

GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

United Nations Development Fund for Women



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER ISSUE 1, FEBRUARY 2008

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Welcome to the first issue of the Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) Newsletter! This issue coincides with the 52nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) (25 February to 7 March 2008) which focuses on the theme “Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women”. We hope that the newsletter will provide CSW participants useful information on GRB as it relates to the challenge of financing gender equality.

Gender responsive budgeting seeks to mainstream gender into budgetary processes from budget planning to implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In recent years, GRB has been increasingly used as an effective tool both to hold governments accountable for their commitment to gender equality and to achieve gender equality. To date, more than 70 countries have engaged or supported gender budget initiatives in many different forms and achieved results ranging from GRB tools and increased capacity, to securing increased budget allocations for gender equality. UNIFEM has supported GRB work in more than 30 countries over the past eight years at national, sectoral and local levels and significantly contributed to positioning GRB within the framework of mainstream fiscal policy as well as national planning and budgeting processes.

This Newsletter seeks to encourage knowledge sharing from Gender Budget Initiatives around the world, share news on progress made in incorporating a gender perspective into budgeting, and inform practitioners of new resources and publications on GRB. The newsletter aims to reach out to the community of development practitioners, gender advocates, policy makers, government and non-governmental actors. Each issue will shed light on the efforts of specific actors in relation to GRB, demonstrate the application of GRB in a particular area, and highlight a specific country or regional programme supported by UNIFEM or other agencies.

UNIFEM welcomes contributions to this publication from practitioners and partners. The newsletter will be issued quarterly, distributed to interested partners and posted on the gender budgets website www.gender-budgets.org.

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT SUPPORT GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

Government budgets are developed following a cycle generally determined by law. This cycle varies from one country to another in terms of the sequences and actors involved. In most countries, the cycle starts with an estimate of public revenues based on macro-economic projections for the targeted year, followed by the issuance of a call circular by the Prime Minister of the Finance Minister. This call circular instructs sectoral ministries to prepare their budget proposals, indicating budget ceilings for each ministry. Once the Finance Ministry receives, reviews, and consolidates the proposals, the budget is sent to the Parliament for examination, debate and final vote.

As representatives of the people, Members of Parliament (MPs) have a significant oversight role on government budgets. In fact, the parliamentary budget debate has been recurrently described as the most public stage of the budget cycle and the single most important opportunity for public participation in the budget process (Budlender, 2006).¹ As a result of consistent advocacy by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and gender equality advocates, MPs are increasingly using this oversight role to ensure that government budgets address the needs of women and men.

Over the last months, MPs in several countries have taken concrete steps in bringing a gender perspective into national budget laws.

In Zimbabwe, a parliamentary committee on Youth, Gender and Women's Affairs has urged the Government of Zimbabwe to increase its budgetary allocation towards gender mainstreaming programmes. The committee's report to the parliament stated "It is very disturbing to note that the budget allocation for the Ministry of Women's Affairs does not have a substantial allocation for the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act that was passed by Parliament". The 2008 budget allocated to the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development's gender programmes a total of Z\$800 billion against a request of Z\$22, 8 trillion.

In Rwanda, MPs call for budgets that prioritize gender equality concerns. The president of the Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians (FFRP), Specioza Mukandutiye has argued that gender equality should be given priority in the national budget in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Mukandutiye, speaking at a workshop on gender equality and national budgets, said that gender mainstreaming is key in the economic development of any country. "We need to sensitize MPs on gender-related issues so that they get to know how they can address gender in the next budget", she said.

The workshop was aimed at devising ways to include gender equality in the national budget to deal with the challenges that women face in their daily lives. The workshop also endeavoured to assist MPs in understanding better the key challenges that affect women's capabilities, and find solutions to these. Mukandutiye explained that issues relating to women's education, employment, development, health and poverty are priorities that the national budget should address, if the economy is to develop and achieve the MDGs.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) offers a series of regional seminars in Africa, Asia and Latin America to equip members of parliaments and parliamentary staff with necessary tools to become more effective in examining the budget from a gender perspective. In addition, the IPU, UNDP, UNIFEM and the World Bank jointly published the resource "Parliament, the budget and gender" in 2004 to advance parliaments' capacity to make a positive impact on the budget. The publication is available in English, Spanish French and Arabic.

