

Women's Empowerment Through Gender Budgeting – A Review In Pakistani Context

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Abstract

Budget is basically an itemized summary of estimated or intended expenditures for a given period along with proposals for financing them. Unfortunately in Pakistan due to lack of sustainable approach in policy makers every budget failed to achieve its goals. Though after the introduction of term 'gender' and 'equality' thoughts and plan of actions changed but one factor is usually neglected that equity and social justice doesn't mean equal distribution of resources but distribution of resources according to the need and priorities of men and women.

Pakistan is signatory of many international conventions and according to them it is the responsibility of the government to formulate policies and budget according to gender role and responsibility the needs of both men and women. Pakistani government has started many projects and programs to fill the gender gap. Gender budgeting related initiatives are part of this strategy. This paper reviews the efforts carried out in Pakistan and their success and future implications.

تلخیص المقالہ

بنیادی طور پر بجٹ ان شقوں کا خلاصہ ہے جو مقررہ مدت کے لیے اخراجات کا حساب اور تخمینہ لگاتے ہوئے مالی اعانت کی تجویز دیتا ہے۔ بد قسمتی سے پاکستان میں جاری رہنے والی پالیسی سازی کی اپروچ کے فقدان کی بناء پر بجٹ اپنے مقاصد حاصل کرنے میں ناکام رہتا ہے حالانکہ "جینڈر اور مساوات" کی اصطلاح کے متعارف ہونے کے بعد نظریات اور کام کے طریقے بدلے ہیں لیکن پھر بھی ایک عنصر نظر انداز ہوتا ہے کہ برابری سے یہ ہرگز مراد نہیں کہ برابری کی بنیاد پر وسائل کی تقسیم کی جائے بلکہ وسائل کی تقسیم مرد و خواتین کی ضروریات اور اہمیت کے اعتبار سے ہو۔ پاکستان نے پیشتر عالمی معاہدوں پر دستخط کیے ہیں جن کے مطابق یہ حکومت کی ذمہ داری ہے کہ وہ ایسی پالیسیاں اور بجٹ بلائے جو صنفی کردار اور اہمیت کے مطابق ہوں۔ حکومت پاکستان نے کئی ایسے پروجیکٹ اور پروگرام شروع کیے ہیں تاکہ صنفی فرق کو ختم کم کیا جاسکے۔ یہ مقالہ ان کاوشوں کا جو پاکستان میں اختیار کی گئیں اور ان کی کامیابیوں اور مستقبل کے کاموں کا جائزہ پیش کرتا ہے۔

From the time when the word gender was coined it has been often misunderstood as something separate or extra for women only. However gradually its understanding become clear and it was defined by development specialists as socially constructed roles,

behaviour, attitudes, expectation, from male ad female in a given society. (Mcdowell L. & Sharp, 1999) United Nations (UN) on the part of world governments is working for gender equality and social justice and it is reflected in its different actions. Millennium Development Goals (MDG), Convention on Elimination of All kinds of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Plan of Action reflects the commitment of gender equality. Different governments of the world especially of developing countries agree to these commitments but their implementation and results are not encouraging in some parts. One big reason of that is documents are signed, plans are made, policies are formulated but at the time of budget allocation priorities change.

“If there is one indicator of a government’s – or any other institution’s – commitment to social justice, it is its allocation of budgetary resources for women. Often governments and institutions are very quick to tick on the checklist that they have signed and ratified international instruments and put policies and laws in place that promote social justice for women, but they seldom match this with the necessary budgetary allocations that actually translate the signature into transformation of women’s lives.”

(Adebanjo Dorothy:2009)

Gender discourse raises a question that why women are primary focus of every policy and plan? The reason is simple, that around the globe women are vulnerable group facing more exploitation. According to statistics six out of ten of the world’s poorest people are women who must, as the primary family caretakers and producers of food, shoulder the burden of tilling land, grinding grain, carrying water and cooking. Yet some 75 percent of the world’s women cannot get bank loans because they have unpaid or insecure jobs and are not entitled to property ownership. This is one reason why women comprise more than 50 percent of the world’s population but own only one percent of the world's wealth. United Nations Development Program (UNDP) states that equality between men and women is more than a matter of social justice - it’s a fundamental human right. But gender equality also makes good economic sense. When women have equal access to education, and go on to participate fully in business and economic decision-making, they are a key driving force against poverty. Women with equal rights are better educated, healthier, and have greater access to land, jobs and financial resources. Their increased earning power in turn raises household incomes. By enhancing women’s control over decision-making in the household, gender equality also translates into better prospects and greater well-being of children, reducing poverty of future generations. Gender equality and women’s empowerment is central to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Yet, while there are some positive trends in gender equality, there are

