



OCCASIONAL PAPER

JULY 2020

260

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ISBN: 978-93-90159-70-3

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ABSTRACT

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is a targeted fiscal instrument that several developing countries have cemented into their growth plans. GRB is used to ensure that policy prescriptions to alleviate gender inequality translate into outputs by linking them to budgetary allocations. Although the concept was introduced in India, Bangladesh and Rwanda at around the same time (the early 2000s), the three countries have followed different routes and are at varying stages of creating fiscal plans to advance the role of women in the public, economic and social sphere. This paper will analyse the differences in approaching a gender-budgeting framework, the ministry-level implementation and the extent of its inclusion in the planning process. It will also compare India, Bangladesh and Rwanda through the Gender Gap Index, Gender Inequality Index and Human Development Index to gauge which areas the GRB should focus on. Finally, it will compare observations from all three countries that can be incorporated to improve the efficacy of GRB.

Attribution: Aditi Ratho, "Gender-Responsive Budgeting in India, Bangladesh and Rwanda: A Comparison," *ORF Occasional Paper No. 260*, July 2020, Observer Research Foundation.

INTRODUCTION: 'GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING' AS A GLOBAL AGENDA

The United Nations adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979, which contained pledges and guidelines for countries to reduce gender inequality. Although CEDAW does not include a specific provision on budgets, its principles require that women have both formal and substantive equality,¹ which means that policies should account for differences in their impact on men and women. Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) was first introduced at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 in Beijing, China, to inculcate in decision-makers the principle of looking at budgets through a gendered lens.² With representatives from 189 governments, over 17,000 participants and two weeks of debate,³ the GRB was brought into the mainstream at the event, and governments, NGOs, civil society organisations and academics have advocated for its use since then.⁴

Over the years, there have been several attempts to create women-centric schemes and allocate funds in various countries. GRB goes beyond this; it is related explicitly to allocating portions of national budgets to promote women's advancement and study the gendered impacts of such allocations to different government departments. It also considers how money is raised to make the budget, in terms of direct and indirect taxes and fines, and how this affects men and women differently.⁵

The Fourth World Conference produced the Beijing Platform of Action, which contained the specific reference of using budgets for the advancement of women, in chapter VI (Financial Arrangements) clause 345:

"Full and effective implementation of the Platform for Action, including the relevant commitments made at previous United Nations summits and conferences, will require a political commitment to make available human and financial resources for the empowerment of women. This will require the integration of a gender perspective in budgetary decisions on policies and programmes, as well as the adequate financing of specific programmes for securing equality between women and men."⁶

Australia was the first country to introduce GRB in 1984,⁷ even before the Fourth World Conference on Women and each government ministry was tasked with analysing the effect of the yearly budget on women. Canada followed in 1993 and South Africa in 1995.⁸ Since then, over 80 countries have tried some variant of GRB.⁹ If made publicly available, countries either include GRB as sections within the primary budget documents (for instance, as in Uganda¹⁰) or as an annexe to the main budget documents, publishing it as a stand-alone report, as is done in India, Bangladesh and Rwanda.¹¹

The 'Women, Work, and the Economy: Macroeconomic Gains From Gender Equity' study by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) published in 2013 assessed losses in GDP per capita due to gender-based discrimination in the labour market.¹² The report further emphasised the key significance of gender equality to boost the economy. These factors buttressed the positive impact of introducing GRB in national budgets.

While GRB attempts to create a budget reflective of the different needs of men and women, gender-responsive budget analysis shows "how and to what extent the [policies] affects diverse groups of men and women as service consumers, infrastructure users, and taxpayers."¹³

It requires an in-depth analysis of national budgets to glean disaggregated data for men and women, with the added relevant social categories of age, income, location, education level and the like.¹⁴ The process of analysing GRB can also enable practitioners to monitor and quantify the extent to which countries have achieved global and local commitments on improving gender equality. GRB helps highlight gaps between international commitments (such as those established at the Fourth World Conference on Women or in national policy documents) and the amount of public spending earmarked for the achievement of gender-specific benchmarks and targets.¹⁵ Non-government entities, such as international development organisations, also play a vital role in influencing countries to adopt gender budgeting. The role of UN Women is particularly remarkable, and its assistance has been critical in initiating gender budgeting efforts around the world.¹⁶