¹ Gender Responsive Budgeting and Women's Reproductive Rights, a Resource Pack, UNFPA/UNIFEM 2006

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT SUPPORT GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

In Peru, Ms Rosana Sasieta, Chair of the Group of women Parliamentarians committee, Member of the Budget Commission and Chair of the Millennium Goal Achievement Commission spearheaded efforts that led to a recent amendment to the Budget Law to incorporate gender. In the following interview, Ms. Sasieta describes her role in pushing forward the amendment to incorporate gender into her country's multi-year programming and budgeting processes.

When and how did you become interested in Gender-Responsive Budgeting?

Rosario Sasieta: I started working on gender issues long before I was elected a policies with realities on the ground. We can indulge in rhetoric about women's rights, but if the national budget does not address women's needs and priorities, and if sectoral ministries and local governments are not required to develop and monitor their budgets from a gender perspective, rhetoric is pointless.

As a member of the budget commission, I was conscious of the importance of the mandate of this Commission. I decided to propose an amendment to include gender in the budget law. At the time, many of my colleagues had never heard of gender responsive budgeting. Some of them resisted the idea. But ultimately the amendment was approved unanimously both in the Budget Commission and the plenary session of the national Congress.

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- Rosana Sasieta

UNIFEM: How was the bill approved and what were the challenges you faced to get it enacted?

Rosario Sasieta: In the beginning, just proposing the amendment was a challenge because of several weaknesses. Firstly, my Party is in a minority position in the Parliament. Secondly, women represent only 21% of the national Parliament. Thirdly, not all women understand the gender approach to budgeting and we had to convince these women to support the bill. Finally, the budget is a rather dry area with many technicalities and bringing in a gender perspective was challenging. However, with patience and with the conviction that our cause was just, we were able to rally for unanimous support.

In the process, critics have asked, for instance, how a gender approach to budgeting can exist in the transport sector. Some women sarcastically responded “Well, then, we'll have a road for women and another one for men”. In fact, taking a gender approach in transport actually means that the relevant ministry, for example, allocates part of its budget to clearing weeds from footpaths. This weeding of trails could enable girls, who would have stayed home otherwise, to get to classes and overcome the tremendous inequity and literacy gap between females and males. It is not foolish to apply a gender approach to budgets.

We have also waged a tough democratic battle with the Ministry of Economy to overcome their reluctance to consider our views, which, beyond politics, are truly revolutionary in the best sense of the word. In fact, gender budgeting makes sense in all walks of life, because women in our country do more work for lower pay and have been contributing to the economy without due recognition. So what we want is simply that part of the State's financial resources are devoted to overcoming inequalities that are holding women back. That is all – the simplest thing in the world.

UNIFEM: Do you intend to share what you have learned from the experience in Peru with other groups of congresswomen in the region?

Rosario Sasieta: I have already started and I intend to continue sharing my experience in LAC and throughout the world. For example, in Ecuador, I was invited to give a talk to the

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT SUPPORT GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

candidates for the Constitutional Assembly, and I discussed the topic of budgets with them. I mentioned that it was important for women to begin looking at the budget, and to take an interest in budgeting, and highlight the contribution that women make to the economy in Latin American countries.

UNIFEM: What are your priorities in the near future?

Rosario Sasieta: I have three priorities:

- My first priority is to activate the task force under the Budget Commission to monitor implementation of the law.
- My second priority is to work to make unpaid work more visible and record it in the national accounts.
- My third priority is to support efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve gender equity within the millennium development goals.

