

Prima Facie for Gender Budgeting: A Key to Gender Equality in India

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Abstract: *Gender budgeting is a strategy to achieve equality between women and men by focusing on how public resources are collected and spent. The present paper will highlight the importance of gender budget and interrelationship with gender equality in India. Gender budgeting is an approach to budgeting that can improve it, when fiscal policies and administrative procedures are structured to address gender inequality. When properly done, one can say that gender budgeting is good budgeting for a means of gender equality in Indian society. Gender budget requires Government budgets to establish its gender specific impacts and to ensure that gender commitments are translated into budgetary commitments. Budgetary resource allocation and the specific expenditure amount for women specific programmes are separately mentioned as part of gender equality in India. As education and health outcomes improve, women's barriers to entry in joining the workforce would reduce. This would reverse the worrying trend of dipping female labour force participation and contribute to India's economic growth. It would also make women more financially independent and reduce the crimes against women that begin in the household. Methodology: The present study is used both the published and unpublished materials pertaining to the present study Interview with the key persons like officials, community leaders, reviewed literatures etc.*

Keywords: Gender budgeting, Equality, Rights etc

1. Objectives

- To analyse the co-relationship between gender budgeting and gender equality in Indian society;
- To analyse and discuss the various factors affecting gender equality correlation with gender budgeting.

2. Research Methodology

The present study is used both the published and unpublished materials pertaining to the present study; Interview with the key persons like officials; Focus group discussion with community leaders; and reviewed of literatures regarding the present topic etc.

3. Introduction

Prima facie, budget appears to be gender-neutral. Public expenditure and revenue are not intrinsically gendered. But, gender neutrality should not allow the budgetary policies to ignore gender specific needs. Budgetary policies can have differential impacts on men and women because of the systemic differences between the sexes in relation to the economy. A gender-sensitive budget aims at examining budgetary resource allocations through a gender lens. It is not a separate budget for women; rather it is a dissection of the government budget to establish its gender-specific impact and to translate gender commitments into budgetary commitments. It also examines the gendered incidence of budgetary policies for effective targeting of public spending and offsetting any undesirable gender-specific consequences of previous budgetary measures.

Gender budgeting stress reprioritization rather than an increase in overall public expenditure and in particular, the reorientation of programmes within sectors rather than changes in the overall amounts allocated to particular sectors. Moreover, one of the key thrusts of a gender-

sensitive budget is to ensure a greater visibility of the care economy' in fiscal policy measures and its inclusion in a system of satellite accounts into the National Accounts System. In other words, gender budgeting manifests a conspicuous gender lens to budgetary resource allocation; with a greater visibility of women's unpaid work and its inclusion in a system of satellite accounts into the National Accounts System.

4. Gender Budgeting

Existing gender-neutrality of macro indicators ignores the feedback mechanism between gender-relations and macroeconomic policy. The assumption of labour force exogeneity in the treatment of the care economy in the prevalent macroeconomic policy making is dubious. Integrating gender perspective into macroeconomic policy has dual dimensions: an equality dimension and an efficiency dimension. In the context of growing recognition that problems of inequality cannot be resolved by the trickle down effects of macroeconomic policies, the concerns of gender-inequality needs to be built in to the macroeconomic policy framework. Apart from the basic principle of promoting equality among citizens, gender equality can benefit the economy through efficiency gains. From the efficiency consideration, what is important is the social rate of return of investment in women, and in cases, this can be greater than the corresponding rate for men. There is a growing awareness that gender inequality is inefficient and costly to development. Empirical literature draws attention to these efficiency dimensions of integrating gender perspective into macroeconomic policies. The empirical evidences suggested that the likelihood of children being enrolled in school goes up with their mother's educational level, and mother's extra income has more positive impact on household investments in nutrition, health and education of children than extra income accruing to fathers. Also, literature on gender inequality in labour markets shows that

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eliminating gender discrimination in occupation and wages could increase not only women's income, but also national income.

Men and women frequently have different priorities for budgetary policies and are affected differently by most of these policies due to the gender differentials in the constraints, options, incentives and needs. Men and women face different constraints, assume different socially determined responsibilities and consequently make different social preferences. Legacies of adverse intra-household gender relations inhibit women from playing their rightful role, contributing to the economy, and getting their due share of the economic benefits in many countries, particularly developing ones. Women therefore are affected by and respond to the budgetary policies differently from men. Disaggregation by gender is vital because there are systemic differences between men and women in relation to the economy⁵.