The introduction of GRB initiatives was aimed at achieving equal opportunities for men and women in the labour market and enabling equal access to the means of production.¹⁷ These factors were expected to facilitate overall improvement in population welfare and higher national growth rates. Since 2006, the Global Gender Gap Report has measured the extent of gaps between women and men on the parameters of health, education, economy and politics. In terms of closing the gender gap in the domains of economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment, a regional analysis shows that Rwanda is the best-performing country in Sub Saharan Africa, and Bangladesh is the best-performing country in South Asia. Studying these countries, along with India, can help establish how GRB can be useful.

The budget programmes of India, Bangladesh and Rwanda have been analysed in this paper from a gender perspective, as have the

integration of such views throughout the budgeting process. Using the UN Women guidelines on how to conduct GRB analysis, this paper will:

- Compare the countries through the Global Gender Gap Index (GGI), Gender Inequality Index (GII) and indicators such as employment level, participation in decision-making (in political, social and economic life) and other indicators that make up the Human Development Index.
- Present and compare the regulatory environment for GRB, including international legal commitments, and introduction and evolution of the GRB process in each country. This section will analyse the reach, functions and formats of the Gender Budgeting Statements of each country, and whether the GRB frameworks are strong enough to initiate better gender equality that can be reflected in the indicators.
- Make observations and recommendations to strengthen the GRB regulatory frameworks to help countries perform better in the various gender-based indicators.

COMPARING INEQUALITY STATUS AND GENDER DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

Ministries (such as health and education) that are provided with funds are responsible for developing and administering schemes and programmes that incorporate gender equality-oriented goals and report on their spending to government accounting offices in the GRB process. An IMF analysis of GRB policies showed that "effective gender budgeting requires that spending ministries take the lead in identifying gender-oriented goals, developing programs, and requesting budgets for them."¹⁸

Since 2006, the GGI has measured the extent of gender-based gaps in individual countries through health, education, economy and political parameters. Countries with GRB efforts where ministries "assess sectors of the economy in which women could participate more productively, identify the constraints to participation, and develop fiscal policies to help address these constraints"¹⁹ are better equipped to spend money on the indicators that can help close gender gaps, provided the socio-political landscape of the country is conducive to women's advancement. Thus, countries in which the GRB process leads to budgets being allocated should perform better in gender equality reports and indexes as opposed to countries where the GRB process merely quantifies how much of the budget benefits women.

The 2020 GGI report shows the progress of 153 countries and provides country rankings that allow for effective comparisons across and within regions. The higher the percentage of gender gap closed, the better the country has performed. Bangladesh has been the best-performing country in South Asia, having closed 72.6 percent of its gender gap by 2020 (see Table 1). India is fourth in the region, having closed 66.8 percent of its gender gap.

Table 1: The Global Gender Gap Index rankings, 2020: South Asia

Country	Regional Rank	Global Rank	Gender Gap Closed (in percentage)
Bangladesh	1	50	72.6
Nepal	2	101	68
Sri Lanka	3	102	68
India	4	112	66.8
Maldives	5	123	64.6
Bhutan	6	131	63.5
Pakistan	7	151	56.4

Source: *Global Gender Gap Report 2020*²⁰

In Sub-Saharan Africa, Rwanda has been the best-performing country, having closed 78.1 percent of its gender gap by 2020 (see Table 2). Other countries in the region seem to have done better than those in South Asia, with 19 having a global ranking higher than Nepal, the second-ranked South Asian country. Furthermore, Sierra Leone, ranked 21 in Sub-Saharan Africa, ties with India, ranked fourth in South Asia, both having closed 66.8 percent of their gender gap.

