women and girl child.

A separate women policy offices/ Women’s machinery has worked closely with treasury departments in coordinating and driving women’s budget initiatives. This is a clear example of Government / Bureaucracy based Strategy.

South Africa

South Africa had two different GRB initiatives i) Non-Governmental Organisations & Parliamentarians and ii) Within National Government – led by its Finance Ministry.

Till date, the NGO-Parliament initiative has been stronger and more sustained than the Government one. This is how the South African case is completely different from Australia, even though they have drawn some of the methods & analysis.

The NGO-Parliament initiative was started in Middle of 1995 and it is called Women’s Budget Initiative (WBI). The Initiative was coordinated by two policy research NGOs and a Parliamentary Committee. This initiative published 3 books within 3 years in which all the 27 portfolios of national budget have examined.

WBI emphasizes and argues that Government itself should have GRB initiative in order manage properly and be accountable.

An Outside-Government GRB initiative has a different purpose. The Outside-Government Initiative involves citizen in the important policy area of budget, where many people – especially marginalized and disadvantaged people – have been excluded for long time. This Government Initiative is an oversight and critique by Parliament and Civil society. It is all about increasing information in order to strengthen Gender Equality.

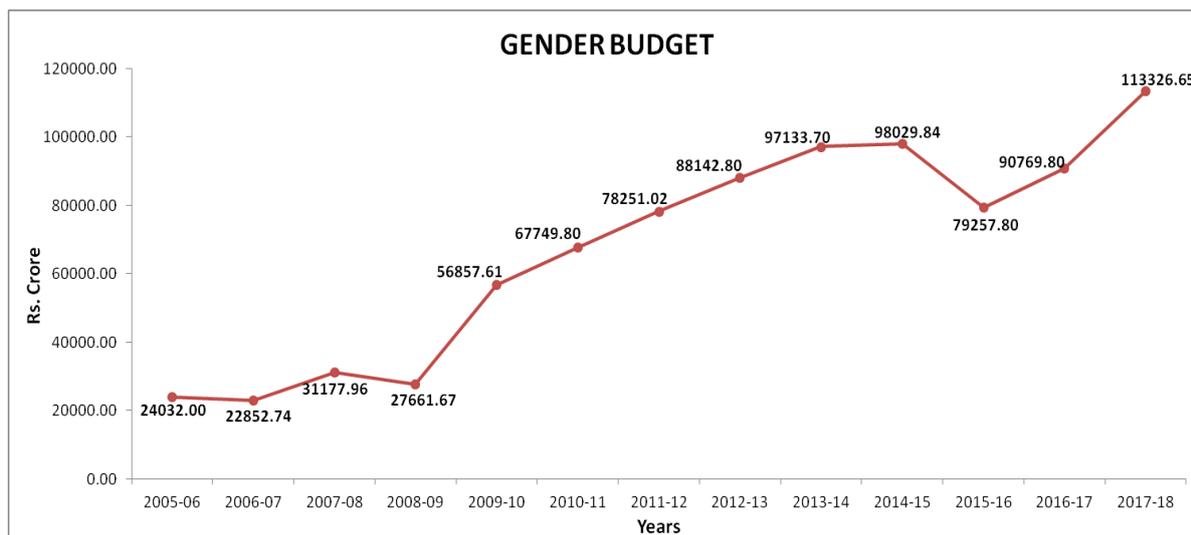
4. GRB in India

Gender Equality has been always at the heart of Government of India’s Social and economic policies. The Gender Budgeting as a budgetary strategy was adopted in 2004-05 and since then it has become part of India’s Annual Budget.

In Union Budget 2016-17 it is mentioned that “Gender Budgeting in its simplest connotation is ‘Gender Analysis’ of the budget aimed at examining the budgetary allocation through a gender lens.”

In Budget 2016-17 under Statement No.20 and in Budget 2017-18 under Statement No. 13 – the separate gender budget has been provided under the Expenditure Statement of the Union Budget. This denotes that Gender Budgeting is an evolving area in India and budget has given the importance to same.

The following graph depicts the Gender Budget allocation (Budget Estimates) of India from the year it has been introduced (i.e. from 2005-06)



The graph depicts that over the year the Gender budget have been gradually increased, despite little lower allocation during 2015-16. There is an increase of about 25% (exactly 24.85%) Budget allocation this year (i.e. 2017-18 BE). This shows that how the Gender Budgeting is considered as one of the important aspect of the India’s Budget.

UN Women (previously known as UNIFEM) in its evaluation report in 2009 stated that “The country where GRB has been most effectively integrated in national government systems was India, where by 2008 - 56 Ministries/Departments of Government had set up Gender Budgeting Cells.”

According to **World Economic Forum**, India is ranked 87 (out of 144 Countries) in Gender Gap Report, 2016. In 2006, India has ranked 98 (out of 115 countries). This shows that still we have long way to go in order to close the Gender Gap.

According to **Census data Child Sex Ratio (CSR)** has shown a significant decline. The CSR is calculated as number of girls for every 1000 boys (between age group of 0-6 years), with an all time low. It has declined from 976 in 1961 to 918 in 2011. This is an alarming indicator and shows the importance to address the issue of women empowerment.

In order to address this issue Government has taken various steps towards women empowerment in the recent past. The recent launch '**Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**' scheme is one the important step towards closing the Gender Gap. This important initiatives was launched on 22nd January, 2015, - an initiative to address issues that affect women in the longer term and to reverse the trend of an adverse and declining Child Sex Ratio.

Here are the lists of Women Empowerment Schemes

1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme
2. One Stop Centre Scheme
3. Women Helpline Scheme
4. Ujjawala : A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation
5. Working Women Hostel
6. Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme For the Children of Working Mothers
7. Ministry approves new projects under Ujjawala Scheme and continues existing projects
8. SWADHAR Greh (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances)
9. Revision under IGMSY in Accordance with National Food Security Act, 2013 in XIIth Plan
10. Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)
11. Archived Maternity Benefit Programme
12. Mahila police Volunteers
13. Mahila E-Haat
14. Nari Shakti Puraskar
15. Awardees of Stree Shakti Puruskar, 2014 & Awardees of Nari Shakti Puruskar
16. Awardees of Rajya Mahila Samman & Zila Mahila Samman

5. Conclusion – A Way Forward

Over the past couple of years, Ministry of Finance organises pre-budget consultations with all stakeholders and Ministries. This is aimed to ensure that voices of women are heard in the budget process. There were meetings held with women's right organisations, in consultation with Ministry of Women and Child Development and UN women organisation –to discuss important issues pertaining to Gender equality and equity. This ensures the correction in Gender Responsive Budgeting much before the overall Budget is tabled in the parliament. This pre-budget consultation will help to strike a balance between achieving social and economic goals.

India should emphasize more on strengthening of gender focused institutions, effective implementation, coordination and investment on gender based schemes. Even though, India implements Gender based schemes there are no measure to see its achievements or outcomes. Therefore, India should also focus on outcomes of this Gender Budget.

There should be more focus on Gender issues as this is becoming a matter of concern now for India. Women's Equality and empowerment is one of the important goals of the Government. There is also a need for Institutional set up in order to have corrective measures and to carry out Gender based Budgeting more effectively and efficiently.

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