The issue of unpaid work is particularly important because as women we spend hours on work that is not accounted for in the national budget. Most women spend countless hours caring for families and for aging parents, ironing, washing laundry, cooking meals and taking kids to school. This is unpaid work, and it is time to find out how many hours of work women contribute to the economy without receiving any recognition for this work.

The World Health Organization found that “for an appendicitis operation one has to be in a clinic or public hospital for three days”, but in our country after a day and a half an elderly patient is sent home because the doctor knows that there is a woman at home to care for him. So, the Ministry of Health optimizes their expenses, saving a day and a half of hospital care, passing the care work to a woman, because behind any ailing person there is always a woman, and if there is a man he hires a woman to care for the patient.

These issues raise major challenges and if I can help address them through hard work and support from UNIFEM, then together we will achieve something great and my daughters and your daughters might be compensated some day for all that unpaid work.

UNIFEM: What would you want to see UNIFEM doing to support this work?

Rosario Sasieta: As Chair of the Group of women Parliamentarians, I have had great relations with UNIFEM. However, I feel that female citizens at grassroots level need more support from UNIFEM in their struggle for equality.

Also, we need support to work with the press because it is futile for the Congress to pass new legislation if citizens are not aware of it. Starting from now, citizens must be in a position to demand, that the gender approach materializes in national and local budgets. Communication is extremely important in making this happen.

I also think that UNIFEM can further contribute to the achievement of MDG Goal 3 on gender equality. We need technical advisors to support us in these issues. In Latin America, where women represent half of the 100 million people living in extreme poverty, we need to make women more visible and give them an opportunity to access decent work. If women have decent work, we can overcome other social problems such as violence against women (VAW) because a woman with an income is less likely to be a victim of violence, or sexual exploitation. Also, a woman with a decent job in her own region does not have to emigrate and so is not trapped in the cycle of trafficking.

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GENDER IN BUDGET GUIDELINES

Budget guidelines, such as call circulars, are official notices issued by the Ministry of Finance or Planning at the beginning of each budget cycle. These documents guide the preparation of sectoral ministries' and government agencies' budget submissions. As such, budget guidelines are an expression of government priorities and provide an excellent entry point to assess governments' commitment to gender equality.

In recent years, and as a result of advocacy from gender budgeting initiatives, an increasing number of call circulars and budget guidelines are specifying that a gender perspective needs to be addressed in budget submissions.

UNIFEM has been tracking country efforts in integrating gender into national budget guidelines. The following examples highlight progress made in the fiscal years 2006, 2007 and 2008.

Ecuador

The national budgetary guidelines for the 2008 budget define gender equality as a selection criterion for investment projects. Budget formats were also amended to allow resources allocated for the country's Equal Opportunity Plan to be tracked at state and local level.

Venezuela

Gender equality principles were included in the national budget guidelines for the first time in 2006. The Government presented the Budget law for the fiscal years 2006 and 2007 with a gender perspective. In addition, gender equity is specified as a key principle in the national planning priorities for 2008. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of policies aimed at guaranteeing women's participation in public affairs and development processes.

Peru

In Peru, the Congress approved an amendment to the Budget Law in September 2007, which aimed to ensure that resources are allocated to benefit women and men in an equitable manner. This marks a precedent in the South American Region.

South Korea

According to the 2006 National Finance Act, the submission of gender budget and balance reports will be mandatory from the 2010 fiscal year. In prelude to this, in its budget guidelines for 2006-2007, the Ministry of Planning and Budget has instructed that every ministry includes gender in its budget allocations and performance reports.

India

India continues its efforts to incorporate a gender perspective into budget processes. In 2006/2007 the gender budget statement covered 33 demands for grants under 27 Ministries and Departments and five Union Territories. In addition, gender budget cells have been established in more than fifty departments following instructions from the Finance Ministry.

Pakistan

The 2007/2008 gender-sensitive amendments were introduced into the federal and provincial call circulars. As a result, line

ministries were instructed to indicate gender-related objectives in their policies and objectives and required to ensure that all relevant performance indicators are sex-disaggregated. In addition, line ministries were instructed to include gender-related indicators wherever relevant.