Table 2: The Global Gender Gap Index rankings, 2020: Sub-Saharan Africa (Top 21 countries in region)

Regional Rank	Global Rank	Gender Gap Closed (in percentage)	Country
1	9	79.1	Rwanda
2	12	78.4	Namibia
3	17	78	South Africa
4	32	74.5	Burundi
5	45	73.1	Zambia
6	47	73	Zimbabwe
7	52	72.5	Cape Verde
8	56	72.3	Madagascar
9	62	71.9	Mozambique
10	65	71.7	Uganda
11	68	71.3	Tanzania
12	73	70.9	Botswana
13	82	70.5	Ethiopia
14	83	70.3	Eswatini
15	88	69.5	Lesotho
16	96	68.6	Cameroon
17	97	68.5	Liberia
18	99	68.4	Senegal
19	107	67.3	Ghana
20	109	67.1	Kenya
21	111	66.8	Sierra Leone

Source: *Global Gender Gap Report 2020*²¹

According to the GGIs, India, Bangladesh and Rwanda have had different levels of success. But the three countries have the most well-established GRB structures in the South Asian and Sub-Saharan African region. They have made targeted budget allocations towards improving gender equality and have also established GRB as part of their policymaking. Although the extent to which GRB has penetrated all facets of the budgeting process and sectors of development in India, Bangladesh and Rwanda differ, it is crucial to study the countries to understand their frameworks and approaches.

Table 3: Global Gender Gap Index for India, Bangladesh, Rwanda

Country	Rank (2020)	Gender Gap Closed (%)	Rank in 2006
Rwanda	9	79.1	N/A
Bangladesh	50	72.6	91
India	112	66.8	98

Source: World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2020²²

Table 4: Global Gender Gap Indicator Ranks for India, Bangladesh, Rwanda

Indicator	Rwanda Rank	Bangladesh Rank	India Rank
Economic Participation and opportunity	79	141	149
Educational Attainment	114	120	112
Health and Survival	90	119	150
Political Empowerment	4	7	18

Source: World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2020²³

Rwanda was not included in the initial GGI global rankings; it was only added in 2014 at rank seven, and has fallen two spots since then.²⁴ With the inclusion of several countries over the years, India's ranking has plummeted 14 places since 2006 (when it ranked 98), while Bangladesh has moved up 41 spots.²⁵ According to the 2020 GGI report, the most significant gender disparity has remained in the political empowerment gap; however, Rwanda and Bangladesh seem to have done particularly well on this front, ranking four and seven respectively, with India not too far behind at 18. All three countries have also performed their best in these indicators.

The UN Development Programme's Human Development Report 2019 highlights the many forms of inequalities shaping the 21st century, including the unequal distribution of wealth, and unequal access to technology and education.²⁶ The Human Development Index (HDI) ranks all the countries of the world based on their level of human development. The HDI is based on the quantification of factors like life expectancy, expected/mean years of schooling and gross national income per capita, and is not specifically gender-based. However, the gender segregation of the HDI reveals a lot.

Table 5: Human Development Index 2019

Country	HDI Rank	HDI Male	HDI Female	Gender Development Index	Gender Inequality Index Value (2018)
India	129	0.692	0.574	0.829	0.501
Bangladesh	135	0.642	0.575	0.895	0.536
Rwanda	157	0.551	0.520	0.943	0.412

Source: Human Development Report 2019²⁷

While the GGI showed Rwanda to be leading and India lagging, the HDI paints another picture, with Rwanda falling behind both India and Bangladesh (see Table 5). However, the gender-segregated HDI reveals this is due to Rwanda's low ranking for both male and female HDI; India and Bangladesh have a larger disparity between men and women. Thus, Rwanda performs higher in the gender-based indicators of the Gender Development Index (GDI) and GII.

The GII evaluates gender inequalities in reproductive health, measured by maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rates; empowerment, measured by the proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by females and proportion of adult females and males aged 25 years and older with at least some secondary education; and economic status, expressed as labour market participation and measured by labour force participation rate of female and male populations aged 15 years and older.²⁸ Higher GII values indicate higher inequalities between women and men.

The gender-disaggregated data for employment and education in the Human Development Report illuminates why the countries rank where they do on the GGI.

Table 6: Data on labour and employment

Country	% of female share of employment in senior and middle management (2010-2018)	% of share of seats held by women in parliament (2018)	Labour force participation rate of women (% ages 15 and older; 2018)	Youth unemployment rate (female to male ratio; 2018)	Total Unemployment Rate (female to male ratio; 2018)
India	13	11.7	23.6	1.32	1.57
Rwanda	36.3	55.7	84.2	1.67	1.00
Bangladesh	11.5	20.3	36	1.57	1.97

Source: Human Development Report 2019²⁹

Rwanda performs the best in female labour force participation, employment of women in management positions, the share of seats held by women in parliament and the total unemployment rate, and only lags in the youth unemployment rate, with a high female to male unemployment rate ratio. This is reflected in its GGI performance. Bangladesh performs well in the share of seats held by women in parliament and labour force participation rate. The only indicator India leads in is the youth unemployment rate, which illustrates why it lags behind the other two countries in the GGI.

