

WOMEN COMPONENT PLAN

(A Holistic Gender Budgeting Tool)

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Gender Budgets – The Global Scene

Gender Budgeting is still in the making in India, as in many parts of the world.

In the 1970's and 1980's, advocates of women development spoke of integrating women into development. In the 1990's, the emphasis changed to the institutionalization of gender issues in development policy and planning, i.e., mainstreaming gender in overall policy planning and budgetary processes.

- The fourth world conference of Women held in Beijing in September 1995 and the subsequent Platform for Action (1995) emphasized a gender perspective in all macroeconomic policies.
- The 23rd Special session of U.N. General Assembly in June 2000 also explicitly called for attention to the goal of gender equality in budgetary processes at national, regional and international levels. The Outcome document of the same General Assembly urged all the Nations to integrate a gender perspective into key macroeconomic and social development policies.

Globally, gender budgeting exercises have steadily grown in terms of the number of countries (Commonwealth initiatives in Fiji, St Kitts and Nevis, Barbados and Srilanka – 1977; Australia – 1984; Philippines – 1986 / 1995; South Africa – 1995...), each of them following different methods and processes. At present, Gender budget initiatives are said to be attempted in more than 40 countries in the world.

Gender Budgets – The Concept

Historically, we have moved a long way in terms of perspectives and methodologies since the mid-1980's, when initial attempts were made to integrate gender perspectives into national budgets – from **'Women's Budgets'**; to **'Gender Budgets'** (reflecting the ongoing shift from a focus on women to the focus on gender and the relations between women and men) to **'Gender-sensitive Budgets'** to **'Mainstreaming Gender Perspectives into Budgets'**, (implying that the aim is not to produce a separate gender budget but to incorporate relevant gender perspectives into overall budget processes).

“Gendering the Budget is not meant to bargain for a larger share of the resources for women or to create a separate budget for them. The aim is to analyze the budgetary expenditures from a gender perspective”

It is very important to remember that budgets are never gender-neutral policy instruments, in the sense that government expenditures and revenues never impact equally on men and women.

Gender Budgeting is a methodology, with its own tools, designed to facilitate the application of gender analysis in the formulation of Government budgets and the allocation of budgetary resources. The objective is to enhance fiscal policy making and measures by providing a mechanism for ascertaining their impacts on women Vs men, girls Vs boys. To ignore the gendered impact of policies and budgeting constitutes 'gender blindness'.

Gender Budgeting involves, among other things, the analysis of public expenditures and revenues from a gender perspective. It includes analysis of gender-targeted allocations (e.g. special programmes targeting women); the differential impact of expenditures across all sectors and services, disaggregated by gender; and review of equal opportunities, policies and allocations within government services etc.

Gender Budgeting in India

In India, the 1974 Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India gave a new impetus towards the search for gender perspectives on public expenditure.

And, though the Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97), for the first time, high-lighted the need to ensure a definite flow of funds from the general developmental sectors to that of women (“The benefits of development from different sectors should not bypass women and special programmes on women should complement the general development programmes. The latter, in turn, should reflect greater gender sensitivity”), not much progress was made in terms of ensuring adequate flow of funds and benefits to women.

It was the Ninth five Year Plan (1997-2002), which adopted “**Women Component Plan**” as one of the major strategies of planning and budgeting and directed both the Central and State Governments to ensure that ‘not less than 30 per cent of the funds/benefits are earmarked in all the women’s related sectors’. It also directed that a special vigil be kept on the flow of the earmarked funds/benefits through an effective mechanism to ensure that the proposed strategy brings forth a holistic approach towards empowering women.

The 2001 National Policy for Empowerment of Women 2001 made concrete suggestions towards the introduction of a gender perspective in the budgeting process. Specifically, it promised

- Developing “Gender Development Indices” (GDI), by networking with specialized agencies.
- Undertaking “Gender auditing and development of evaluation mechanisms”
- Undertaking the collection of “Gender-disaggregated data” by all primary data collecting agencies of the Central and State Governments as well as research and academic institutions in the Public and Private Sectors

Already in 1998, the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India had taken up the initiative of generating “gender-aggregated data” across the country.

Based on a series of consultations, held with States and Union Territory Administrations to develop Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measures (GEM), 18 important indicators were identified for collection of gender-disaggregated data at state/district levels. But the responses were not very encouraging.

The “Workshop on Engendering National Budgets in the South Asia Region”, held July 2002 in New Delhi in Collaboration with the UNIFEM, was another concrete step towards a gender budgeting initiative in India.