Malaysia

For the years 2006-2007, the four ministries (Education, Health, Human Resources, and Rural Development) that piloted the GRB initiative in Malaysia since 2003 were instructed by the Finance Ministry to include gender in their budget submissions. Other ministries were also urged by the Finance Ministry to include gender-sensitive issues in budget submissions for 2008-2009.

Senegal

In 2007, the call circular lists gender equality among the priority areas that should be reflected in sectoral budgets, projects, and programmes.

Mauritius

In Mauritius the Finance Ministry instructed that the 2007/2008 budget submissions make provision to close the country's gender gap. A whole chapter in the 2007 Mauritian budget speech focused on breaking cultural barriers for women. Special programmes for unemployed women- in particular those rendered unemployed by significant job losses in the textile and clothing sector- were also mentioned.

Morocco

In 2008, the budget guidelines in Morocco called for a full integration of gender in all development policies. Gender has been included in the Prime Minister's call circular since 2006. Since 2005, the Moroccan Finance Ministry has also produced a Gender Report as an annex to the annual Economic and Financial Report, which accompanies the presentation of the Budget Law.

Tanzania

Tanzania's budget guidelines for 2006/7 include a "gender section" and list gender mainstreaming amongst priority areas for resource allocation.

In many other countries, national and local governments are taking equally important steps in incorporating gender into their planning and budgeting processes with varying success. In this context, progress towards gender responsive budgeting must be acknowledged. The efforts of national women's machineries, civil society organizations, ministries of finance and line ministries in advocating, building capacity, monitoring and influencing budget making processes have made this progress possible. Further efforts should focus on sustaining and advancing these achievements. As Gender experts pointed out sectoral ministries and government agencies may overlook the recommendation to integrate gender into budget submissions, unless guidelines concretely specify how submissions should reflect gender concerns. To achieve this, sectoral ministries and government agencies need to have the capacity, skills and incentives to place gender at the center of budget making processes.

UN SECRETARY GENERAL'S REPORT ON CSW: GRB A MAIN ACHIEVEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF FINANCING GENDER EQUALITY

In preparation for the 52nd session of the CSW, the UN Secretary General's report on Financing for Gender Equality (FGE) was released on December 17, 2007. The report provides an analysis of the progress made and remaining gaps and challenges in financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women, and proposes recommendations to be considered by the Commission.

The recommendations make a strong reference to Gender Responsive Budgeting as an effective tool for FGE. In fact, the report states that "In follow-up to the Monterrey Consensus, the most significant achievements have been made in the area of gender-responsive budgets. Further efforts are needed to ensure a shift from analysis to implementation, to broaden the focus to include both revenue and expenditures and to ensure the full involvement of all stakeholders."

These noteworthy observations of the UN Secretary General, along with the increasing focus on GRB as a practical tool for Financing Gender Equality, allow us to anticipate that the outcome document of the CSW will call for a full integration of gender into budget planning and budget performance monitoring processes.

The UN Secretary General Report is available at <http://www.gender-budgets.org/content/view/495/153/>.

India Building Capacity of Budget Officials on Gender Responsive Budgeting

The Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) has been designated by the Indian Ministry of Women and Child Development as the nodal institution for training budget officials and civil servants on GRB. The Institute will assume this mandate with the aim of contributing to the country's efforts to include a gender and poverty lens in national policies, programmes and schemes.

According to Aasha Kapur Mehta, Professor of Economics at IIPA, gender budgeting is a tool that can be used to demand that public expenditures be re-prioritised to help address poor people's and poor women's issues. Professor Mehta, who authored several studies on the impact of HIV/Aids on women, intends to apply GRB in particular to HIV/Aids issues. She believes that her efforts will lead to increased health expenditures, which in turn will address challenges facing women infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. In addition, increased health expenditures will relieve the workload of caregivers who are primarily women.