Table 7: Data on access to/level of education

Country	% of female population 25 years and older with at least some secondary education (2010-2018) ^a	Gross enrolment ratio (female to male ratio): Pre-Primary (2013-2018)	Gross enrolment ratio (female to male ratio): Primary (2013-2018)	Gross enrolment ratio (female to male ratio): Secondary (2013-2018)
India	39.0	0.93	1.17	1.02
Rwanda	12.9	1.03	0.99	1.12
Bangladesh	45.3	1.04	1.07	1.17

Source: Human Development Report 2019³⁰

Women's access to education in India is far better than in Bangladesh and Rwanda (see Table 7). However, this has not translated into employment and participation in the labour force as well as it has in other countries (see Table 6).

a Percentage of the population ages 25 and older that has reached (but not necessarily completed) a secondary level of education

INDIA, BANGLADESH AND RWANDA: ASSESSING GRB REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS

The amount of money spent by government ministries in individual countries on sectors like education and labour force participation cannot be compared given the differences in population size, gender ratios, and other demographic and socio-economic factors. These reasons also make it difficult to compare the schemes for the advancement of women in different countries. However, comparing the level at which ministries undertake the exercise of making fiscal policies based on gendered analysis can provide important insights on their standing in global gender indexes.

Analysing the GRB frameworks in India, Bangladesh and Rwanda can illustrate to what extent the GRB functions have affected gender inequality indicators.

Table 8: International Commitments to GRB

Year	Agreement	Association with GRB
1979	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	Women's participation in public life is connected to dimensions of the budget: revenue, expenditure, macroeconomics, and decision-making
1995	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action	Declares the need for integrating a gender perspective in budgetary decisions on policies and programmes, including financing of schemes that promote gender equality
2015	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	Commits governments to "a significant increase in investments to close the gender gap"

Source: "Gender Responsive Budgeting in Asia and the Pacific," United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2018³¹

India, Bangladesh and Rwanda have signed and ratified the international agreements that bind them to introduce GRB in their respective legislations.

In the three countries, different approaches in the depth and expanse of GRB have posed mixed results.

India

Introduction and Evolution of GRB Process

The concept of GRB was first introduced in 2001 as a special reference by then Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha as part of his budget speech, as per a timeline by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD).³² In 2002, a study on Gender-Related Economic Policy Issues by the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy looked at gender-oriented policies and analysed the Union Budget through a gendered lens. In 2002, 2003, 2004, the expenditure on women as part of the Union Budget was reflected in the MWCD's annual report. In 2003, the Cabinet Secretary, Government of India, advised that each ministry and department include a section on gender issues in their respective annual reports. In 2004, the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, instructed all ministries to establish Gender Budgeting Cells (the focal points coordinating gender-based initiatives) and the Planning Commission advised ministries to have a GRB analysis for 2005-06 proposals. In 2005-06, the GRB process was cemented by the Department of Expenditure in the Ministry of Finance, which expected all ministries and departments to provide a note on GRB as part of the budget circular every year that would reflect gender allocations in the following manner:

Part A: Schemes under the ministry/department that specifically target women and/or girls with 100 percent of the budget allocation; and

Part B: Schemes under the ministry/department where at least 30 percent of the budget is allocated for women and/ or girls.

Finally, in 2013, the MWCD issued guidelines to all states and union territories to provide an overview and a timeline of their GRB plans.

