



GENDER BUDGETING AND AGRICULTURE POLICY – AN ANALYSIS IN GUJARAT (2007-2017)

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ABSTRACT

The budget as a policy statement indicates Government's duty and interest in welfare of its people. Gender responsive budget (GRB) is an important tool for realizing constitutional obligations, national and international commitments to Gender equality. Growing evidence reveals that better status of women results in reduced poverty, better education, health and population control. GRB helps in solidifying National Human Development Index and National Goals of gender equality.

The paper is an excerpt from a research on Gender Budgeting and Public Policy – An analysis in Gujarat, India (2007 to 2017). It is particularly confined to the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, Gujarat, India. The research broadly examined the opportunities and challenges of GRB for future policy formulation and execution. Gujarat has an agricultural economy and 65% women work in agriculture as cultivators and labourers. Policy initiatives aims at visibility of women farmers, their entitlement to land, skill development, trainings, access to credit and markets. Yet, "feminisation of agriculture" is taking place at a fast pace. Gujarat adopted GRB in 2006-2007 and mechanisms and machinery for GRB execution and monitoring are in place. The feminization of agriculture does not match with any increase in budget allocation for women farmers. Irrespective of which Government is in power, the gender agenda remains consistently underfunded. Implementation of inclusive policies are constrained by lack of political will, coordination mechanisms, clarity on gender issues, limited engagement with macro-economic policies and continued socio-cultural, economic and political discrimination against women. A paradigm shift in GRB is needed.

KEYWORDS: *Feminization of Agriculture, Gender Responsive Budgeting, Inclusive Policies, Political Will.*

INTRODUCTION

Amartya Sen, the Nobel Prize winner in Economic Sciences, set of a debate in Development economics when he claimed that millions of women were "missing" in China and India, referring to the number of females who died as a result of foeticide and unequal access to household resources, nutrition, and health care. Gender inequality is one of the oldest and most pervasive forms of inequality in the world. It denies women their voices, devalues their work and makes women's position unequal



to men's, from the household to the national and global levels (Oxfam International, 2017)

One of the most important developments in twentieth century was the entry of women into economic and political activities previously undertaken almost entirely by men. Although many countries are making strides in eliminating gender disparities, women still lag men in access to education, health, paid employment opportunities, and political participation. Gender disparities are found throughout the world, but they are particularly pronounced in parts of the developing world. Most developed countries have eliminated gender disparities in education and health, even while women's roles are still circumscribed in economic and political life. In most developing countries, gender disparities in education and health have narrowed. However, there has been less success in increasing women's role in economic activities, in the management and ownership of productive assets, and in political participation.

The World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Report, 2016 shows that many countries have made significant progress in closing the gender gaps, however, no country has eliminated gender inequality entirely. The economic gender gap in some countries reverted back to where it stood in 2008 after a peak in 2013. Given this reverse trend, at the current rate of change, the gap between women and men on economic participation will not be closed for another 170 years. Many working women remain in occupations that are more likely to consist of informal work arrangements (ILO 2016). In OECD countries, despite major achievements in gender parity in education, the women's representation is still low in key growth enhancing fields of education such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (OECD 2014). A study of 173 countries shows that almost 90 percent or 155 countries have at least one legal provision impeding women's full participation in economic opportunities (World Bank, 2016)

GENDER BUDGETING – CONCEPT AND RATIONALE

The budget is not just an annual statement of receipts and expenditure but a political statement of the priorities set by the Government in resource allocation. Thus if addressing gender needs is the priority of the government then it can be best reflected through its budgets. This however, does not mean having separate budgets for men and women, but analysis and construction of general budgets from a gender perspective. A budget is a primary instrument for fiscal management. It is assumed that the fiscal policy is gender neutral (but) it is not, since it impacts men and women differently. The presence of gender differences and inequalities in a country means that a gender-blind budget is in practice which tends to impact men and women, boys and girls differentially. Depending on how the Budget and public services it finances are structured, the outcomes for men and women can be unequal.

