



Gender Budgeting to Gain as a Tool for Empowering Women

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ABSTRACT

The Constitution of India guarantees right to equality of all citizens, and attempts for sustainable development of all. The thought of women development has become an integral part of development talk and policy initiatives. There has been a gradual shift in the policy making from welfare of the women, to equity of women, to efficiency, and to empowerment. A woman empowered is a nation empowered. Money makes many things. The gender Budget has the potential to restore the socio economic structure of a society. The gender budgeting is aimed to advocate and support the empowering of economic governance and leadership in order to increase women's participation in decision making processes. After the implementation of gender budget in various countries, India too has taken various strategies to follow the provisions. The effectiveness of gender budgeting is not just a matter of the policy but includes the structures and institutions that mediate policy formulation and implementation.

The aim of this study is to analyze the strategies and tools of gender budgeting for women empowerment. This research also explores the role of the government for women and child development, allocation of money for various schemes and their effective utilization. The Union Budget 2013-2014 has allocated Rs. 97134 crores for addressing gender concerns in the budget which is less than 6 % of the total budget.

With the help of the data collected in the field as well as the reports published by the central government and the state government, this research attempted to analyze the schemes with the provision of gender budgeting and the impacts of the schemes on women from those specific areas. We also tried to analyze how far gender budgeting has helped to liberate women of those rural areas. We found that lack of funds, lack of awareness of the schemes, poor implementation of the schemes, non release of funds in time, lack of political commitment, delay in processing and effective utilization of funds in time are some challenges to be solved.

KEYWORDS : Gender budgeting, women empowerment, union budget

Introduction

It is widely documented that equitable access to education and financial services can play a pivotal role in poverty alleviation and in decreasing the weakness of poor people (Zammit, A.2008). Gender budgeting is the allocation of funds for women's development and protecting their interests with suitable tax policies to enhance female empowerment. Gender is not another word for women nor it does not mean of the sexual difference. It is socially and constructed roles, relations, expectations and responsibilities of both men and women. Gender Budgeting recognizes the unpaid care economy the work that mainly women do in bearing, rearing and caring for their families and the people in our society. Gender Budgeting recognizes that unless this unpaid care work is done, the economy will not function effectively and people's well-being will be very negatively affected. Government therefore needs to find the ways of supporting those who do this unpaid work (CBGA, 2010, WorldBank, 2012).

Research studies have shown that investment in girls' and women's education not only makes for greater equity but also tends to translate directly into better health and nutrition for the family and potentially greater economic empowerment. The concept of gender mainstreaming was first proposed at the 1985 Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi, Kenya. In India Gender Budgeting was introduced by the government in 2005-06. The objectives of Gender Budgeting are for committing to initiatives with the objective that could tackle gender imbalances, promote gender equality and development (Aasen, B. 2006). Companies with more women leaders perform better. Peace agreements that include women are more durable. Parliaments with more women perform more legislation on key social issues such as health, education, anti-discrimination and child support. That is why we call for transformation of the continent in order to meet its development objectives.

The condition of women in India is an extremely difficult topic to introduce as there is greater internal diversity and plurality (Langford, M.2010). The dreadful proceedings of 16 December 2012 reignited debates around women's right and empowerment. The public reaction was one of anger and highlighted that in the world's biggest democracy with the 10th biggest economy violence against women can no longer be tolerated or ignored. The form, scope and effectiveness of gender budgeting differs across countries reflecting their own par-

ticular circumstances (World bank, 2012). During the budget session in the parliament discussions on tax policies tend to dominate the limelight. But little is often heard about improving the lot of Indian women in such proposals or debates.

Why gender budgeting for India?

Although India has always had policies to empower women but they have not been successful. It is mainly because formulation of policies in gender-neutral terms establishes gender inequality rather than eliminating them. Provisions such as universal education, full employment that are contained in gender-neutral language have failed to empower women. For the successful implementation of policies, the importance should be given to the already existing inequalities in the society (Sen, G. 2000).