Gender Budget Statements: Depth, Functions and Format

The gender budget is released along with the various documents that comprise the Union Budget. It is included in the expenditure section, which gives a holistic overview of ministries and states that have allocated funds for the gender budget, welfare of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and children, among others.³³

India's gender budget is a compilation of ministries, departments and states that have specifically allocated funds for schemes under Part A or B of the budget circular.³⁴ Some of the ministries, departments, and states specify schemes targeted at women, while others detail general development schemes that have a women-centric component. The "Output Outcome Framework for Schemes 2020-2021" section of the 2020 Union Budget profiles the outcomes of budget allocations, the indicators and objectives that the allocations attempt to fulfil and the target beneficiaries, in a bid to provide more of a GRB analysis rather than simple budgeting.³⁵

While ministries and departments must mandatorily provide a gender budget statement, some state governments have also

incorporated GRB into their budget planning, either directly or indirectly. As of October 2015, 18 states and union territories have incorporated gender budgeting,³⁶ and 57 Gender Budget Cells have been set up by multiple ministries and departments.³⁷

The Ministry of Finance, MWCD, and the Planning Commission have contributed to the enforcement of GRB in the India through the following functions:³⁸

The Ministry of Finance

- issues a budget call circular that instructs ministries and departments to report the quantum of allocations earmarked for women and girls
- reviews budget documents of different ministries and departments
- presents the gender budget statement in the legislative assembly

The MWCD

- conducts capacity building and training at the state level
- promotes research under the Gender Budgeting Scheme
- promotes inter-ministerial convergence to create gender-friendly policies
- advises departments on women's welfare initiatives
- has developed a Manual and Handbook for Gender Budgeting for Gender Budget Cells for Central Ministries and Departments in collaboration with UN Women³⁹

The Planning Commission⁴⁰

- conducts workshops, along with the finance ministry and MWCD for better implementation of GRB and Gender Budgeting Cells
- incorporates gender-sensitive planning in state planning guidelines
- several state planning departments and commissions are part of the committee on gender budgeting and Gender Budgeting Cells

At the same time, the implementation of GRB in India has not been without flaws. Some schemes are reported in Part A of the expenditure document, even though 100 percent of the budget allocation is not specifically set aside for women.⁴¹ Additionally, it is also common for ministries to report schemes under Part A that do little for gender equality and perpetuate the unpaid care burden on women (for instance, the gas connection scheme, which regards women as 100 percent of its beneficiaries). Another implementation issue is that GRB only looks at which sex is the beneficiary of certain schemes and includes it within the budget document, thereby skewing the numbers. For instance, if there has been a budget allocation for sensitising male police officers, this should technically come under GRB but may be missed due to the semantic exclusion of women in the objective of the scheme.⁴² Although India has amended its Constitution to make provisions for women's participation in decision-making (such as mandating that one-third of the panchayat level government officials must be women), these provisions have only had some success due to a limited understanding of GRB and gender-responsive decision-making.⁴³

The GRB regulatory framework in India reveals that there is a concerted effort to quantify the *extent* of the budget that is

allocated to women's advancement. However, there is little evidence of attempting to look at the gaps through gender-based analyses within the schemes itself in a bid to rectify the budgets accordingly. Thus, in India, GRB does not have as much of a role in determining the allocation of budgets. The GRB exercise is merely for accounting purposes, to show how much of the budget has been allocated for women's advancement. This goes against the mandate of GRB. The amount of funding allocated for women, and gender budget audits, do not make for a holistic GRB. It is the reasoning behind the allocation in the planning stages and the reporting structure of its utilisation that is of utmost important, but this is missing in India.

Bangladesh

Introduction and Evolution of GRB Process

In 2003, the Finance Division of Bangladesh's finance ministry developed the Recurrent, Capital, Gender and Poverty (RCGP) database to improve the monitoring and reporting of financial resources allocated to promote gender equity.⁴⁴ All expenditure details in the database are disaggregated based on sex to indicate the percentage of allocation towards women's advancement.⁴⁵

Bangladesh has since initiated a form of budget formulation where instead of adhering to traditional budget preparation systems, it uses a Medium Term Budget Framework Process⁴⁶ (MTBF) that was introduced in 2005-2006.⁴⁷ This means there is a medium-term outlook for budget planning and explicit linkages between policy priorities and resource allocations.

