

Promoting gender equality through gender budgeting: Case study from Rajasthan

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Abstract

Gender equality is very important for development and it is also good economics. Despite some progress in reducing inequalities among men and women, still widespread inequalities between men and women exists. Gender budgeting has emerged as one of the very useful strategy for promoting the women empowerment and addressing inequalities. In the state of Rajasthan, officially gender budgeting was adopted in 2005-06 after the Chief Minister's Budget Speech. In the same year, gender budget auditing was initiated in 6 departments and later-on scaled up to all 42 departments. An analysis of implementation of Gender Budgeting in Rajasthan shows that though the intentions were good, but implementation was not proper. Gender budgeting though is very important tool for gender mainstreaming however in order to be successful, it need to be properly designed, implemented and monitored. Also, having the leadership, technical expertise and accountability is very important. This will require the commitment from all stakeholders and sustained action to ensure that objective of Gender Equality is achieved.

Keywords: gender equality, gender and development, gender budgeting

Introduction

Gender equality is very important for development and it is also good economics. It also affects other development outcomes in three different ways. It helps in removing the obstacles that hinders women's access to education & economic opportunities which can have wider productive gains. Also, improving the women's status contribute in improving the development of their children. Besides that, equal opportunities for women and men to contribute politically, socially and economically will lead to more representatives institutions and policies which will contribute in more inclusive & equitable development (World Bank, 2012) [14]. Despite some progress in reducing inequalities among men and women, still widespread inequalities between men and women exists (World Bank, 2011) [13].

Working on Gender equality is also important as it is a basic human right. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is adopted by governments from across the world mentions that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (Sida, 2005) [9, 10]. However gender inequality is persisting in most of the countries. The progress achieved in addressing gender inequality, to some extent, and mainstreaming it in policies/ institutions is because of growing women's movements and struggle by advocates of women's right. The UN First World Conference organized in Mexico in 1975 was a landmark event and it followed by declaration of International Women's Decade by UN and launch of Women in Development. The women in development approach contributed in making women more visible and increasing their role in productive work. However this approach was criticised to be western and it also doesn't look into the different needs of the women from south (Sida, 2005) [9, 10]. The criticism of Women in Development approach and work of socialist feminism led to origination of Gender and Development approach in 1980s (cn2collins, 2014) [2]. The Third UN conference on women was organized

in Nairobi and it brought together development practitioners, policy makers, researchers & academicians and during the conference discussions were done on achievements made in previous decade. The deliberations during the conference further helped in shaping the Gender and Development (GAD) approach. GAD approach looks into how social, political and economic roles of both the genders are looked into Gender inequality (cn2collins, 2014) [2]. GAD approach also looked into impact of power relations in the development of women & gender inequality, which contributed in inclusion of concept of empowerment to challenge the existing power relations. Gender budgeting has emerged as one of the very useful strategy for promoting the women empowerment and addressing inequalities. Though several Governments and organizations have adopted it, however, its implementation has remained highly uneven.

In the paper, we have looked into implementation of Gender Budgeting in India, with special focus on its implementation in the State of Rajasthan, as one of the strategies for Gender mainstreaming. I have also suggested some of the strategies for strengthening its implementation. I have used seven factors identified by Mehra and Gupta (2006) [4] in the paper "Gender Mainstreaming: Making It Happen" to analyze the implementation of Gender Budgeting.

Gender Budgeting in India & Rajasthan

Globally gender budgeting has emerged as important tool for making policies and programmes gender responsive. "Gender-sensitive budgets", "gender budgets", and "women's budgets" refer to a variety of processes and tools aimed at facilitating an assessment of the gendered impacts of government budgets. In the evolution of these exercises, the focus has been on auditing government budgets for their impact on women and girls. This has meant that, to date, the term 'women's budget' has gained widest use. Recently, however, these budget exercises have begun using gender as a

category of analysis so the terminology 'gender-sensitive budgets' is increasingly being adopted. It is important to recognize that 'women's budgets' or 'gender-sensitive budgets' are not separate budgets for women, or for men. They are attempts to break down, or disaggregate, the government's mainstream budget according to its impact on women and men, and different groups of women and men, with cognizance being given to the society's underpinning gender relations." (Sharp, 1999).

