

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH GENDER BUDGETING IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper gives a broad overview of the gender budgeting initiatives in India, highlighting certain related issues that need to be addressed for making gender budgeting an effective tool for women's empowerment. It does not seek to create a separate budget but looks for actions to address the needs of women in the areas like health, education and employment.

Women & girls not only comprise a large part of the valuable human resources of the country, they are also individuals having their own identity & their socioeconomic development sets the foundation for sustainable growth of the economy & society. As a whole Gender Budgeting tends to focus on women because nearly about two third of the non-literate people in the world are women.

As in many studies it is evidenced that the level of awareness of women related legislations (e.g. Domestic violence, dowry, rape, sexual abuse, child marriages trafficking of women etc.) is very low so more effective publicity is necessary. The best way to do so is to educate the children, orient the teachers and ensure that next generation grows up with new thinking.

Keywords: Gender equality, women's rights and enhancing economic efficiency

Introduction

Gender Budgeting has become a powerful tool for gender mainstreaming. Over the past two decades, women's empowerment has been increasingly recognized as a crucial factor for any country's holistic and sustainable development. Several programs and projects across the world have been launched and are currently in progress to bring social, economic and political equity and broader access to basic livelihood needs.

Gender budget initiatives analyze how Governments raise and spend public money, with the aim of securing gender equality in decision-making about public resource allocation; and gender equality in the distribution of the impact of government budgets, both in their benefits and in their burdens. The impact of government budgets on the most disadvantaged groups of Women are a focus of special attention. It directly promotes women's development through allocation of budgetary funds for women's programmes and reduces opportunities for empowerment of women through budgetary cuts. Structural adjustment programmes and globalization policies have directly increased women's unpaid work burden, thereby increased women- provided subsidy in the economy.

Women constitute almost 50% of the world's population but India has shown disproportionate sex ratio whereby female's population has been comparatively lower than males. Women are not treated as equal to men in all the places. In the Western countries, the women have got equal right and status as compared to men in all aspects of life. But gender disabilities and discriminations are found in India even today. The paradoxical situation has such that she was sometimes concerned as Goddess and at other times merely as slave.

Devaluation of income for the majority of masses as a result of new economic policy coupled with price rise, erosion of public distribution system and reduction of services offered by the public health system have made women bear disproportionate share of burden, because in the patriarchal families women have to shoulder responsibility of providing meals and looking after the sick family members. Hence women have high stakes in preventing an increase in the proportion of indirect taxes on essential commodities and in budgetary provisions to guarantee food security and health care.

This paper gives a broad overview of the gender budgeting initiatives in India, highlighting certain related issues that need to be addressed for making gender budgeting an effective tool for women's empowerment. It does not seek to create a separate budget but looks for actions to addresses the needs of women in the areas like health, education and employment.\

Objective

The study was planned with the following objectives:

- 1) To find out how effective the gender budgeting as a tool for narrowing inequality gaps between men and women
- 2) To identify problems unique to women in the areas like health, education and employment.
- 3) To document existing policies, programmes, and the involvement of support agencies in promoting women's empowerment.

Methodology

An extensive literature review of secondary data sources was undertaken as relevant to the stated objectives of the study.

In order to fill in secondary data gaps on topics such as, health, education and employment sector wise distribution of women empowerment. To supplement data obtained from secondary sources, a few case studies were obtained and incorporated in the report.

This study has been conducted within a short time frame. Thus the scope of the study is limited. Since secondary sources of data were relied upon it was difficult to maintain uniformity in sample size for comparative analyses of various aspects related to women empowerment.

Steps in Gender Budgeting

Gender budgeting is not easy undertakings but they can be very worthwhile. They highlight a citizen's right to participate in decisions that affect their lives and their equal right to access public resources. Budget decision-making typically entails four steps: formulation, approval and enactment into law, implementation and audit and evaluation. Steps include:

- Identifying and prioritizing the problems facing marginalized groups like women and girls.
- Assessing existing government policies and programs in relation to these priorities including the extent to which they are responsive to marginalized groups.
- Assessing the extent to which the government budget is adequate to implement the policies and programs.

- Monitoring the extent to which resources are used for their intended purpose and reach intended beneficiaries.
- Evaluating the impact of the resources spent on the problems identified in the first step.
- Developing gender-sensitive policies to integrate into the next budget.

Why do gender budgeting?

The budget is the most important policy instrument of Government because no other policy will work without money. As such, the Government budget can be a powerful tool in transforming our country.

Why is gender budgeting necessary?

The achievement of human development is highly depend on the development and empowerment of the 496 million women and girls. According to the 2001 census, account for 48 percent of the total population of the country. In addition, the Constitution of India has mandated equality for every citizen of the country as a fundamental right.

Nevertheless, the reality is that women in India continue to face disparities in access to and control over resources. These disparities are reflected in indicators of health, nutrition, literacy, educational attainments, skill levels, occupational status among others. The poor status and value attached to women is also reflected in the fact that the female sex ratio for the 0-6 age group declined from an already low 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001, implying that millions of girls went missing in just a decade.

There are a number of gender-specific barriers which prevent women and girls from gaining access to their rightful share.

Unless these barriers are addressed in the planning and development process, the fruits of economic growth are likely to completely bypass a significant section of the country's population. This, in turn, does not augur well for the future growth of the economy.

The chart below illustrates some of the forms of discrimination faced by girls and women through the life cycle.