Subsequently the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPF&P) was commissioned to study gender-related economic policy issues and the policy alternatives for building a gender sensitive national budgeting process.

The annual Indian Economic Survey 2000-01, for the first time, contained a section on Gender Inequality in the chapter on Social Sector, based on the input provided by the Interim Report on the ‘Status of Women in India and their Role in Economy’, submitted by NIPF&P in January 2001.

The second Report of NIPF&P, submitted in August 2001, made a ‘Post Budget Assessment of the Union Budget 2001-02’, The Report categorized public expenditure in three main types:

- (i) Those specifically targeted to women and girls.
- (ii) Pro-women allocations which are the composite expenditure of schemes with women component, and
- (iii) Mainstream public expenditure that has gender differential impacts.

Though the methodology adopted was found inadequate, needing much refinement, the salient findings of the union budget analysis brought to light some interesting trend in public fund expenditure from gender perspective and also methodological issues.

The NIPFP Reports led to the realization of the need to analyze State Budgets with a gender perspective, since the States / UTs account for bulk of the expenditure in social sector, which impinges on the welfare, development, and empowerment of women.

Gender Budgets – States

In December 2001, the Department of Women and Child Development entrusted the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD), with the task of coordinating Gender Budget Analysis in 22 States.

The methodology chosen was a simple one of desk review, basically collecting, from state budget documents, requisite information on the following categories of schemes and programmes:

- **Women Targeted/Specific Schemes** (defined as schemes where 100% of allocation is meant for women)
- **Pro-Women Schemes** (defined as those which incorporate at least 30% of allocation for women or significantly benefit women)
- **Gender–Neutral schemes** (meant for the community as a whole)

These schemes were further classified in four clusters on the basis of their potential impact on women’s social position:

- **Protective and Welfare services**
- **Social services**
- **Economic services**
- **Regulatory and Awareness Generation services**

And 6 departments of the States were selected for analysis (Department of Women and Child Development, Department of Health and Family Welfare, Department of Welfare, Department of Rural Development, Department of Education and Department of Agriculture).

The Interim Report included results of the analysis of data from only 10 States (Assam, Bihar Meghalaya, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Manipur) and related to the 2 financial years, 2000-2001 and 2001-2002.

In spite of the various gaps and limitations accepted by the authors themselves, some of the conclusions, however limited, are revealing:

- The range of % allocations to women programmes (target + pro-women) varied between 2% to 11% across the 10 states for the year 2000-01.
- The share for women-targeted schemes in the State Budgets was less than 1% in 6 states
- Pro-women schemes received a larger portion of state budget as compared to the women-specific schemes (6%-11% during 2000-01) in 5 states
- The share of pro-women schemes in absolute numbers as also in percentages is considerably higher in the total allocations for women (targeted + pro-women) as compared to targeted programmes exclusively meant for women in all states studied.
- The combined allocations are as low as 2% and 5% of the state budget in some states. It is far below the desired and recommended levels of 30% as per guidelines of Planning Commission under Women Component Plan.
- Allocations to social sector as percentage of total State budget ranged between 24% - 36% in the 10 states during 2000-2001
- The allocations for targeted schemes across states varied as a percentage of state social sector budgets from as little as 0.66% to around 7 and 10%.
- The percentage of state social sector budget allocated to pro-women schemes showed wide variations across states (4% to 42%).

- The combined (targeted + pro-women) figures presented a slightly better picture of social sector allocations percentages, in the range of 14% to 44% in the year 2000-2001 and 16% to 34% in the following year for 4 states.

Women Component Plan – A Paradigm Shift

“The Women Component Plan is a strategy articulated in the 9th Plan and is central to the 10th Plan. The States have been directed to adopt Women Component Plan, through which not less than 30% funds/benefits have to be earmarked in all women related sectors...

The feed back from researchers as also the gaps in data received indicated that almost all departments included in the study, with an exception of a few, were unable to provide the exact amount earmarked as a share of Women Component Plan out of the total budget of that Department. The accounting/auditing and record keeping procedures did not have these disaggregated allocations. It was informed that whenever required these figures are worked out on an ad-hoc basis in line with the requirements....

The Department of Women and Child Development may like to take up the above matter with the State Governments and direct these identified departments to generate information for Women Component Plan. Pro-women Schemes provide services both to men and women. Therefore unless gender-segregated data is maintained for physical and performance targets, it would not be possible to ascertain the extent of resources in flow for women.”