In India, focus on women was always part of the 5 year plans developed by planning commission, however explicitly gender sensitivity in budget allocation was started with the 7th five year plan (1985-1990) and 27 schemes oriented towards women were monitored by Department of Women and Child, Government of India. The trend further continued in the 8th five year plan (1992-1997), (Menon, 2013) ^[5]. The ninth five year plan (1997-2002), has the women component plan to ensure that at least 30% of budget/ benefit from all development schemes were directed towards the women. Subsequent five year plans gave more focus on meeting women's need while allocating budget for development schemes (Reddy, 2011) ^[8]. In the state of Rajasthan, officially gender budgeting was adopted in 2005-06 after the Chief Minister's Budget Speech. In the same year, gender budget auditing was initiated in 6 departments including Education, Women and Child Development, Agriculture, Health, Registration & Stamps and Social Justice & Empowerment. Further in 2006-07, the exercise was done in 6 more departments namely Rural Development, Industries, Tribal Area Development, Local Self Government, Cooperative, Animal Husbandry, Horticulture and Forest. The recommendations, from the audit, were shared with the concerned Departments for taking necessary steps. In 2009-10, a high level committee was formed under the Chairpersonship of Chief Secretary to monitor and facilitate implementation of gender budgeting. The committee has Principal Secretary Finance, Planning and Women and Child Development members and Commissioner, Women's Empowerment was the Secretary. A Gender cell was set up at Directorate of Women Empowerment as nodal cell to facilitate the process of gender mainstreaming in the state, and to act as a secretariat to the High Level Committee. Besides that gender desks were set up in 42 Departments to function as focal point on gender issues. Also, Gender Budget Statement as part of State Budget was introduced in 2012-13 (DWCD, 2013).

The High Level Committee identified 7 key departments namely Panchayati Raj and Rural Development, Primary Education, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Women and Child Development, Social justice and Empowerment, Medical and Health department to implement Gender Budgeting as a tool for analyzing the impact of actual Government expenditure on women as compared to men. Subsequently, Gender Responsive analysis report pertaining to each of the identified department, corresponding to Budget allocation/expenditure position of previous two financial years were prepared, scrutinized and analyzed by the Gender Cell. The gender budget analysis reports of the identified departments were placed in high level committee meetings. Initially committee met regularly however after 2011, the regularity in terms of the meeting was not adhered. During the meeting of high level committee, Principal Secretaries of the different departments made the presentation on gender

analysis of budget of their respective departments (DWCD, 2013).

In April 2010, the Gender cell on the basis of Gender budget statement of Government of India prepared its own Gender Budget Statement. In the statement, the existing schemes were divided into four categories i.e. A to D. In A category schemes with more than 70% allocation of budget (of total budget) for women were included. In B category, schemes with total allocation of between 70% - 30% were included. While in C category, schemes with total allocation of budget for women between 30% - 10% were included and in D category remaining schemes were included. The same was submitted to Planning & Finance Department in the year 2011 for approval. The state finance department, taking note of the High Level Committee recommendations about introducing Gender Budget Statement, directed the gender cell in July 2011, to carry out the gender analysis of budget of all departments. Finance Department also directed all departments to prepare Gender Budget Statement as per the format shared by Gender cell (DWCD, 2013).

In order to facilitate preparation of Gender budget statement, capacity building of the officials from the concerned department was facilitated.