It is the most powerful and important tool of the government to transform the country and empower the about 48.5% of Indian population. These women are not only the valuable human resource but also are the individuals of their own right. Their socio economic development lays the foundation of the society and sustainable growth of the economy of the country. But in India, women continue to face the disparities in access and to control over resources. These disparities are reflected by various indicators like health, literacy, nutrition, educational attainments, skill levels and occupational status etc. In schools and colleges, girls have higher dropout rates. They are the first to be pulled out of school to help with household work and childcare (Census India, 2011)

There are number of gender specific barriers which prevent women and girls from gaining access to their share of resources and services. Unless these are addressed in the planning and developmental process the women empowerment may not be achievable. These also cause the negative growth of the economy. Out of many programmes, gender budget can be used in India as effective tool for the promotion and empowerment of women in India. It helps to identify the needy and increase the expenditure. Gender Budgeting can help to improve economic governance and financial management. It can provide feedback to government on whether it is meeting the needs of different groups of women and men, girls and boys irrespective of rich and poor, caste, age and rural and urban areas (Yamin, A.E, and Falb, K, L 2012).

The evidences collected from 2011 census shown more women are living in below poverty line than men. So, with the implementation of gender budget women and girls, can easily access to knowledge and their skills and innovations are optimized. Finally they fully participate in decision-making processes.

Why gender budget focus on women?

- World's two third of illiterate people are women
- Maternal mortality is much high in developing countries including India
- Lack of women representatives in business and government decision making
- Women are engaged in less formal and lower status types of work for less pay than men for the same work
- They continue to do the most of unpaid work (rearing and caring of the children)

Methodology

This research work is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data was obtained from the beneficiaries and government officials through field surveys and interviews. Data was also collected from various NGOs working for women. The secondary data was collected from reports released by the government, journals, proceedings, news and media clips. Information was also gathered from various subject experts from university and colleges. The reports of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) were also used as source of information. In that way we planned to compare briefly and analyzed Indian model of gender budgeting.

Results and Discussion

India's record for achieving the Millennium Development Goals has been extremely poor as compared to several African, Latin American and Asian Countries. In the international arena despite the attempt to portray a 'Shining India', the country has been named and shamed continuously for not being able to reduce its maternal and child mortality rates, wide spread anemia and malnutrition among women and children, starvation deaths in certain pockets, high prices of goods. It's in this context one must examine the Union Budget 2013-14.

Union Budget scenario, 2013-14

Women make up 48.5% of India's population yet the Gender Budget Statement for 2013-14 is only Rs. 97,134 crore. This is a mere 5.8% of the total Union Budget expenditure. The allocation of Rs. 20,440 crore to the Ministry of Women and Child Development is a marginal increase of Rs. 200 crore from the previous year's budget and falls well below the annual outlay of Rs. 23,541 crore outlined within 12th Five Year Plan. Of this, Rs. 17,664.02 crore has been allocated to the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme leaving very little funding for women friendly initiatives and schemes. There has been an increase in the overall allocation to interventions addressing violence against women but these amounts are still vastly inadequate for the effective implementation of these schemes and the institutional framework for their implementation also remains weak. The policy makers need to be understood in the historical context of the social parameters of the country (Bhumika Jhamb et al, 2013)

The allocation for Implementation of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act demonstrates the Union Government's lack of commitment to address violence against women. The allocation towards the Act increased from Rs. 20 crore in 2012-13 to Rs. 67.5 crore in the current budget; however, this remains Rs. 22.5 crore below the recommended outlay for the scheme by the Steering Committee on Women's Agency and Empowerment as outlined within the Twelfth Five Year plan.

Furthermore, even if the allocation of Rs 90 crore that was identified in the Twelfth Five Year plan were to be considered it remains grossly inadequate for the effective functioning of the Act. In 2012, The National Commission for Women (NCW) and a committee of representatives from civil society released a draft Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) which estimated a realistic annual Union Budget of Rs. 1158 crores for the implementation of the Act. Elements of this scheme have been taken up by the Union Government but this action remains largely symbolic due to low budgetary allocations. Over the last 2.5 months we have heard much about the need to address ongoing gender discrimination and the government has talked of legislative

and police reform to ensure women's safety and security. With the release of the 2013 Union Budget we are left wondering if this will be yet another unfulfilled promise.

The poor status is also reflected in sex ratio. According to the 2011 Census data it is 940 and the world figures are 984 (2011). As per Census 2011, all-India female literacy rate is 65.4 percent and in States like Rajasthan and Bihar the rates hover around 52-53 percent. The 11th Plan pointed out that initiatives need to be taken to raise awareness to ensure to maintain and enhance the sex ratio. According to Food Agricultural Organization (FAO) on average, women comprise 43 percent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) almost all maternal deaths (99 percent) occur in developing countries. Over the past two years, the number of HIV-positive women and girls has increased in every region of the world. Further, the Western macro-economic policies cause hindrances and high adverse effects on the population particularly on women worsen gender inequalities and bad country development prospects.