still many areas of concern. Girls account for the majority of children not attending school; almost two-thirds of women in the developing world work in the informal sector or as unpaid workers in the home. Despite greater parliamentary participation, women are still out numbered four-to-one in legislatures around the world (UNDP Gender and Poverty).

To cater with all these problems a key strategy was introduced known as gender mainstreaming. And for gender mainstreaming a key factor or contributor is gender sensitive budget. Gender budgeting is defined in many ways “Gender-responsive budgeting aims to raise awareness of the gendered impacts of budgets and to make governments accountable for ensuring their budgets promote the achievement of gender equality and women rights, especially among the poor (Evaluation Report, UNIFEM’s work on Gender –Responsive Budgeting: Over view, 2010).

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is government planning, programming and budgeting that contributes to the advancement of gender equality and the fulfillment of women's rights. It entails identifying and reflecting needed interventions to address gender gaps in sector and local government policies, plans and budgets. GRB also aims to analyze the gender-differentiated impact of revenue-raising policies and the allocation of domestic resources and Official Development Assistance. “Gender budget initiatives analyze how governments raise and spend public money, with the aim of securing gender equality in decision-making about public resource allocation; and gender equality in the distribution of the impact of government budgets, both in their benefits and in their burdens. The impact of government budgets on the most disadvantaged groups of women is a focus of special attention” (Anjali ,Goyal, 2009).

The above definitions underline the fact that gender budgeting is now seen as a socio-economic tool for ensuring gender equity in the development process and lays a strong emphasis on engendering public expenditure and policy. Anjali (2009) identifies critical activities constituting the gender budgeting exercise including gap between policy and gender sensitive program formulation and implementation, mainstreaming gender concerns in public expenditure and policy and gender audit of public expenditure, program implementation and policies.

Gender Budget Initiatives or Gender Responsive Budgets are tools and processes designed to facilitate a gender analysis in the formulation of government budgets and the allocation of resources. Gender 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 impacts on women and men. The way in which national budgets are usually formulated ignores the different socially determined roles, responsibilities and capabilities of men and women. Budgets formed from a gender-neutral perspective ignore

the different impacts on men and women because their roles, responsibilities and capacities in any society are never the same. These differences are generally structured in a way that leaves women at a disadvantage in society by creating inequality gaps. Therefore, they are an important tool for analyzing the gap between expressed commitments by governments and the decision-making processes involved in how governments raise and spend money. Gender responsive budgets can contribute to narrowing such gaps. Progress towards gender equality is slow, and this is in part due to the failure to attach money to policy commitments. Overall research shows that not enough attention is given to the impact of allocated resources and this serves to perpetuate gender biases, although budgets offer the potential to transform gender inequalities. Good policy requires understanding both the impact of policy and how it might be better designed to achieve outcomes which meet the needs of women, men, and girls and boys as well as different groups of women, men and children. There is no single approach or model of a gender sensitive budget exercise. Australia was the first country to develop a gender sensitive budget with the Federal Government publishing in 1984. In South Africa, parliamentarians together with nongovernmental organizations, started working on gender sensitive analysis of budgets in 1995. The South African Government later followed in 1997 by doing a gender-sensitive budget analysis (Leadbetter).

Gender budgeting is a new concept in Pakistan. The process of gender mainstreaming was started once Pakistan agreed to International commitments regarding gender equality and social justice. The constitution of Pakistan embrace gender equality.¹ Various International, National and civil society organizations are putting in serious efforts towards gender mainstreaming at different levels in Pakistan. Pakistan is signatory to International commitments such as CEDAW, MDG and Beijing Plan of Action which demand for gender equality and social justice. With the support of International organizations the Government of Pakistan has committed to include gender component in all development plans and policies and this is being reflected in some main policy documents such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), Mid Term Budget Framework (MTBF) and Gender Reform Action Plane (GRAP) (Gender Responsive Budgeting in Pakistan, 2008). To achieve the objectives set in these plans and programs, it is necessary to allocate resources keeping in view the needs of men, women, children, youth, old age and people with functional limitations. Budget is the document which if prepared with proper allocation of resources, would facilitate in gender mainstreaming process. In this regard the first project in Pakistan with the support of UNDP was started in 2005-2007, titled Gender Responsive Budgeting Initiative (GRBI). GRBI was initiated in 2005 and according to the report it has created a favorable environment for the future inclusion of gender responsive budgeting by raising awareness about gender budgeting and initiating a process to integrate it in the country's plan and polices. The project activities included awareness rising at the federal, provincial and district levels of the government. Major achievements were capacity building of relevant departments in