As budgets are not unlimited, within the scarce resources, there would be a need to reprioritize the current allocations. This could be done by analysis of schemes which do not have the desired impact upto the mark, thus revisiting policies and schemes. Understanding social structures becomes more important, thereby making bottom up planning more desirable and effective. The nature of gender concerns ranges from a focus on addressing the burden of unpaid care economy to redressing female deprivation in education and health. More of the women's work than of men's work is not counted in national economic statistics because a great deal of women's work does not take place in large market oriented formal sector establishments. Instead, it consists of 'subsistence production', 'informal sector employment', and 'domestic' or 'reproductive' work and 'voluntary community work'. In no country have women achieved economic equality with men, and women are still more likely than men to live in poverty (Oxfam international, 2017).

Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment- International Commitments

The international community has agreed to a number of global commitments aiming to increase attention, political will and financing for gender equality. The United Nations Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted by United Nations General Assembly, 1979 emphasized the importance of gender equality as a means to strengthen prosperity and as a matter of basic human rights. Since 1995 Beijing Platform of action, the concept of gender mainstreaming defined by UN Economic and Social Council, 1997 was universally adopted. In 2000, the UN member countries adopted eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on gender equality and women empowerment, primary education and maternal health by 2015. The ambitious 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development includes stand-alone Goal 5 on gender equality and women’s empowerment which provide a comprehensive framework and vision to eliminate gender-based inequalities and discrimination. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) endorsed in 2015 provides a framework for financing and implementing SDGs through partnerships and mutual accountability. These global policy frameworks pay special attention to address inequalities, gender-based discrimination and ask for increased focus on women’s rights, gender equality and greater allocation of resources. It also reiterates transparency, equal participation in budgeting process, promoting gender responsive budgeting and its tracking. The agenda categorically state that in order to fulfil the ambitious commitments, the countries must accelerate efforts, have effective and multi-stakeholder partners and allocate required financial resources for poverty alleviation and reducing inequalities which is vital for any Nation’s development.

Gender Budgeting – Origin and Spread

The initiatives on GRB gained importance after Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995 and after the Beijing +5 in 2000. The process of Gender Budgeting was first initiated in Australia in 1984. The Australian approach is the “Three-way Categorization”, it distinguishes between;

- Gender-specific expenditure
- Equal opportunity expenditure for civil servants and
- General expenditure (the rest) considered in terms of its gender impact

Gender budgeting is now widespread. More than 90 countries have tried some variant of gender budgeting although the outcome of the effort varies. Some countries have adopted or modified fiscal policies and programs to ensure that the budget contributes to closing gender gaps. Others have begun a process of collecting, in a systematic manner, information on different needs of women and effects of fiscal policies on men and women and using the information into budget classification and monitoring systems. A few countries have achieved both substantive changes in the fiscal policies and in administration. Some have made a little progress beyond setting-up administrative machineries or conducting training sessions for public officers. The most successful effort encompasses both policy and administrative aspects. A majority of GB efforts have not gone far though. The reasons are lack of commitment of fiscal policy makers and Government bureaucracies, weaknesses in the structures and its implementation (Stotsky, 2016).

The most holistic approach however has been the “Five Step Approach” of South Africa which includes;

- Analyze the situation of women, men, girls and boys
- Assess the gender-responsiveness of policies
- Assess budget allocations
- Monitor spending and service delivery
- Assess the outcomes

Conceptual Framework: Budget Cycle, Approaches and Tools

The gender equality principles are incorporated into all stages of budget making process. The gender objectives are integrated into programs and budgets on basis of evidence collected on existing gaps using gender analysis or by estimating resources required to implement them. Such analysis assists in allocating funds in realistic and fair manner. The role of Ministry of finance is critical in introducing GRB guidelines and regulations to all departments. GRB emphasizes consultations with civil society such as budget hearings. The budget approval stage is an opportunity for final adjustments to ensure gender responsiveness in budget proposals just before engaging with members of parliaments and budget committees. The gender ministries, advocates and civil society often lobby with politicians to influence budgetary decisions. The gender lens is integrated into budget execution in all processes of examining fund allocation and its impacts. The Public Expenditure Tracking Survey is important tool to examine utilization of funds as per budget plan and its impact on social, economic and gender specific outcomes. Gender-Disaggregated Public expenditure incidence analysis examines the benefits of public services to men and women. Finally, at budget evaluation and audit stage, the gender perspectives is integrated into various accountability tools such as citizen's report cards. The gender audit is a tool to strengthen Government's accountability in addressing gender inequalities.

