

GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING –A STUDY ON STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES AND WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

Today many countries across the globe have successfully incorporated gender perspective into their macroeconomic operations. In this regard, Gender Responsive Budgeting has emerged as an important fiscal macroeconomic policy to address gender issues in growth and development. Gender equality and empowerment is not a choice but a prerequisite for countries to prosper and GRB is a fiscal innovation tool to achieve this. At this juncture, as we head towards the global 2030 agenda of SDG, we need to identify cross cutting themes of gender and development and map them in our plans and actions through this fiscal innovation

The present study is descriptive and empirical in nature. Primary Data has been collected from various stakeholders of GRB from 16 States in India. Data has been collected from 68 respondents using structured questionnaire. The investigation tries to bring out the stakeholders' perspectives on various aspects of Gender Responsive Budgeting and aims to identify the gaps in implementation of GRB. The survey has been designed with special emphasis on awareness, perception, current GRB practices and future plan of action of stakeholders.

The findings imply that almost all stakeholders are sensitized and aware of the importance and implications of GRB for gender inclusive growth. However there implementation gaps as far as current practices are concerned.

The authors hope that the study will give meaningful insights to design better capacity building programmes for stakeholders to strengthen their abilities on critical aspects of GRB so as to yield outcome based results for gender inclusive growth.

Keywords: Gender Budgeting, Gender Responsive Budgeting, Gender Inclusive Growth, SDG, Fiscal Innovation

1. Introduction

Worldwide the struggle of women for equality and empowerment is a long drawn one. The position of women in societies, civilizations, organizations and communities has remained secondary for multiple reasons. The most important being the fact that woman was the only single soul responsible for care jobs. Care jobs like “cooking, cleaning, rearing, and children, caring for the old disabled and ill” constitute major chunk of a woman’s responsibility. This care work is “unpaid” and calls for “unequal share” of

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responsibilities, thus leading to “discriminatory social institutions and stereotypes on gender roles.” This care work kept women out of mainstream economic activities, labour workforce participation and decision making in personal and societal arenas. This further worsened the scenario of gender inequality which had been prevailing since ages, especially in the case of developing economies like India. What happened therefore was that women continued to perform stereotyped gender roles for years together and remained a dependent sole confined to motherhood and femininity.

However many academicians and economists continued to argue that women’s participation in workforce is a pre requisite for economic development and can add to the economic output of the country. Researchers argue that there is quite a meaningful relationship between economic participation of women in workforce and economic output. N. Appiah, E. 2018 in his study brings out empirically that there are strong links between “female labor force participation and economic growth”. The study was conducted over a data of 139 developing nations. Many researchers like (Boserup, 1970, 2013; Durand, 1975; Pampel and Tanaka, 1986; King and Hill, 1997; Mamnen and Pazason, 2000; Juhn and Ureta, 2003 and Lincove, 2008; Lechman and Kauer, 2015) have acknowledged that female labour workforce participation is integral to economic growth. Today it has been empirically established that “Achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment is integral to each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Only by ensuring the rights of women and girls across all the goals will we get to justice and inclusion, economies that work for all, and sustaining our shared environment now and for future generations”.

Several changes like globalization, urbanization and improvement in governance has brought about a positive change to lives of women as they continue to shoulder family as well as community responsibilities. In areas like education, women have seen considerable if not equal opportunities as compared to men. But still there is a long way to go as far as economic participation, equality of wages and opportunities, health and maternal mortality, safety and social security is concerned.

Today “Gender Equality” and “Gender Empowerment” is integral to development of nations and civilizations. With the advent of this realization, government policies in India started seeing a shift towards gender centric issues. Provisions were made in the five year plans to incorporate benefits for women and other marginalized sections of the society. In India, the past three decades has seen several initiatives, programmes and schemes that were launched to generate income, employment and awareness amongst women and rural communities. Despite all these measures, women continued to face discrimination, violence, ill health and unequal access to opportunities. Scheme allocations and utilizations were poor. The outreach was limited and the pace of change in the “socio economic status” of women was still very slow. The sex ratio continued to decline and crimes against women were on a high.