gender budgeting and for the first time in Pakistan Time use survey was initiated (Gender Responsive Budgeting in Pakistan, 2008). Alongside with these activities another favorable document is published by Statistics Department i.e. in 2009 a Compendium on Gender Statistics in Pakistan, is published with sex disaggregated data on population, education, health, family planning, employment, time use pattern and, public representation.(Compendium on Gender Statistics in Pakistan, 2009). Another important document is Gender analysis of 2008-9 budget which shows that expenditures for women has been increased. According to the report the increase in women targeted expenditure is a positive move that allows us to know the amount government allocates to the female segment of society rather than allocating money in a gender blind manner. Although the share of female targeted allocations is higher than male targeted allocation, the given level of gender inequality indicates that it needs to be raised further. Moreover, there should be greater emphasis on pro-women expenditures such as expenditures on day-care centres and population welfare to promote women's participation in paid activities that largely promotes empowerment of females in the long-run. This increase is largely attributed to higher gender targeted expenditure on education. (Budget Analysis)

Sindh budget 2008-09 shows a growth of 20 percent in female-specific expenditures in Sindh as opposed to 6.1 percent in male-specific expenditures. In contrast to federal and other provincial governments, male-specific expenditures are almost equal to female-specific expenditure, (Rs 2.5 billion or 1.7 percent of the services related expenditures during 2007-08). Although, the share of male-specific expenditures is the same during both years, the share of female-specific expenditures increased from 1.7 percent in 2007-08 to 1.9 percent in 2008-09. In NWFP, budget 2008-09 shows more than doubled female specific expenditures while there was a 23 percent decline in male-specific expenditures in 2008-09 as compared to 2007-08. As a result, the share of female-specific expenditure has gone up by 5.6 in 2008-09 compared to only 3.3 percent in 2007-08 while the share of male-specific expenditures declined from 2.5 percent to 1.6 percent of the services related expenditures. The important message emerging from the analysis is that the Government of Baluchistan has a greater focus on the male segment of society than the female segment. The allocation for males in 2008-09 is greater than for females, and the mainstream expenditures also positively affect males, creating a double disadvantage to females in Baluchistan. At the federal level, Ministry of Women Development (MoWD), Health and Education are the main sources of gender specific expenditures, while Ministry of Population Welfare is the main ministry for pro-women expenditures. Three trends emerge from the statistics: (1) there is a substantial growth in gender targeted expenditures of HEC, Health and Education divisions in 2007-08 and 2008-09 as compared to 2004-05; (2) massive decline in expenditure of MoWD in 2007-08 and 2008-09 as compared to 2004-05; and (3) Benazir Income Support Programme is the main source of growth in gender targeted expenditures in 2008-09 as compared to 2004-05 and 2007-08. The main reason for the decline in gender specific expenditures of