GRB goes hand-in-hand with public financial reforms and is not a separate process. It is to be perceived as significant 'add-on' for better information and equitable budgeting because it emphasize on sex-disaggregated data in all budget and reporting documents, formulation of gender indicators to capture implications of policies on gender equality, strategic performance reports and inclusion civil society especially women's organizations in budget discussions and hearings.

Major Stakeholders in Gender Responsive Budgeting

The major stakeholder in GRB in a country is Ministry of finance. It has important responsibility of introducing specific provisions for gender equality in budget laws, guidelines, resolutions, formats and templates for gender outcomes, give technical guidance, enhance skills and track performance. The Ministry of women empowerment or gender/women affairs is mandated to gather information on existing gender disparities in the Government policies, programs and budgets. It is expected to advocate for efficient inclusion of gender goals in public spending decisions and policies, provide technical support and skill trainings as well monitor gender outcomes. The Ministry is also responsible for percolating down such steps and procedures among the Line ministries and sub-national Government departments at State levels. The civil society especially the women's organizations, movements and media is expected to give evidence, suggest approaches, highlight best practices from elsewhere, provide technical skills, undertake gender audits including advocacy and bring gaps in the fore-front of policy making and also discuss successes to the public

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The budget process in India has undergone financial management and reforms and budget speeches by Finance Ministers recognized Gender responsive budget (GRB). Evidence shows that the gender budgeting deemed important to the Government of India (GOI) but in real sense, it has so far not fulfilled the expectations of gender equality. The building blocks are lack of transparency and accountability. Monitoring techniques and gender reporting systems are in place but the agencies lack capacities to use them.

Gujarat has an agricultural economy. Animal husbandry and dairying also play vital role in rural economy of Gujarat. About 65% women are engaged in agriculture and allied activities as cultivators and labourers. They play significant and multiple roles yet their work are seen as an extension of their domestic work or as subsistent work. Based on the operational land holding information, the women in Gujarat own only 10.3% of land holdings (9% share in area) while the men are owners over 89.7% (91% area). Policy initiatives such as National policy for women 2016 Women farmer's entitlement bill, 2012, National Policy for Farmers, 2007, Nari Gaurav Niti or the Gujarat State Policy for Gender Equity, 2006, (revised) aims at visibility of women farmers, their entitlement to land, skill development and trainings, access to credit and markets. Also, evidence worldwide and sporadic but concerted attempts by the Government and civil society in the State shows that women with access to secure land, formal credit and access to market have greater potential in making investments for increased productivity, improved food security and nutrition. The lack of ownership of land by majority of women does not allow them to formal credit systems and markets. Most farmers including women fall under the small and marginal category having less than 2 hectares of land which act as a deterrent owing to lower net returns. The women generally perform labour-intensive tasks such as seed sowing, weeding, harvesting, picking, hoeing, storage etc, unfortunately most farm machinery either is difficult for women to operate or are not easily accessible. Over the years, feminization of agriculture is increasing at fast pace in the State. It is assumed that Gender responsive budget would make their role visible and recognizable.

METHOD OF THE STUDY

The paper is confined to discussing the GRB in the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare which is mandated to enhance productivity, food security and contribute to Gross Domestic Product of the State. The purpose of the research is to analyze the opportunities and challenges of GRB in future policy formulation and execution. The study was Descriptive-Exploratory in design and relied on the secondary sources. The data is collected from published and unpublished documents, web-sites, reports, budget statements, circulars and newspapers etc.

FINDINGS

Institutional Mechanisms for GRB, Gujarat

In order to translate Gender equity policy commitments into budgetary allocations, the Department for Women and Child Development (WCD), Finance and General Administration and Development (GAD) are the nodal departments to guide and monitor the progress on GRB in the State. A Gender resource centre (GRC) established in March 2004 is promoted by the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Gujarat to provide support for incorporating gender equity and equality in overall development process and plans of the State. It is a Society registered under Societies Registration Act 1860 and Bombay Public Trust Act 1950. GRC recognizes that women's inequality manifests itself in many forms such as gender discrimination in terms of

declining male-female sex ratio, social stereotyping, gender based violence at home, low level of education, health and nutritional status, limited access and control to resources etc. It co-ordinates efforts of different sections of society and the Government to make a noticeable difference to the lives of women and serve as a nodal agency for all gender related initiatives in the State. It attempts to develop and make available the resources at single place to share them across organizations in order to make their efforts in the sector more streamlined, efficient and effective. GRC aims to sensitize and facilitate Government Departments, NGOs, Academic Institutions, International agencies and independent experts in planning, implementing and evaluating gender sensitive programmes, policies, laws and schemes.