Analysis of Gender budgeting in Rajasthan

In order to assess the success of Gender Mainstreaming, different frameworks have been developed by the organizations, academicians and researches. In the paper "Evaluating gender mainstreaming in development projects", Waal, M. D., (2006) ^[12], has identified five factors to evaluate gender mainstreaming. These factors are Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact and Sustainability. Further, in the paper, "Gender Mainstreaming: Making It Happen", Mehra and Gupta (2006) ^[4] has identified seven factors which contributes in the success of the gender mainstreaming. These seven factors are Strategic, Relevance, Research & Analysis, Gender expertise and hands on technical assistance, financial resources, Accountability and Leadership. Besides that as per the "Monitoring and Evaluation framework for Gender mainstreaming" developed by Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development, Kenya (2009) ^[6], the key strategies for gender mainstreaming are - develop gender standards, create a roster of gender experts, capacity building, ensure availability of sex & age disaggregated data and build the partnerships. All the three frameworks have its benefits and limitations. However after comparison of all the three frameworks, I found the framework developed by Mehra and Gupta as most useful for analysis of the case study as other frameworks doesn't take into the account the factors like Relevance, Accountability and Leadership, which are very important for the success of Gender Mainstreaming in any organization.

The analysis of Gender budgeting based on the seven factors, identified by Mehra and Gupta (2006) ^[4], are given below-

1. Strategic – for success of gender mainstreaming, it is important to be strategic in all process. Gender budgeting and preparation of gender budget statement was a strategic activity as budget allocation reflect the priority of Government and respective departments. It is also very important for addressing women's issues in programmes. However it was not strategically implemented, instead of trying to cover to all development schemes, initially some

schemes, which are most relevant to women, should have been selected & it should have been scaled up in phased manner. It would have also ensured the proper use of available limited resources and would be easier to monitor its implementation.

2. Relevance – Gender budgeting is overall very relevant for the state as women in the state lags behind on most of the socio-economic indicators. However some of the departments like housing, agriculture didn't considered it relevant to their departments.
3. Research and analysis – Before undertaking the gender budgeting, sufficient data were available at global and national level to show the benefit of gender budgeting. However analysis should have been undertaken to prioritize the department and schemes for gender budgeting instead of covering all the schemes. Also there is lack of gender disaggregated data for most of the programme hence it was difficult to analyse its impact and progress over the period, in terms of benefit to the women.
4. Gender expertise and hands on technical assistance – Lot of technical support were provided by the external agencies like UNFPA and UN Women. Also reputed academic institutes were roped-in to provide technical support. However most of this technical support was limited to developing policies/ guidelines & capacity building and there was lack of hands on support to the different departments.
5. Financial resources – No separate financial allocation for facilitating gender budgeting was made. The financial support for capacity building and technical support were provided by the external organizations like UNFPA & UN Women. Lack of financial allocation also shows the Senior Officials were not very interested in it.
6. Accountability – Accountability is key to successful implementation of gender mainstreaming. Outcomes and results need to be regularly monitored & assessed. However except for the gender cell, which is responsible for the implementation of the initiative, there was lack of accountability. Different departments considered it merely as an exercise to fill the format. There was also lack of gender specific indicators and availability of quality data which further hampered monitoring of the progress.
7. Leadership – Leadership is vital for changing the usual way of working in the organization and implementing gender mainstreaming. Further it is also required for mobilizing resources. Initially though High Level Committee took interest in the initiative but later on the committee also doesn't provided the required leadership. Besides that there was lack of leadership within concerned departments which hampered its implementation.

The analysis highlights though intentions were good, but implementation was not proper. The efforts were spread-out too thin and too many things were tried out at the same time. Sufficient resources were also not allocated and leadership in different departments were not fully supportive of the idea of Gender Budgeting. Hence, the initiative doesn't achieve the desired results.

Conclusion

Gender equality is a basic human right and ever several decades of struggle, we are no way near to it. However there has been significant improvement over the period. Gender as

an issue in development has come long way from initial women in development approach to Gender and Development approach. The focus on women empowerment and gender mainstreaming highlights improved understanding of impact of power dynamics and commitment to include gender in all policies & programmes. However there is need to continuously evaluate that whether these approaches are able to contribute in the betterment of the lives of needy and vulnerable women or not.

The case study, analyzed in the paper, shows that gender budgeting though is very important tool for gender mainstreaming however in order to be successful, it need to be properly designed, implemented and monitored. Also having the leadership, technical expertise and accountability is very important. Besides that, it needs to be ensured that the vulnerable women, who are marginalized & need it most, should not be left behind. This will require the commitment from all stakeholders and sustained action to ensure that objective of Gender Equality is achieved.

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