Based on the MTBF approach, "a strategic phase of budget planning is undertaken before the detailed annual budget estimate

is prepared⁴⁸ where ministries are required to set out their plans for the next three years. Poverty, gender and climate issues have been incorporated into the budget circular guidelines that ministries must adhere to; in section 3 of the document, ministries and divisions are expected to "identify the impact, or effect, that each of the strategic objectives has on two important areas: poverty reduction and women's advancement and rights."⁴⁹ The MTBF approach also considers the mission statements and objectives of the ministries, their priority spending areas, progress in certain key performance indicators, revenue and expense accounts, achievements based on objectives, and target beneficiaries.⁵⁰ The final document the ministries are supposed to provide under the MTBF process includes a table generated from the RCGP database that identifies the gender-related expenditure allocations within the ministry/division's budget.⁵¹

Gender Budget Statements: Depth, Functions and Format

A distinct and separate gender budget was only introduced in 2009-10 when the finance minister placed before the Bangladesh parliament an analysis on gender budgeting along with the annual budget.⁵² The first gender budget report covered only four ministries: education, health and family welfare, social welfare, and disaster management. In 2011-12, all ministries and divisions were brought under the GRB process.⁵³ Since then, the government has presented a gender budget report before parliament every year, which explains the policies and strategies for the advancement of women, the activities of various ministries and divisions related to women's development, and the requisite budget allocation for these activities.

Each ministry has a gender budget report, which is showcased

under the budget documents of the finance ministry. These reports have detailed sections on the ministry's relevant policies, ministry-specific national policy directives concerning women's advancement, and targets and indicators to achieve gender-equality goals. Besides simply identifying relevant policies and budget allocations as an accounting exercise, the reports also identify gender gaps in the ministry's activities and obstacles to achieve objectives. Furthermore, consolidated data on "Women's Participation in the Ministry's Activities and their Share in Total Expenditure" is provided, which is important in order to estimate indicators of socio-political empowerment that makeup gender inequality indexes.⁵⁴ This shows that Bangladesh has done work in providing data on how many women are involved in the gender-responsive decision-making process, along with having laws that mandate women's participation in the political decision-making process, such as reserving one-third of all local government (union parishad) positions for women.⁵⁵

For 2019-20, Bangladesh's finance minister proposed a 30.82-percent allocation of the national budget for the "development of women in the country," and value-added tax exemptions on showroom rentals for women entrepreneurs.⁵⁶ While these are important efforts in providing money for gender-based programmes and focusing on how taxation affects women, the exercise of GRB is not just about creating space for women in the budgets or increasing funding for women's programmes.

One of the key issues in the implementation of GRB in Bangladesh is the lack of mandatory data disaggregation of beneficiaries and impact based on gender throughout the entire MTBF documentation process, which is a crucial aspect of fiscal transparency. Although the process seems exhaustive, the key performance indicators for

ministries and their compliance with gender-based objectives states that "these indicators *can* be gender disaggregated if sex disaggregated data is available" and "if possible, at least one or two gender specific indicators are identified for each ministry/division to indicate the level of performance relevant for measuring pro-women progress".⁵⁷ The documentation of these indicators should be made a regulatory requirement. These budget classification structures and framework for conducting the GRB exercise should be done at local levels as well. The 2020-21 national budget, unlike previous years, did not publish any separate gender budget document showing ministry-wise fund allocations for women.⁵⁸ Making the GRB exercise mandatory as per the Constitution could be one way to hold the government accountable to ensure gender budgets are reported yearly.

Rwanda

Introduction and Evolution of GRB Process

The concept of gender budgeting was introduced in Rwanda in 2003 through a comprehensive gender mainstreaming programme led by the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion and the UK government's Department for International Development.⁵⁹ According to the Rwandan government, this early initiative suffered because it was not led by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN) and there was an "overreliance on outside experts and insufficient building of local capacity."⁶⁰

In 2008, gender was identified as a crosscutting issue within the government's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (EDPRS), along with the environment, HIV/AIDS and social protection.⁶¹ As a result, the MINECOFIN, responsible for EDPRS implementation along with other ministries, emphasised the

importance of introducing gender into the national budget process. It also produced a technical guide to provide a framework for gender mainstreaming in the planning and budgeting processes for different stakeholders.⁶²

In 2009, MINECOFIN took the lead on gender budgeting with support from UN Women,⁶³ and with the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion playing a supporting role. With the change in leadership, the government developed gender budget statements to be incorporated into programme budgets. In this phase, every ministry was responsible for ensuring that the promotion of gender equality was firmly integrated into its areas of responsibility.

