

Gender budgeting and Good Governance

Gender budgeting first and foremost is a strategy to improve equality as is the intention of the gender mainstreaming strategy since the Platform for Action of the Beijing UN conference 1995. Since the budget in every country is crucial to political commitments and programs budget negotiations and decisions are power questions. As women only have limited access to political power with only 18% of world deputies and not more than 20 heads of state or government worldwide are women they have limited influence on world budgets. Gender budgeting very rightly integrates gender equality and gender relations into budget policies. This strategy starts from the argument that neither money nor budgets are gender neutral. Therefore 50% of the population are neglected in their interests and needs as they are invisible and do not have the lobby they need. Gender budgeting thus does not only make more transparent the expenditure in the budget but makes budgetary decisions more participative. So gender budgeting also contributes to good governance. Good governance for your memory calls for more equality, more transparency, more efficiency and especially more participation. Accountability is another key issue because often there is a mismatch between the promises of a government and its delivery.

In the UN family we count now more than 60 nations (2002) having introduced one or the other form of gender budgeting. In the EU we have Belgium, France, the Nordic countries, Italy, Spain and United Kingdom. Austria is the only country which indorsed gender budgeting in its constitution. We count also iniatives on the regional and local level in the EU but the EU itself refrains from

gender budgeting until now. It is worthwhile noting that UNIFEM supported Gender responsive budgeting in 45 countries on the national and/or local level in Kenya or Indonesia, in Albania or Kyrgyzstan, in Brazil or Nicaragua and also worked with the EU.

Gender budgeting needs efforts at the intersection of gender and budgets and segregates public expenditure for women as a first step. Gender budgeting does not limit policies to avoid discrimination of women. Gender budgeting must contribute to associate budgets to legal action or programs which address women and men in a different way. It has to be recognized that the needs of men and women are different. Policies have to admit and give gender – responsive solutions like for the implementation of laws against domestic violence. The analyses of allocations in a budget offer helpful information but also the utilization patterns have to be looked at in order to know whether the allocations are reaching women.

Finally gender budgeting also addresses the question of state income. Taxation is one source of income. Often forgotten is the contribution of women to GDP. The care economy mainly in the hands of women worldwide counts for more than 30% of GDP- how could states survive without the unpaid care of women. This contribution to the wealth of an economy is neglected. It is important to underline the importance of this contribution because it also legitimizes the approach of gender budgeting and the opportunity of accountability in view to gender equality.

Gender budgeting and development aid

GRB approaches examine government policies, processes, plans, and monitoring indicators that determine budget priorities

and shape allocations to finance efforts that promote women's rights and gender equality. With the emphasis on partnership and mutual accountability between donor and partner countries, GRB approaches need to be applied to both donor and national processes for planning, budgeting, and M&E and joint coordination mechanisms in order to span the full range of drivers of aid. It is important to keep in mind that while many understand budgeting as it relates to balancing revenues and expenditures, in development contexts, budgeting entails a process that links government development goals and policy commitments with budget decisions needed to ensure resources are allocated in an equitable, efficient, and targeted manner to achieve these goals. In developing stronger links between budget allocations and expenditures and demands for the achievement of gender equality objectives, GRB efforts have engaged in mainstreaming gender into broader Public Finance Management Systems .