Moreover, when we talk of gender issues, we need different approaches to address the practical gender needs as well as the strategic gender needs. Maxine Molyneux (1985), differentiated between practical as well as strategic gender needs. He opined in his writings that problems concerning women are multidimensional in nature. A woman’s social set up like marriage, labour and physical set up accounts for certain immediate needs which are called “practical needs”. However, in the long run equity and empowerment calls for addressing the strategic needs like political representation and decision making roles, access to banking and financial services like credit, training and skill development etc. It is extremely important to address both these needs to improve overall gender welfare. This requires targeted interventions from the political machinery. But the question was *how?*

India was confronted with a situation where in these issues had to be brought to the mainstream. There was a dire need to understand the intersectionalities of departments and stakeholders so that plans and schemes not only provide materialistic benefits but also welfare and well being. It was realized that no political, economic, social or cultural activity could be “gender neutral”. Thus emerged the concept of “Gender Budgeting”. The core idea behind this innovation was that Union as well as State Budgets should be “gender sensitized”. Therefore, initially every budget had a Women’s Component Plan. The initiatives were further strengthened when the Government sought to institutionalize the mechanism of Gender Responsive Budgeting through the “Gender Budget Statement” which is published every year along with the Union Budget since 2005 – 2006.

“Gender-responsive budgeting is not about creating separate budgets for women, or solely increasing spending on women’s programs. Rather, gender-responsive budgeting seeks to ensure that the collection and allocation of public resources is carried out in ways that are effective and contribute to advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment. It should be based on in-depth analysis that identifies effective interventions for implementing policies and laws that advance women’s rights.” (UN Women)

The Gender Budget in India statement has two constituents. The component reflected in (PART A) highlights the budgetary allocations which are completely dedicated to women specific programmes (100 % women specific allocations). The component B highlights those schemes and programmes wherein at least 30% of allocations flow to women beneficiaries.

It was evolved to ensure that gender commitments, policy commitments and political will should be translated into budgetary commitments. Under this budgetary practice, the Gender Budgeting Statement captures the total quantum of resources earmarked for women in a financial year. Currently, a separate Gender Budget Statement is also attached as a part of general budget. It is a potent tool as an ongoing process of keeping gender perspective in policy/ programme formulation, implementation and review so that budget benefits are reaped by men and women equally. Over the years gender budgeting has given rise to need for disaggregated gender data, sensitization of government machinery, capacity building of planning and execution departments, participatory planning approach with NGOs, social and gender audits, performance and outcome budget, budgetary need analysis and beneficiary incidence analysis. It has also encouraged us to understand the inter linkages between Gender Budgeting and other pertinent issues like Climate Change, Feminization of Agriculture, Urbanization, Employment, Education, Health, Child Welfare and Social Protection, Decision Making and Political Representation, Entrepreneurship and life skills, Rural Development and Sustainable Livelihoods and many others.

This paper is an attempt to study factors contributing to overall Gender Budgeting Performance of a department. The survey was administered to key stakeholders who were involved in decision making as well as implementation of gender programmes in the respective departments. The data so collected was used to gauge the performance of departments in terms of their overall rating. It was concluded that the attitude and perceptions of the stakeholders plays a crucial role in the implementation of gender budgets. Even today, as many ministries and departments consider themselves gender neutral, there is a great need to sensitize one and all that there is no administrative function , process or department that can afford to neglect gender issues and act “gender blind”. A gender lens is required in plans, policies and programmes all over.

Yet another crucial observation of the study was that the current practices in every department are a precursor to their future performance. Though, the gender budget concept has been around for more than a decade now, awareness on implementation process seems to be a challenge.

The study is empirically able to establish that “awareness” is the biggest contributor to the overall performance ratings of departments with respect to gender budgeting. The “current practices” of the departments and “attitude” of decision making authorities are also important predictor variables.

2. Research Objectives

The study was undertaken with the following research objectives

- i. To study the stakeholders’ perception and awareness with regards to Gender Budgeting
- ii. To understand the current practices and mechanisms followed by departments to foster Gender Budgeting goals
- iii. To study the impact of attitude, awareness and processes on overall Gender Budgeting Performance

3. Methodology and Data Collection

The study is descriptive and empirical in nature and tries to study the current state of affairs in departments with regards to GB mandates. The data has been collected with the help of online survey from Gender Budgeting Stakeholders from government departments across 16 States.