- NIPCCD Report, 2002

SCP FOR DALITS – A Model for WCP

The Concept of the “Special Component Plan” (SCP) was originally evolved, with regard to dalits during the 6th Five Year Plan. It was based on the conviction of the Planning Commission of India that neither 50 years of planning nor thousands of crores of rupees allocated for ‘SC/ST Welfare’ had any substantial impact on the lives of dalits. Social development and empowerment of dalits needed a new paradigm of planning and budgeting. And SCP was visualized as an effort to radically rework the whole strategy of dalit welfare and dalit empowerment.

The objective of SCP is to ensure not only that sufficient funds are allocated for the welfare of dalits, but also make sure that the funds are properly used and that effective and practical programmes towards clear goals and targets are initiated.

The basic insight of SCP is the idea of Convergence – convergence of schemes and programmes towards a unified goal. To ensure such a convergence, SCP demands the pooling together of all resources spent by various departments and agencies.

Main Elements of SCP

- SCP is obligatory for all the State governments and departments as well as all Central Govt. ministries and agencies
- Allocation of resources should be adequate, in proportion to the population of dalits in the country and in the States
- Every department should initiate concrete steps to evolve separate programs, in accordance with specific needs and priorities of SCs;
- Only those programmes specifically meant for dalits and the percentage amount of funds allocated, as per specific G.O.s, can be included in the SCP
- Separate budget heads have to be shown in the Budget Link Book, clearly mentioning the receipts-expenditures details of the SCP (in

order to prevent diversion, under utilization and misutilisation of funds earmarked for SCs)

- “Notional allocations” under SCP need to be avoided. And no distinction can be drawn between the so-called ‘indivisible’ and ‘divisible’ sectors.
- SC Welfare Department (or Scheduled Castes Development Corporations in the States) should act as the nodal agency for the formulation and implementation of SCP

Chief Instruments of SCP:

1. Special Component Plan (SCP) at the State and Central Ministries levels:

The targets fixed under SCP by the States and Central Ministries are to be disaggregated into district-wise and sector wise targets. And, at the district level, the district collectors are responsible for coordinating the implementation of the schemes under SCP;

2. The Special Central Assistance (SCA) for the SCPs of the States.

The scheme of SCA to SCP has been introduced, in order to fill up the gaps in the state plans budgetary provisions. SCA is given as 100% grant by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to SCP of various States.

SCP FOR DALITS – TAMILNADU EXPERIENCES

The Tamilnadu Peoples’ Forum for Social Development has been, over many years, monitoring of the functioning of SCP for dalits in Tamilnadu. And we have constantly interacted with other groups across India who have attempted similar budgetary exercises. Our two major publications on SCP for dalits have been well received all over and have become effecting lobbying tools for advocacy. The Tamilnadu Dalit Legislators’ Forum, The Tamilnadu Dalit Panchayat Presidents Association and various dalit movements and organizations in Tamilnadu have used our research material effectively in their campaigns and struggles. We can

boldly say that it was mainly due to our research and lobbying efforts that the Tamilnadu Government was forced to announce during the 2000 Budget Session of the Assembly, an “Empowered Committee to evaluate the functioning of SCP for dalits in Tamilnadu.

At the national level too, our work on dalit budgeting have been taken up, as models, by initiatives such as the Peoples’ Bias (Budget Information and Analysis Service) and the National Campaign for Dalit Human rights (NCDHR).

Our long experience of the functioning of SCP for dalits has given us many insights into both the potentiality of SCP as well as the way in which bureaucratic apathy and lack of political will have worked together to constantly sabotage this progressive scheme, to the great detriment of dalits in the country. And we are confident that our learnings can be usefully employed in the search towards a more relevant Women Component Plan in India, at the Central and State levels.

The bureaucrats have often hid behind the excuse that greater parts of allocations are ‘indivisible’ and hence cannot be separately worked out for dalits (in spite of the clear instructions that “no distinction can be drawn between the so-called ‘indivisible and divisible’ sectors”)

And, often, notional and not actual allocations are worked out, thus creating a myth that much more than the allocated amounts are actually spent for the sector. Such notional allocations have been at the heart of the controversies around the implementation of SCP for dalits in recent years. In actuality it means crores of rupees being denied to dalits.

Again unspent SCP/SCA funds have often been found diverted to other purposes, leaving the earmarked / intended purposes unattended.

Government agencies like the Controller and Auditor General (CAG) and the SC/ST National and State Commissions as well as concerned movements and institutions have constantly been challenging both the Central and State Govts for their lethargy and faulty approaches to SCP.

The Tenth Five year Plan Working Group on SC/ST Welfare have strongly recommended that the SCP/SCA funds should directly be released to the implementing agencies on the pattern adopted by the Ministry of Rural Development in releasing funds directly to DRDA.