Gender Budget Statements: Depth, Functions, and Format

Rwanda has moved beyond considering gender as a cross-cutting area in various strategies and has fully integrated it as a separate entity in the planning and budgeting process. In 2010-11, MINECOFIN submitted the national budget with the gender budget statements of four pilot sectors—governance, agriculture, infrastructure and the private sector—following the issuance of the first budget call circular.⁶⁴ This budget call circular was the launch of the Medium Term Expenditure Framework, which prompted the different "budget Agencies to start preparing their budgets" from a gendered lens.⁶⁵ Since then, gender budget statement reports are prepared and submitted to MINECOFIN and presented to parliament during budget hearings every year.⁶⁶ MINECOFIN prepares a 'Budget Framework Paper,' which includes the 'Consolidated Gender Budget Statements' in its annexe.⁶⁷

Based on Article 32 of the Organic Budget Law on State Finance and Property, all ministries, departments and agencies are required

to prepare and submit gender budgeting statement plans in a form that includes sections on gender situation analysis, output, planned activities, indicators, targets, and approved budget.⁶⁸

Article 68 of the Organic Budget Law on State Finance and Property is a follow-up to the gender budgeting statement plans, wherein all ministries, departments and agencies must prepare and submit annual implementation reports. These contain sections on output planned activities, accomplished activities, planned targets achievement against planned targets, approved budget FY, and executed budget vs approved budget comment/reasons for variance.⁶⁹

While the objective of the ministries is mostly common, in attempting women's advancement in economic, political and social participation, Rwanda seems to have also successfully implemented legislation and auditing in the governance department. Circulars in Rwanda call for budget agencies to report on factors like the "differences in civil service employment with respect to sex and level in the civil service" as well.⁷⁰ Additionally, the 2003 Constitution creates the basis of this reporting as it mandates at least 30 percent quota of women in all decision-making positions. Rather than simply reporting, Rwanda's budget statement analysis also directly contributes to the budget-making and policymaking process, and budgets are redirected in terms of where there is a shortage. This has led to women constituting two-thirds of the lower house of parliament, 50 percent of the cabinet being female, and women being district council members, mayors in charge of social affairs and well-represented in the judiciary.⁷¹

Rwanda also established the Gender Monitoring Office in 2003 through its Constitution, which is a separate entity to monitor the

compliance of "gender related commitments across public, private, non-governmental and religious institutions".⁷²

Observations

An assessment of the GRB regulatory frameworks in India, Bangladesh and Rwanda shows that although India was the first to introduce the concept, it lags significantly behind the other two countries in the GGI.

Rwanda ranks especially high in GGI indicators for political empowerment as it has constituted gender quotas for governance in its legislation, has introduced governance as a metric for ministerial reporting of GRB, and has introduced the concept of gender-responsive decision-making in the GRB process. This metric has resulted in actual budgetary allocations for improving the political empowerment sector. Gender-responsive decision-making in the GRB process is important because it enables delivery of services to reach men and women equally,⁷³ and both Rwanda and Bangladesh have attempted to incorporate this. Research conducted by the IMF has made a direct link between effective GRB methods and reducing gender inequalities—" [As seen from the case of] Rwanda, evaluations from within and outside of the government affirmed that gender budgeting had spurred government efforts to reduce gender inequalities in economic and political life and promote women's development."⁷⁴ The Rwandan government has purposefully sought to ensure that gender-oriented goals are identified, and that budgeting addresses these goals in important public services such as education and health. Rwanda has also made a point of ensuring that the gender budgeting efforts accompanied the implementation of a programme-based budget.⁷⁵

Rwanda performs well in female labour force management, employment of women in management positions, the share of seats held by women in parliament, and total unemployment rate, only lagging in youth unemployment rate and with a high female to male unemployment rate ratio (see Table 6). This is again a reflection of the policies and the GRB structures that account for it.

