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GENDER BUDGETING: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Gender budget acts as an instrument for holding the government accountable to its gender equality commitments. Like other problems (poverty, unemployment etc.) inequalities exist between women and men in the society, but women are the most affected in reality. Budgets are not gender neutral, rather they are "Gender-Blind", as it ignores the differing effects on women and men and hence, women are marginalized. Currently, the gender disparity is in the forefront. Steps are being taken now to this issue particularly. One such measure is gender budgeting. Gender budgeting is seen as a socio-economic tool for ensuring gender equity. In India, the impact of gender budgeting in development and planning is yet to be fully researched. Gender Cells must be started at the State level, both at the planning and budget department as well as in every Department/Ministry of the State and monitor the formulation and implementation of gender budgeting at various levels and the progress of Women Component Plan in the State.

KEYWORDS

gender budgeting, gender equity.

INTRODUCTION

Gender Budgeting is of recent origin. This was introduced two decades ago. Government's while making policies consider about the gender and allocate the budgets, to implement the policies. Gender budget moves or marches towards a more gender equal society. Gender budget is known by different names like:

- women's budget,
- gender-sensitive budgets,
- gender responsive budgets,
- mainstreaming gender perspectives into budgets,
- applied gender budget analyses.

DEFINITION AND CONCEPTS

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. Gender budgets are not separate budgets for men and women and boys and girls. Gender budget initiatives are the exercises that help the country to move toward in the direction of achieving gender equality.

Ministry of Finance, Government of India, defined it as: "A presentation of budgetary data in a manner so that the gender sensitivities of the budgetary allocations are clearly highlighted. It envisages highlighting the budgetary allocation not only to women-specific programmes, but also to quantify pro-women allocations in the composite or gender-neutral programmes of various departments. Gender budgeting also involves carrying out an impact analysis of Government programmes and its budgetary allocations on the overall socio-economic status of women in the country. The ultimate aim of gender analysis of national budgets is to incorporate gender variables into the models on which planning and budgeting is based" (Government of India, Ministry of Finance, 2004). According to United Nations Platform for Action (UNPAC), "Gender budgeting do not look at whether or not the same is spent on men and women, but rather at what the impact of the spending is on men and women and whether or not the budgets respond to the needs of men and women adequately" (UN platform for Action Committee, 2010). Thus, gender budgeting refers to the process of conceiving, planning, approving, executing, monitoring, analyzing and auditing budgets in a gender-sensitive way; involves analysis of the impact of actual expenditure and revenue on women and girls as compared to men and boys; helps governments to decide how policies need to be made, adjusted and reprioritized; and it is a tool for effective policy implementation where one can check if the allocations are in line with policy commitments and are having the desired impact (Government of India, Ministry of Women and Child Department, 2007).

From the study of various definitions it is clear that, Gender budgeting is not an end in itself. It is a tool or means for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. Gender budgeting does not mean separate budgets for men and women; it is not about dividing the budget on 50-50 basis between male and female; it does not always imply an increase in the allocations for women, it is about prioritizing as well; and it is not only for the government budgets but also for public and private sector units, institutions, civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations.

GENDER BUDGETING: A GLOBAL SCENARIO

Australia is the first country to develop Gender Sensitive Budget with Federal Government in 1984. In 1995, South African parliamentarians with non- Government organization started working on gender sensitive analysis, followed by Central African Government in 1997. Later on, many other countries in common wealth and in Developing countries followed these budget exercises like Rwanda, UK and others (Budlender, 2001).

Gender budgeting is still in the making in many parts of the world. In 1990's, the importance changed the institutionalization of gender issues in development policy and planning by mainstreaming gender in overall policy planning and budgetary processes. In 1995, the Fourth World Conference of Women which was held in Beijing insisted the need for a gender perspective in all macroeconomic policies of Government (Social Watch, Tamil Nadu, 2008). In 2000, the 23rd special Session of United Nations General Assembly, called for the attention, to the goal of gender equality in budgetary process at national, regional and international levels; the 2000 United Nations Millennium Development Goals had gender equality as one of its 8 goals; in 2001, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) launched a 20 country programme, created a momentum among government's, Civil Society and Parliamentarians to be gender perspective while budgeting; and in 2005, the 2nd phase of UNIFEM aimed at the application of Gender Analysis to Government Budgets, focusing on the use of Gender-Responsive Budgeting as a tool to increase accountability, participation budgeting (Pilot, 2006).

GENDER BUDGETING IN INDIA

In India, gender budget initiative had its beginning from VIII plan [1992-1997]. Karnataka takes its credit of being the pioneer in gender budgeting of public expenditures. Kerala and Tamil Nadu have achieved a high degree of progress in gender related programmes.

The Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India in collaboration with UNIFEM has taken an initiative in gender analysis of budget allocations in India and a study was entrusted to the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy. The section on 'Gender Inequality', which contained in the Economic Survey, 2000-2001, was based on the Interim Report on Gender Budgeting done by National Institute of public Finance and Policy. A consensus was arrived at the United Nations Regional Conference on Gender Budgeting, 2001 in deepening the process of gender budgeting

in India to the state level and also in extending the gender budgeting initiative to other countries in South Asia. As a result, a gender perspective was integrated in policy and budget processes, especially as part of the country's Five Year Plan (Pooja, 2013).