MoWD is the completion of number of women specific programme in 2004-05 and lack of new mega initiatives.(Analysis of the Budget through a Gender Lens 2008-2009, p.21) At the provinces level, the increase in female and male-specific expenditures in Punjab is a positive move that allow us to know the amount that the government is allocating for female and male segments of society rather than putting all money in a gender blind manner. Although the share of female targeted allocations is higher than male targeted allocation, given the level of gender inequality, it needs to be raised further. Moreover, there should be greater emphasis on pro-women expenditures like expenditures on daycare centers and population welfare to promote female participation in paid activities that largely promote their empowerment in the long-run. Stagnation in targeted gender-based expenditures in Sindh indicates that the Government of Sindh is less concerned about the female segment of the society rather more focused towards increasing the share of general budget expenditures assuming that these expenditures remain gender neutral. However the reality is that these expenditures remain gender blind. Following the example of NWFP, where gender targeted expenditures help to improve socioeconomic indicators like female enrolment, the Government of Sindh needs to focus more on gender targeted expenditures. Moreover, these gender targeted expenditures should be complemented with pro-women expenditures to promote greater gender equality and empowerment in the province. Historically, NWFP has the highest share of female targeted expenditures and effective targeting with other factors helped to improve the socio-economic indicators in NWFP. For instance, the Pakistan Living Standard Measurement Survey (PSLMS) 2006-07 shows that NWFP is better than Sindh and Baluchistan with respect to gross enrolment rates and immunization of children despite the resistance from a specific group against female education. In the context of Pakistan, both gender targeted and pro-women expenditures either contribute to greater gender equality or highlight the causes of gender differences. For instance, female and male targeted expenditures on education clearly highlight the policy focus of the government and show whether these are equitable or not and also whether these expenditures reduce or increase gender equality in education outputs and outcomes. The increase in women targeted expenditure is a positive move in the budget that would affect marginalized segments of the society, largely women, positively (Analysis of the Budget through a Gender Lens 2008-2009.p.27-30).

This analysis also needs to include that only increase of budget for women is not useful until and unless we should also analyze in health education and employment sector where disparities exist? What are the reason and then suggest recommendation for plans and policies. For instance first we need sex disaggregate data which is now available with the government. After that we need to identify causes of gender disparities in different sector to know why women or men are invisible in some areas or unequally burdened. This gender analysis would suggest solutions which may help us in achieving our targets. If we would set unachievable targets then we will not be able to get required results.

A part from all these activities and strategies, the success rate is very slow. Global Gender Report 2007 shows that in gender assessment, Pakistan's number is 126 out of 128 countries (Global Gender Gap Report, 2007). It states that in education, economic and health sub indexes India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are hapless but in political empowerment they show supportive figures. A part from other issues mentioned by development reports and analysts, a major one is corruption. Usually budgets are prepared, policies and plan of actions are formulated and funds are allocated but lack of monitoring and evaluation systems leads to misuse of these funds which shackle the development process. Many projects failed because of ineffective procedures of need identification and misunderstanding their problems and issues. It indicates the situation of imbalance in gender relations as well as Government's unskillfulness towards gender issues. If we review the budget 2008-2009 that in education sector, Federal Government reserved more funds for men than women. In 2007-2008 male specific expenditures are almost 5% of the education budget and female specific are 3 percent. In 2008-2009 share of both male female education expenditures had increased to 6 percent and 3.6 percent respectively (Analysis of the Budget through a Gender Lens 2008-2009). Latest UNESCO figures confirm that Pakistan's net enrolment ratio at 73 percent for boys and 57 percent for girls as well as gender gap in education increased since 1972 from 19 percent to 25 percent (State of Human Right in 2008). However, in health sector situation is totally different, Federal Government health budget focuses either women and girls or both male and female. There is no specific fund for males or specific health programmes for them, though it's a reality that men are suffering from several diseases and infection especially sexually transmitted diseases and infections. In 2008-2009, share of female specific spending was increased to 35.6 percent (Analysis of the Budget through a Gender Lens 2008-2009). The need is not to allocate all resources either to males or females but a gender analysis of the current situation and the formulating it on equitable bases. With all these numbers one factor remains questionable that if Government is spending expenditures on women's health than why the conditions of women's health is so terrible? Why we are unable to fulfill the basic needs of health, education and reduce poverty? All these questions needs some answers. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) to enhance social and economical development, National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women recommending review of laws and regulation and encourage research on gender issues building a link between Government and NGO's, The National Plan of Action For Women to facilitate women's participation in all spheres of life, The Medium Term Budgetary Framework (MTBF) to make long term future plans and Medium Term Development Framework (MTDF) for the promotion of gender equality and mainstreaming gender in to policies and development plans and the most important Gender Reform Action Plans (GRAPs) suggesting policy, institutional and budgetary reforms at the federal, provincial and local levels across all sectors (Gender Budget Statement 2008-09). All these programs and

plans show that Government is doing really hard efforts to mainstream gender but then again a question spring up! Where is the outcome?

End Note

1. Article 25 of the constitution states” All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law and there should be no discrimination on the bases of sex alone”.

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