Gender budgeting-An Effective tool for women

Any successful strategy for women's empowerment will have to account for the fact that

- Empowerment cannot be successfully achieved till all aspects social, economic and political are addressed.
- Empowerment should cover women in all regions of the country
- Gender concerns have to be mainstreamed in all aspects of public expenditure and policy as women are equal citizens in the country
- Participation of women in decision making is necessary given their specific needs and to recognize them as equal members of society
- Societal attitudes have to be re-engineered Resource Allocation and public expenditure are important inputs in the empowerment process and thus Gender Budgeting has a very critical role to play. However, the tool of gender budgeting has to lend itself to this process based upon the requirements of women's empowerment

Problems faced by women in India related to health, education and employment

Problems faced by women are as follows:

1. Domestic work

Women in India are very emotionally attached to their families. They are supposed to attend to all the domestic work, to look after the children and other members of the family. They are over burden with family responsibilities like extra attention to husband, children and in laws which take away a lots of their time and energy.

2. Male dominated society

Even though our constitution speaks of equality between sexes, male chauvinism is still the order of the day. Women are not treated equal to men. Their entry in job requires the approval of the head of the family. All these put a break in the growth of women.

3. Lack of education

Women in India are lagging far behind in the field of education. Most of the women (around sixty per cent of total women) are illiterate. Those who are educated are provided either less or inadequate education than their male counterpart partly due to early marriage, partly due to son's higher education and partly due to poverty. Due to lack of proper education, women

remain in dark about their rights various legislations development of new technology, and other governmental support which will encourage them to flourish.

4. Discrimination through the life cycle of girls and women

➤ Infant (0-1 Years)

- Infanticide
- infant mortality
- discrimination in breast feeding
- health care

➤ Child (1-10 Years)

- Child mortality
- Malnutrition
- Polio
- Anaemia
- Iodine deficiency disorder
- School drop-out
- Child labour
- Discrimination in food
- Child abuse

➤ Adolescence (11-18 Years)

- Malnutrition
- Anaemia
- Child marriage
- Child labour
- School dropout
- HIV/AIDS
- Trafficking
- Commercial sex work

➤ Adult Women

- Domestic violence

- Rape trafficking
- Commercial sex work abortion.
- HIV/AIDS
- Desertion
- Anaemia
- Unpaid care work
- Unpaid farm work
- Lack of asset base

➤ **Worker**

- Sexual abuse at workplace
- wage discrimination
- discrimination in employment
- safety & security
- lack of support
- facilities
- absence of women
- friendly tools & equipment's

➤ **Wife**

- Domestic violence
- Dowry harassment
- Sati
- Polygamy
- Desertion
- Divorce
- Unpaid care work

➤ **Pregnancy**

- Maternal
- Mortality
- Anaemia

- Unsafe delivery
- Early & frequent deliveries
- under nutrition

➤ **Older woman**

- Health
- Widowhood
- Insecurity
- Destitution
- begging

5. Social barriers

The traditions and customs prevailed in Indian societies towards women sometimes stand as an obstacle before them to grow and prosper. Castes and religions dominate with one another and hinders their path of growth. In rural areas, they face more social barriers. They are always seen with suspicious eyes.

The gender budgeting became bottom up approach. That means it is not the allocation of resources in the budget at national and or state levels that has to see but the resources that flow to and are available to women at the field level i.e. the women in the villages, cities and towns of the country that need to be monitored. Planning for empowerment should then be based on reality check on what is the level of empowerment of women at the field level based on regional geographic spatial maps.

Gender Responsive budget is important because evidence suggests that the economic gains of gender equality lead to increased output and better development of people's capacities. Women's economic empowerment could provide the possibility for all countries to have some combination of increased productivity less stress and better overall health. On the other hand, women will be benefited in a way with lesser strain, greater involvement in important decision-making and that in turn will pave the path of true development.

Population Census 2011

- Total population of India has reached to 121 crores.
- It comprises 62.37 crores males and 58.65 crores females.

- Sex ratio for females per 1000 males is 940 females.
- Child sex ratio for females is 914 per 1000 males.
- Literacy rate of India has gone up to 74.04 percent from previous figure of 64.83 percent.

Women related legislations

Laws covering various spheres.

➤ **Economic**

Factories Act 1948, Minimum Wages Act 1948, Equal Remuneration Act 1976, The Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948, The Plantation Labour Act, 1951, The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1976

➤ **Protection**

Relevant provisions of Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973; Special provisions under IPC, The Legal Practitioners (Women) Act, 1923, The Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994.

➤ **Social**

Family Courts Act, 1984, The Indian Succession Act, 1925, The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1971, The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 (& amended in 2005), The Indian Divorce Act, 1969

National Policy for Empowerment of Women

- **Objective:** Advancement, development and empowerment, elimination of discrimination
- **Themes and issues:** Judicial legal system, economic empowerment, social empowerment (health, education, science and technology, drinking water and sanitation, protection from violence) women and decision making, girl child.

Conclusion:

According to 2001 census, rate of literacy among men in India is found to be 76% whereas it is only 54% among women. Thus; it is very important to increase education among women in empowering them. This paper highlighted the general awareness' and understanding of the problems of women's employment in all the top policy and decision making and executive personnel. There is also the special problem facing women like the preference for male child for various social and cultural reasons. It has also been seen that some of women are too weak to work. They consume less food but work more. Therefore, from the health point of view, women who are to be weaker are to be made stronger.

Another problem is that workplace harassment of women. There are many reported cases of rape, kidnapping of girl, dowry harassment, and so on. For these reasons, they require empowerment of all kinds in order to protect themselves and to secure their self dignity. To sum up, women empowerment can not be possible unless women come up with self-empower themselves. This will require awareness, understanding and action. There is a need to formulate reducing feminized poverty, promoting education of women, and prevention and elimination of violence against women.

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