In budget 2005-06, the Union Government for the first time included a statement on gender budgeting, which presented the magnitude of allocations for various programmes/schemes under the 10 demands for grants that were expected to benefit women. With budget 2006-07, the gender budgeting exercise has been expanded to cover 24 demands for grants under 18 Ministries/Departments of the Union Government and five Union Territories. The statement was extended in the budget of 2007-08, to include 33 demands for grants of 27 Ministries/Departments. The gender budget statement indicates in two parts, Part A presents schemes in which 100% provision is for women. Part B presents schemes where the allocations for women constitute at least 30% of the provision. Both the tools as explained in the Guidance series sheets are being used in the Indian context and it reflects a serious commitment on the part of the government to strengthen the gender budgeting initiative in Indian milieu (Mishra, 2006). At present, the budgets of 22 states of India are implementing gender budgeting initiatives. 56 Ministries/Departments have set up gender budget cell and a number of Ministries/Departments have reflected allocation for women in the gender budget statement of the Union Budget (Parveen, 2010).

GENDER BUDGETING IN FIVE YEAR PLAN

The Planning Commission of India has always focused on women's issues as per the perceptions of their members on women's status within the economy. The First Five Year Plan (1951-1956) set up Central Social Welfare Board in 1953 to promote welfare work through philanthropic agencies. The Second Five Year Plan (1956-1961) supported development of Mahila Mandals for grass roots work among women. The Third, Fourth and Interim Plans (1961-74) made provision for women's education, prenatal and child health services, supplementary feeding for children, nursing and expectant mothers. The Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-1978) marked a major shift in the approach towards women, from welfare to development. The Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) accepted women's development as a separate economic agenda. The Multi-disciplinary approach with three pronged thrust on health, education and employment was initiated. The Sixth Five Years Plan onwards, the plan document has been including a separate chapter on women and children (Patel, 2007).

The Seventh Five Year Plan (1987-1992) declared as its objective to bring women into the mainstream of national development. During this period, the Department of Women and Child Development was established within the Ministry of Human Resource Development of Government of India. The Seventh Plan introduced the concept of monitoring of 27 beneficiary oriented schemes for women by Department of Women and Child Development. The exercise continues and number of schemes covered is being expanded.

The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-1997) projected paradigm shift, from development to empowerment and promised to ensure flow of benefits to women in the core sectors of education, health and employment. Outlay for women rose from Rs. 4 crore in the First Plan to Rs. 2000 crore in the Eighth Plan. The Eighth Plan highlighted for the first time, a gender perspective and the need to ensure a definite flow of funds from the general developmental sectors to women. The plan document made an express statement that the benefits to development from different sectors should not by pass women and special programmes on women should complement the general development programmes. The later, in turn, should reflect great gender sensitivity.

The Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) stated that Empowerment of Women was its strategic objective and adopted 'Women Component Plan' as one of the major strategies and directed both the Central and State Governments to ensure "not less than 30 per cent of the funds/benefits are earmarked in all the women-related sectors". Special vigil was advocated on the flow of the earmarked funds/benefits through an effective mechanism to ensure that the proposed strategy brings forth a holistic approach towards empowering women. The National Policy for Empowerment of Women 2001 of Government of India adopted during this period envisaged introduction of a gender perspective in the budgeting process as an operational strategy.

The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2009) suggested specific strategies, policies and programmes for Empowerment of Women. It appreciated efforts at ensuring gender-just and gender-sensitive budget and promised to continue the process of dissecting the government budget to establish its gender-differential impact and to translate gender commitments into budgetary commitments. It made provision of outlay of Rs. 13,780 crore. It accepted that women component plan & gender budget play complimentary role for effective convergence, proper utilization and monitoring of fund from various developmental sectors. The Ministry of Women and Child Development was established during this plan period.

The Eleventh Five Year Plan mentions that gender equity requires adequate provisions. Efforts were made in creation of enabling environment for Women to become economically, politically, and socially empowered on equal basis with men in all spheres, along with equal participation and decision making, healthcare, quality education, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security, public office etc. to be made possible. The National Policy aims to bring about Social and Economic Empowerment to the Women to bring Gender Justice in all levels of the society and planning (Patel, 2007).

CONCLUSION

Gender budget acts as an instrument for holding the government accountable to its gender equality commitments. Like other problems (poverty, unemployment etc.) inequalities exist between women and men in the society, but women are the most affected in reality. Budgets are not gender neutral, rather they are "Gender-Blind", as it ignores the differing effects on women and men and hence, women are marginalized.

Currently, the gender disparity is in the forefront. Steps are being taken now to this issue particularly. One such measure is gender budgeting. Gender budgeting is seen as a socio-economic tool for ensuring gender equity. In India, the impact of gender budgeting in development and planning is yet to be fully researched. Gender Cells must be started at the State level, both at the planning and budget department as well as in every Department/Ministry of the State and monitor the formulation and implementation of gender budgeting at various levels and the progress of Women Component Plan in the State.

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