The existing gender-neutral budgets ignore the gender specific impacts of budgetary policies. Generally, budgeting involves four components: (i) the budgetary allocation of resources to various heads, (ii) the actual Government outlays on various heads, (iii) an accounting of how resources are utilised for a particular purpose (e.g. on administrative overheads and wages and salaries, operation and maintenance, etc.) and (iv) an evaluation of the effectiveness of the resources utilised in delivering the intended results. Gender budgeting involves looking at all the four components from the point of view of women as beneficiaries. While many public goods and services like defence are not amenable to gender partitioning, many others have differential impact on the two sexes. For example, outlays for augmenting the supply of safe drinking water can benefit women more than men by cutting down on the time spent in fetching water from the river or ponds. The existing practice of budgeting does not pay any special attention to the impact of budgets on women. A gender perspective in all policies and their budgetary dimensions is very much important in Indian society for ensuring gender equality.

Australia was the first country to develop a gender-sensitive budget. A comprehensive assessment of gender differential impacts of the Federal Budget has been undertaken in Australia since 1984. The form in which gender budgeting took place in Australia established a model whereby each government agency was required to provide a gender audit (an audit of the annual federal Budget of the government's achievements in relation to women and girls). It was strongly emphasized to Departments that a comprehensive gender analysis of mainstream public expenditure were relevant and not just those expenditures directly allotted of women and girls. It was found that expenditures specifically targeted to women and girls in Australia made up only less than 1 per cent of the total budget⁷. The gender-sensitive budget in South Africa, which was initiated in 1995, was a joint effort of parliamentarians and non-governmental organisations. This parliamentary- NGO initiative has undertaken a detailed gender-sensitive analysis of expenditure portfolios like education, health, welfare, housing, labour, trade and industry, land affairs, agriculture,

safety and security, transport, energy, foreign affairs as well as the cross sectoral areas of public sector employment and taxation. Later, during 1997, there began a parallel initiative within the Department of Finance, as a pilot for the Commonwealth initiative to integrate gender perspective into macroeconomic policy. In 1998 Budget Review (the document tabled along with the Budget), there were a number of sections that discussed gender issues in the various Departments, which was a big step forward as the *Review* had never previously mentioned women or gender in South Africa.

5. Women's Contribution to the Economy

Women's contribution to the economy remains significantly invisible in national accounts. Although a certain degree of statistical invisibility of women in the economy is a global phenomenon, it is particularly predominant in India and other South Asian nations due to the orthodox socio-cultural milieu. The attempt of United Nations Statistical Division in extending the production boundary of the Systems of National Accounts (SNA), 1993 has led to the inclusion of the activities of unpaid work of women in care economy.

Valuing Care Economy in India:

In theoretical literature, there are two main approaches to the valuation of the care economy: (i) Input-related method, based on imputing value to labour time spent on care economy, and (ii) Output-related method, based on imputing market prices to goods and services produced in the care economy for example, imputing market price to the fuel wood collected, homemade utensils, etc. The major problem related to input-related approach is to decide which value to impute to labour time. Three methods have been used for this purpose.

6. Conclusions and Suggestions for Social Policy

Incidence of the benefits of public expenditure among different sections of the community grouped by income class or any other criteria is notoriously difficult to measure in precise quantitative terms. The difficulty arises from the fact that the bulk of government expenditures are meant to provide services that are essentially public in nature - for instance, expenditures on defence, maintenance of law and order and dispensation of justice - their consumption being "non-rival", the benefits of these expenditures are enjoyed by all citizens irrespective of caste, creed or sex. Thus, picking on only the items that are specific to a group as indicative of the attention paid to that group by government is inappropriate. Nevertheless, there is a case for segregating group-specific expenditures in the budget in certain cases where there is *prima facie* evidence of a societal bias against specific groups and a corresponding need to do more of collective action. Considering the gender bias inherent in a male dominated society like India and the evidence from the trends in sex ratio shows how the bias is getting accentuated in many parts of India it is time the budgets of the government provided some idea of how much is earmarked specifically for the benefit of women. The suggestion is not to provide gender-wise break-up of all government

expenditures, but that the expenditures meant primarily for women be shown separately so that they can be easily culled out from budget heads of social and economic services in which it is possible to segregate such expenditures. With this objective in view, the report after presenting a gender diagnosis in India in access to resources and in economic activity and gender sensitive analysis of Budgets recommends the following priority actions for gender - sensitive budgeting.

- a) Collecting gender disaggregated - A system should be set up to collect gender disaggregated data from relevant Departments to obtain the gender-wise relevant statistical database, targets and indicators. A gender audit of plans, policies and programmes of various Ministries with pro-women allocations should be conducted for evaluation of the progress.
- b) Segregation of provisions for women Segregate the provisions for women in the composite programmes under education, health system, economic activities etc.

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