Timings of release and use of funds

One may argue about the need for more funds for various programs, but what is equally important is their timely release. Schemes such as Ujjawalacharged better than other schemes where release of funds was lagging. Very often, allocations made are not released in time due to faulty design and bureaucracy. Consequently, if the funds remain unutilized, in the subsequent year the allocation is slashed and the scheme fails to meet its objectives. There should be proper monitoring of fund allocation and its utilization. Ideally, unutilized funds should be allowed to be carried forward next year. It is also found that the target of 30 per cent gender allocation under all ministries has not yet been achieved and must be immediately implemented. There is a direct need of greater accountability and transparency. Even measuring outcomes is vital. "In India, owing to comparatively weak indicators for critical goals such as reduced maternal death rates, a high rate of female literacy and increased job participation, a follow through is essential to evaluate the outcomes.

Criticism

The transformative effect of gender mainstreaming was minimal and its application has led to contradictory results. It opened important opportunities for specific new policies whereas in some other it diluted positive action. Studies also revealed that gender mainstreaming has failed to affect core policy areas (Stiglitz, J. 2012). The causes of failure are listed below:

Ineffective results

After implementing the gender mainstreaming has not increased women's participation in decision making. Even in professional and managerial posts, progress has been unfriendly. The annual growth rate toward the fifty percent target is predicted to be 0.4%. On top of this slow growth, there is a considerable hierarchy based on sex. As of 2004, women held 83.3% of positions at the lowest professional level, P-1, but just 16.7% at the highest staff level.

Poor implementation

The results of gender budget are feeble due to lack of proper timely implementation and lack of proper monitoring or follow-up. Lack of adequate training and support to the recipient is also a cause. Inadequate funds, insufficient development of analytical skills, poor supervision of the implementation of gender components and a general lack of political commitment are found to be root causes (UNDP, 2012, World Bank, 2013). After the launch of gender mainstreaming other claims that positive actions were sidelined (Stratigaki, 2005)

Ignoring local context

The mainstreaming gender does not end in simply increasing the number of women within a specific institution. It is about changing social consciousness, so the effects of a policy for both women and men are truly analyzed before they are implemented. For the effective implementation of the policies of mainstreaming requires local language, culture and other local context is to be taken into consideration.

The above critiques of gender mainstreaming suggest that it can silence the voices and ignore the needs of those it theoretically seeks

to benefit. In order for gender mainstreaming to achieve transformative outcomes, political and social institutions must undergo fundamental restructuring.

Suggestive remarks

The mainstreaming of gender and women's empowerment through gender budget is an effective tool. If we all act decisively with the full determination and knowledge to empowering women and girls very soon we will achieve one of the mile stone of millennium development goals and can solve the greatest challenges of the 21st century. The suggestion remarks are given below:

- The overall share of the budget for women as proportion is insufficient.
- There are many blockages in the government systems which hinder the delivery of services to women.
- Certain schemes may reinforce gender inequalities instead of equality.
- **Efficient utilization of funds:** For this purpose use various media (TV, radio, FMChannels, print media) to increase public awareness in all languages.
- **State government participation:** In Centrally Sponsored Schemes, where the Centre gives 50% or 60 % or 75 % share of the funds and the state government is expected to give 25 %, the ministry should pressurize the state government to contribute its share of fund, land, building etc. so that schemes can be implemented.
- **Reduce processing days:** Political decentralization must be supported by financial decentralization. Once the fund is parked in the ministry, schemes and programmes must be immediately clocked so that fund flow is made available to the local self government bodies within a month. Processing of proposals by women's groups, SHGs and elected women representatives must be done within 15 days of submission.

Conclusions

Once these challenges undertaken our country will not only achieve Gender specific Millennium Development Goals 3 and 5 but also able to address the gender related issues in regional context.

Policy recommendations

- Expand the gender budget to all the Departments and ministries
- Allocation should be on the basis of women proportion
- Actual expenditure figures for a financial year also be included in the Statement (Current format presents only estimates).
- Data from Gender Budget Cells should be collected on a regular basis and made available on the website for the public.

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