India has supported GRB initiatives since 2000. Following instructions of the Finance Ministry in 2005, fifty-one ministries have to this date set up gender budget cells. Twenty-seven ministries present annual reports and performance budgets

highlighting budgetary allocations for women. IIPA has already organized GRB training workshops for all fifty-one gender budgeting cells in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The training workshops were carried out using the gender budgeting handbook published by the Ministry of Women and Child in 2007 to respond to the need for a uniform understanding and application of GRB across ministries and departments.

GRB programme in Central and Eastern Europe: what was learned so far?

UNIFEM is implementing a four-year sub-regional programme "Gender-Responsive Budgeting in South East Europe (SEE): Advancing Gender Equality and Democratic Governance through Increased Transparency and Accountability".

Launched in 2006, the program seeks to strengthen democratic governance and promote women's human rights by supporting gender sensitive planning and budgeting processes. The programme is implemented in Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Serbia. The programme is funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

According to UNIFEM's Project Coordinator, Asya Varbanova, key lessons are already emerging from the programme. The first lesson is that misconceptions about GRB must be addressed from the start of any GRB initiative. For instance, it should be clarified that GRB is not a one-size-fit-all approach and there are no "recipes" of how to simply apply GRB. Moreover, GRB is also not about separate "funds for women", but rather about finding out how budget processes from planning to implementation affect women and men as well as different societal groups.

For Ms Varbanova, GRB has the potential to improve the equality, effectiveness and efficiency of government budgets. It can also translate commitments into adequately-resourced actions in order to obtain the buy-in of stakeholders, the relevance of GRB to address specific local issues needs to be explained. Otherwise, GRB will remain a theoretical concept that can be difficult to understand or advocate for.

So far, the GRB Programme in SEE has focused on establishing the basis for the application and institutionalization. To achieve this, several activities have been carried out: mapping and assessing relevant budgetary and institutional processes; identifying partnerships and entry points for intervention; and piloting gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) research and advocacy work in selected areas.

Israel: Adva Center 2008 gender Budget analysis from Barbara Swirski:

The Adva Center is an Israeli action-oriented policy analysis center created in 1991 to advocate for policy changes in favor of disadvantaged groups. In an analysis of Israel's 2008 budget, the Adva Center points out that the budget plan spending ceilings allow defense expenditures to increase at a much greater rate than civilian expenditures.

Using the evidence from their budget analysis, Adva Centre mobilizes advocacy campaigns targeting members of the Knesset and Government officials. For the past few years, Adva Centre has organized regular briefings on the budget for legislators, journalists, and advocacy organizations.

In August 2007, the Women's Budget Forum, a coalition of 30 Jewish and Israeli-Palestinian feminist and human rights organizations led by the Adva Centre, launched activities around the 2008 budget. The activities started with a presentation on the budget's gender implications at a special session of the parliamentary budget committee.

Amongst others, the Forum raised concerns about proposed health and social security taxes that would be imposed on specific group of women ; the postponement of an increase in the minimum wage (65 percent of its recipients are women);

and the proposed delay in the expansion of the number and services of public day-care facilities.

Other major budget issues that the Adva Center will be addressing in 2008 include:

- high military spending,
- the budget's underestimation of economic growth and tax revenues in 2008, and the continuing emphasis on decreasing the budget deficit to justify underinvestment in social infrastructure and services,
- the need for increased investment in educational opportunities,
- the continuing under-funding of the public health system.

Adva Centre produces a number of advocacy materials. These include Adva's flagship publication, "Israel: A Social Report – 2007", which analyzes the country's socio-economic trends. In 2008, the Adva Centre will compile a resource on the social implications of the 2008 draft budget, a gender analysis of the budget, and an examination of the budget's impact on the public health system.

The gender budget website: one stop shop for GRB resources

The Gender Budgets Website was relaunched in June 2007 to respond to increased demand and feedback from users and partners. Several adjustments were made to the content, structure, design and search functions of the site.