India, on the other hand, has a GRB framework that is limited to a gender budgeting statement—the exercise is limited in scope and does not lead to changes in budgetary allocations. GRB analysis does not have any real influence on the actual allocation of funds during the project design phase. It is only when the activities are identified and approved post design that an analysis takes place on how it might impact men and women. For instance, several Indian ministries, such as home affairs and women and child development, have schemes for daycare, crèches, nursing homes and girls' hostels as part of their gender budget. However, there is no effort to first collate infrastructure data related to a woman's presence in the workspace, which can provide a holistic assessment of the impact of adding such amenities and formulate potential remedies to reduce any inequalities. The GRB process should generate a link between programming and funding. Until then, a direct causal link cannot be made between the GRB framework and its standing in terms of gender equality indicators.

Recommendations

- India, Bangladesh and Rwanda issue budget call circulars asking ministries to report on their gender-based budget allocations. In India, ministries assign a percentage to each of their schemes and programmes, indicating the portion of the total allocation

(expenditure) that is expected to benefit women directly. In Bangladesh, ministries and divisions are also asked to show the impacts of projects and programmes on poverty reduction and women's advancement and rights. Rwanda also has a similar gender budgeting report to be filled to indicate activities, objectives and expenditure of ministries and departments. While this exercise reveals details on funds directed towards the benefit of women and gender equality, it is in danger of becoming just a routine form-filling exercise without any real impact. Better coordination with the creation of schemes and gender reporting will ensure that the analysis driven by the budgeting exercise bears fruit at the legislation level.


- Although the gender budgeting reports of the three countries have sections of target beneficiaries, the analysis needs to delve further to discover how they can be better targeted. Policy dissemination and awareness generation are key components that need to be incorporated into the GRB framework. Additionally, these reports should also account for the gender-based impacts of raising revenue for the budgets—how the taxation policies have affected men and women differently. Although it is part of the GRB exercise, it is often neglected in gender budget reports and statements, which must be rectified.
- GRB analysis needs to be strengthened from merely being a study of pre-approved projects to influencing the allocation of funds during the project design phase. It is imperative to collate data to determine on-ground numbers in levels of inequality, and then use this data to prepare budget allocations. Countries must incorporate how data collection has impacted the budgeting process in their GRB analysis.

- Countries with a higher emphasis on changing budget allocations and programmes based on GRB analysis score highly in closing the political participation gender gap. For instance, Rwanda and Bangladesh use data from factors such as ministerial male-female employment, which complements their rankings. There is a clear need to align gender budgeting efforts to goals in national development plans, including those related to the Sustainable Development Goals (which call for "a significant increase in investments to close the gender gap") and improving GDI. The GGI, GDI and GII rankings reflect the IMF's conclusion that the effectiveness of GRB affects levels of gender inequality.
- The finance ministries in India, Bangladesh and Rwanda lead and consolidate the gender budgeting efforts of the different ministries in each country and prepare holistic reports. States and other government departments in these countries also have their respective gender budgeting efforts. There must be better coordination between these efforts to mitigate replication and inefficient budget consumption. Data gathered at local levels should be incorporated into national budgets, which should be considered by ministries in allocating funds for national schemes.
- Providing increased funding does not help if there is no data available on how the funding should be used. There is an urgent and strong need for granular, disaggregated data collection to complement budget allocation in all sectors, such as health, education and labour. The collection and disaggregated presentation of data at the local level will only help in improving the efficacy of the schemes. Collecting disaggregated data for better information on the distribution of resources among

male and female beneficiaries at local levels would provide a better and more evidence-based grounds for decision-making and will contribute to ensuring that public funds are used more effectively.

CONCLUSION

Where the scope of GRB has been limited, such as in India, there is no strong causal link between GRB processes and gender inequality indicators. Where GRB implementation has been stronger (such as in Rwanda and even Bangladesh, to some extent), it is reflected in the indicators as well. There is also a strong link between gender-responsive decision-making and GRB.

GRB is only one of the many tools that can provide gender justice and equality; simply budgeting for schemes does not ensure justice. There is also a need to acknowledge how certain groups are excluded even in the gender-responsive exercise due to a binary understanding of gender. GRB must be linked with a gender-responsive decision-making process to ensure funds are distributed effectively to vulnerable groups. The GRB process must be made more empirical and data-driven, to analyse and create a causal link for how different sectors create funds and programmes and implement them to improve the country's gender equality indicators. 

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