3.1 Category of Respondents

The respondents were senior officials from various Ministries and Government departments who were involved in planning and budgeting activities. Considerable efforts were made by the investigators to get in touch with those respondents who occupy key decision making positions for implementation of gender budgets and gender related programmes. The questionnaire was designed in such a manner that various aspects of gender budgeting in terms of current practices could be explored as well as the views and the opinion of the stakeholders could be captured in the most objective manner.

3.2 Sampling

Judgmental Purposive sampling method was used to collect data. The idea was to invite survey participation from those respondents who are actively involved in gender budgeting and planning and also in implementation of schemes and programmes. To ensure pan India representation, several respondents from all over the country were contacted with an online survey.

The complete survey was undertaken by 68 respondents who manned important positions in Ministries and Government departments. A total of 68 stakeholders from 16 States completed the survey. The

primary data so collected was subject to data analysis to fit a model to measure Gender Budgeting performance.

3.3 Methodology

Primary data was collected with the use of structured questionnaire while secondary data was collected to develop the scale and questionnaire items.

Secondary data was collected with the help of research journals, websites related to public policy and Ministry of Women and Child Development, International Publications and Newspapers.

Several indicators were used to measure major factors that contribute to Gender Budgeting performance. Lekha S. Chakraborty (2016) in her paper titled “Asia: A Survey of Gender Budgeting Efforts” brings forward that the attitude of key officials towards gender budgeting drives the efforts in the department. The philosophy of having a gender centric approach needs to be imbibed well in all the activities of the department, without which all gender budgeting activities boil down to a mere compliance. Maruzani, Nyevero (1998), highlighted in their academic writings that “Gender Aware Policy Appraisal”, “Genders Disaggregated Public Expenditure”, “Gender Disaggregated Beneficiary Assessment”, “Gender Aware Budget Statement” in organizations are key outcomes possible only through strong political commitments. Considering the importance of personnel’s attitude, several items were developed to capture perceptions of key stakeholders. So, several items were included in the questionnaire to capture the attitude of officials towards gender budgeting related goals and processes.

To capture the “awareness” and “understanding” component of the stakeholders, pertinent questions related to gender budget concepts and mandates were included in the survey. Such questions were intended to explore how well the stakeholders are aware of the importance and implications of Gender Budgeting.

The study also tried to investigate the current practices prevalent in the departments with respect to implementation of Gender Responsive Budgeting. The initiatives undertaken by several departments in this regard were also captured within the framework of the survey. Some of the key aspects covered were capacity building initiatives, preparation of manuals, sensitization programmes, conduct of research etc.

The survey enlisted three major aspects which are imperative for success of gender budgeting initiatives viz “attitude” of stakeholders, “awareness” of processes and “current practices” in the departments. The overall performance on Gender Budgeting mandates was measured using appropriate 5-point Likert continuum. The self assessment of the participants was a proxy measure of the gender budgeting performance of the respective departments. Multiple Regression technique was used to fit a model where “attitude”, “awareness” and “current practices” can be important contributors to the overall performance.

3.4 Hypothesis

The study proposes the following hypothesis.

Null Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant relationship of “overall performance” with “attitude”, “awareness” and “current practices”

Alternative Hypothesis

H₁: There is a significant relationship of overall performance with “attitude”, “awareness” and “current practices”

3.5 Variables

The predictor variables are

- i. Attitude towards Gender Budgeting (X1)
- ii. Awareness on Gender Budgeting processes(X2)
- iii. Current practices of Gender Budgeting in the departments (X3)

Each predictor variable has been measured with the help of a score that has been computed by the summation of several items of that variable.

The “**attitude**” score for X1 comprises of

- Stakeholders’ perceptions towards gender related issues,
- Contribution of GB to gender empowerment and equality,
- Importance of GB in developmental agenda like rural development, health, employment etc.

The “**awareness**” scores of officials have been computed based on the

- Levels of awareness with regards to processes of GB implementation
- Overall understanding of GB framework.

The “**current practice**” score of the departments was computed based on the

- Degree of adherence to GB norms,
- Capacity building and
- Research initiatives.