The States of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Gujarat as well as the Central Government have set up Standing Tripartite Committees, to look into the serious issues of SCP and SCA and to review the progress of various ministries. The Government of Tamilnadu too, after much lobbying, has recently constituted an “Empowered Committee” to review the functioning of the programme in the State and to suggest remedies towards improvement.

WOMEN COMPONENT PLAN – SOME POINTERS

It was the utility of the concept of SCP with regards to dalits that motivated the Government of India to come up with further sectoral SCPs. A Tribal Sub-Plan for Scheduled Tribes has been developed. And, during the 9th Five Year Plan (1997-2002), the Women Component Plan was articulated. Now there are attempts to develop a similar SCP for Children too.

The Women Component Plan was adopted by the Government of India as a major strategy of gender budgeting and women empowerment. WSP was intended towards a ‘convergence of existing services’, available in both women-specific and women-related sectors. The Plan directed both the Central and the State Governments to ensure ‘not less than 30 per cent of the funds/benefits are earmarked in all the women’s related sectors’. It also directed that a special vigil be kept on the flow of the earmarked funds/benefits through an effective mechanism to ensure that the proposed strategy brings forth a holistic approach towards empowering women.

WCP, started during the 9th Five Year Plan became central to the 10th Five Year Plan.

It is no wonder that Government documents wax eloquent about the great contribution of WCP towards the empowerment of women in India. The 10th Five Year plan document, for instance, has the following statements.

“A review of the progress made by WCP has confirmed that it has already started paying rich dividends proving its strength as an effective strategy to achieve its objective. As per the information made available to the Planning Commission, substantial amount of funds are flowing to women through both women-specific and women-related schemes, implemented by 15 Central Ministries/Departments.”

“The most striking feature in this entire exercise is to notice that there are Departments like Family Welfare accounting for as high as 70 per cent flow of its total budget for the good of women.”

“WCP as a percentage of the total GBS of the GOI for the Ninth Plan works out to 25.”

“The review has brought forth a revealing factor that the WCP has created lot of awareness and sensitisation amongst the planners, policy-makers and administrators to ensure that the funds/benefits from other development sectors do not by-pass women.”

Such statements and claims need to be tested against concrete facts and figures. We just have to check the above claims against, for instance, statements given below!

“In ten states selected the range of allocations to women programmes (targeted and pro combined) varied between 3% to 13% of the State budget. Targeted schemes as compared to pro-women schemes received lower percent allocations and in four states less than 1%. Allocation to pro women schemes showed wide variations across states and ranged between less than 1% to 11% (Table 2, Column 7). It is obvious that fiscal flow to women’s programme in all states is far below the desired level and lower than the norms of Planning Commission (30%).”

“The feed back from researchers as also the gaps in data received indicated that almost all departments included in the study, with an exception of a few, were unable to provide the exact amount earmarked as a share of Women Component Plan out of the total budget of that Department. The accounting/auditing and record keeping procedures did not have these disaggregated allocations. It was informed that whenever required, these figures are worked out on an ad-hoc basis in line with the requirements.”

- NIPCCD Study, 2002

Our own preliminary and exploratory studies of the Tamilnadu Govt budgets for gender budgeting, using the NIPCCD methodology, have shown that real allocation to programmes related women's empowerment is far less than the stipulated 30% in most cases.

It is very important that serious independent efforts are taken to ensure that WCP does not suffer the same disabilities found in the implementation of SCPs in other sectors: Major departments, claiming 'indivisibilities' of allocation of resources, notional allocations projected as real allocations, lack of dis-aggregation of data etc.

As the NIPCCD study makes it clear, “As Pro-women Schemes provide services both to men/women and girls/boys, unless gender-segregated data is maintained for physical targets and performance/achievement targets, it would not be possible to ascertain the extent of resources in flow for women”.

The most difficult task in gender budget analysis is to compile gender-segregated data on allocation and expenditure on pro-women and gender-neutral schemes, which are not generated from the existing formats and schedules of budgetary procedures and reporting systems.

Again, mere expenditure analysis does not give any true picture about the actual impact of such expenditure on women. This certainly calls for more in-depth analysis on sectoral issues over a larger than annual time frame. It is also necessary to formulate uniform guidelines and procedures so that valid comparisons and inferences can be made at the regional and national level.

Finally and most importantly, there is a need for a serious methodological debate for carrying out the task of WCP in India, at the Central and State levels. There is also the urgency of sharpening the methodological tools monitoring the progress of Women's Component Plan.

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