While a Gender Budget Statement (GBS, popularly known as Statement 20) was introduced in Union Budget in 2005-06, the Government of Gujarat introduced it in 2014-2015. It is a reporting mechanism used by the Departments to review its programmes from gender perspective and is an important tool for presenting information on allocations for women. The gender budgetary allocations are reflected in two parts- Part A includes schemes with 100% allocation for women and Part B of the Statement includes schemes and programmes with 30% to 99% allocation for women. It is made clear to the concerned officers that the information in the GBS must be checked for accuracy based on the realistic assumptions otherwise it can weaken the gender budgeting exercise. The number of Departments adopting GRB in the State are 20 and the total number of schemes combining both A and B categories are 611 by 2016-2017.

Findings from the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, Gujarat

The total schemes in Department of Agriculture and Co-operation increased from 7 to 34 in 2016-2017 after the GBS was first published in 2014-2015. The percentage of GRB in agriculture shows negligible increase from 0.14 percent to 1.07 percent in last three years even though agriculture is one of the largest occupations for rural Gujarat and 65% women are engaged in it.

In 2014-2015, 97% budget in agriculture was allocated for women specific schemes (Category A) which included animal husbandry related schemes. Only 3% was allocated for skill development and trainings for both men and women farmers including fruit and vegetable preservation trainings exclusively for women. The evidence shows that women do more or equivalent work in agriculture as the men does, yet negligible amount is used in building their capacities.

In 2015-2016, 49% of the Gender responsive budget was allocated for the fisheries sector including development of inland fisheries in both tribal and non-tribal areas, establishment of coastal aquaculture units, navigational aids and other infrastructural facilities and for extension services. 44% budget was allocated for animal husbandry related activities and only 7% was available for agricultural trainings including trainings of women in canning and preservation. In 2016-2017, only 14% of the budget was allocated for women specific schemes which included animal husbandry, dairy development and agriculture research and education centres and 86% budget was allocated for Category B. The major amount of the budget, 37% each was allocated for horticulture development and for soil and water conservation respectively and remaining 26% was meant for fisheries and agricultural university for constructing and face-lifting the training centres. Of this, only 8% was allocated for agriculture extension activities.

Overall, the budget for women specific schemes (Category A) declined from 97% in 2014-2015 to 52% in 2015-2016 and again to only 14% in 2016-2017. There has been an increase in Category B schemes from a meagre 3% in 2014-2015 to 48% in 2015-2016 and 86% in 2016-2017.

The expenditure in 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 shows an increase by Rs. 983 crores in 2014-2015 and Rs. 33862 crores in 2015-2016. A large number of schemes with high expenditure are noted in horticulture development and soil conservation programmes. In the absence of gender segregated data, it is difficult to ascertain the real allocation of resources for women farmers in these two programmes.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Restricted reach of GRB, stagnant or declining allocation even in 2016-17 is not an aberration but seems to be a norm. Irrespective of which Government is in power, the gender agenda remains consistently underfunded. The implementation of inclusive policies has been constrained by factors ranging from lack of political and administrative will and commitment, lack of an integrated approach or coordination mechanisms, lack of clarity and capacities on gender issues, limited engagement with macro-economic policies and continued socio-cultural, economic and political discrimination against girls and women. A paradigm shift in GRB is needed. Attention at time of budget prioritization from “just reporting” to “meaningful planning” is crucial. It would be incorrect to assume that gender equality can be achieved only by earmarking public funds. For gender transformative changes, the Government and other stakeholders need to focus on knowledge through rigorous gender research and analysis, organizational changes, institutional strengthening, meaning-full participation of women, sensitive men and boys, and capacity and skill building. Gender sensitivity requires loud thinking beyond program or project boundaries. A deep understanding of root causes of gender inequality and of structural and systemic barriers, belief in women rights as human rights, political and administrative ‘will’ and commitment by the Government, civil society and other stakeholders certainly would lead to gender sensitive budgets.

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