Both the number of publications offered by the site and the number of visits to the site have increased since its relaunch. Currently, the website offers over 400 publications including resources in Arabic, French, Spanish and Portuguese. When the site was re-launched 6 months ago, it only offered 173 resources. In addition, the number of visits to the site has increased steadily from 1800 visits in June 2007 to almost 7000 in November 2007. Since the site was re-launched over 32,000 users have visited the website.

The website was launched in 2001 to support efforts of governments, women's organizations, members of parliaments and academics to incorporate gender into planning and budgeting processes. It contributes to promoting cross-regional information-sharing on GRB and facilitates networking and collaboration amongst countries and civil society and international organizations.

EVENTS

On the occasion of the 52nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of women (CSW) held at the United Nations headquarters (25 February to 7 March 2008), a number of side events are taking place that will highlight country experiences and key issues related to the theme of the CSW “financing for Gender Equality”.

For members of delegations and representatives of civil society interested in gender responsive budgeting, we would like to recommend events in the tables to the right. These events will offer great opportunities to meet key experts and practitioners and learn about GRB experiences from around the world.

Parallel events organized by Permanent Missions and UN Agencies

Date	Time	Event	Sponsor	Location
25/2/2008	1:15 PM - 2:45 PM	Experiences on Financing for Women's Health	UNFPA and co-sponsored by: UNIFEM	Conf. Room 7
27-2-2008	10:00 AM - 6:00 PM	The role of Parliaments in Financing for Gender Equality	Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and co-sponsored by: United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women	Conf. Room 4
29-2-2008	11:30 AM - 1:00 PM	EC/UN Partnership on Gender Equality for Development and Peace: Country experiences of strengthening gender equality in the new aid architecture	UNIFEM	DHL Auditorium
3-3-2008	3:00 PM - 4:30 PM	Engaging Local Government in Gender-Responsive Budgeting and Planning	Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations and co-sponsored by: International Development Research Centre	DHL Auditorium
4-3-2008	1:15 PM - 2:45 PM	Screening of short films on Gender Responsive Budgeting experiences	UNIFEM	DHL Auditorium
5-3-2008	1:15 PM - 2:45 PM	From Beijing to Doha: Financing MDG 3	NGLS and co-sponsored by: UNIFEM	Conf. Room C

Parallel events organized by NGOs

Date	Time	Event	Sponsor	Location
25/2/2008	1:30 PM - 3:00 PM	Gender Budgeting	Oxfam GB and co-sponsored by: Oxfam International	Church Center- 2nd Fl
	2:00 PM - 3:35 PM	Gender Budgeting - Good and Bad Practices: Gender Justice of Public Expenditure	International Alliance of Women and co-sponsored by: WILPF	Church Center- Drew Room (lower level)
	5:00 PM - 8:00 PM	Budgeting for Gender Equality - A Girl's Workshop	Girl Scouts of the United States of America and co-sponsored by: Girls Learn International, Inc. & Sadie Nash	Church Center- 2nd Fl.
26-2-2008	11:45	Gender Budgeting - the South Asian Experiences	Mahila Dakshata Samiti and co-sponsored by: India Women's Watch & South Asia Women's Watch (SAWW)	Church Center - 2nd Fl.
28-2-2008	1:15 PM - 2:45 PM	An Economy for Equality	UNIFEM	Church Center- Hardin Room (11th Fl.)
4-3-2008	1:15 PM - 2:45 PM	Gender and Taxation	International Women's Tribune Centre and co-sponsored by: International Development Research Centre	Church Center- 2nd Fl.
6-3-2008	1:45 AM - 1:15 PM	Women, War and Budgeting for Peace	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom	Church Center- Boss Room (9th Fl.)

For more information visit the UNIFEM Event website at [HTTP://WWW.UNIFEM.ORG/CAMPAIGNS/CSW/2008/](http://www.unifem.org/campaigns/csw/2008/) where UNIFEM materials and the CSW agenda, background documents and calendar of events are available.