The score of each predictor variable was divided into three levels viz “High”, “Medium”, “Low”.

The predicted variable is the Overall Performance Rating (Y) of the concerned department on GB aspects.

4. Results and Discussion

Multiple regression model was used to fit a model for predicting overall performance of departments based on stakeholders’ attitude, awareness and department current practices.

The output of Multiple Regression and F test is as under

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
Multiple R	0.880005452
R Square	0.774409596
Adjusted R Square	0.763835046
Standard Error	0.481628732
Observations	68

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	3	50.96298445	16.98766148	73.23334	1.15536E-20
Residual	64	14.84583907	0.231966236		
Total	67	65.80882353			

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>
Intercept	1.449340265	0.2025373	7.155917769	9.9E-10	1.044725498
Total Attitude Score	0.248736899	0.113414278	2.193170943	0.031936	0.022165835
Total Awareness Score	0.947857948	0.166937067	5.67793581	3.57E-07	0.614362823
Total CP Score	0.239091403	0.157543552	1.517621	0.013403	-0.075638019

- i. The model has fitted the predictor variables well as the Coefficient of Determination R^2 is 0.774 which is greater than the accepted value of 0.70.
- ii. The p values are less than 0.05 for all the predictor variables. So, we can reject the null hypothesis. This explains that there is a strong relationship between “overall GB performance” and “attitude score”, “awareness score” and “current practices score.”
- iii. The coefficients are positive which indicate positive association with the response variable “overall performance”
- iv. The F statistic is significantly large and p value is again less than 0.05 which further strengthens the association in the model. We reject the null hypothesis indicating a claim that attitude, awareness and current practices have strong association with overall performance.
- v. The regression equation can be written as

$$\text{Overall Performance Rating} = 1.44 + 0.24 (\text{Attitude Score}) + 0.94 (\text{Awareness Score}) + 0.23 (\text{Current Practices Score})$$

5. Conclusion and Way Forward

The study brings out the contributing factors to Gender Budgeting performance. While awareness and attitude of policy makers, planners and senior government officers is an important attribute for achieving Gender Budgeting goals, the level implementation is also an indicator of performance. Various aspects of implementation like adherence to GB norms, monitoring mechanisms, employee training and capacity building, research and consultations etc should be taken into consideration so as to yield outcome-based results.

The policy commitments can be translated into budgetary commitments through gender budgeting. It was generally observed amongst the stakeholders that though the departments are sensitized towards GB framework and processes, there are several lacunas on the implementation and awareness front. Many stakeholders are not aware of GB cells or GB statement in their States. Certain gaps in terms of capacity building still persist. If we exclude the initiatives of Ministry of Women and Child Development, not many States have undertaken capacity building or research activities to drive outcome-based results. More than sixty percent of the States do not have requisite manuals or frameworks to undertake planning activities. These gaps bring us to the revelation that concentrated efforts are required to strengthen the current practices as far as the implementation of GRB is concerned.

A target driven approach is required to design specific budget interventions for gender equality and gender empowerment. To achieve these four aspects are extremely essential. Firstly, there is a greater need of involvement of planning officials and State Finance Departments in capacity building activities. Secondly, States should consider a bottom up planning approach by designing need-based budgets. For this close coordination is expected with Urban and Village level bodies, small and medium enterprises, educational institutes etc. Thirdly, every State requires a monitoring framework just like planning framework so that outcome-based budgeting can be achieved. Lastly, for GRB to move beyond a customary exercise, microscopic lens is required amongst the planners. This includes some key aspects like benefit incidence analysis and gender disaggregated data.

The performance of States on GRB indicators can be measured on various parameters like the current practices, awareness and perceptions of officials involved, degree of utilization and implementation, monitoring and feedback mechanism etc. Each of these parameters can be studied in detail to give meaningful insights into the States' performance. It is equally important to have outcome-oriented results and continuously monitor the performance to identify training and research gaps. Since, the concept of GB has been into existence since 2006, it becomes extremely essential to understand how well the States have embedded the framework into their planning and budgeting activities for gender equality and inclusivity. Such studies will be pivotal in designing targeted interventions and capacity building programmes to deal with GRB planning and implementation issues.

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