

The Trend of Gender Budgeting in India

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Abstract: Gender budgeting has both intrinsic and instrumental relevance. It is necessary for the reduction of gender inequalities and for the improvement of social, educational, health and economic indicators of a country. It is apparent that gender-sensitive concerns remain a neglected aspect of India's fiscal policy. But gender budgeting is very relevant and important to ease the path of overall development. Gender budgeting is getting importance day by day as the government of India also is also emphasising on it in order to improve the overall socio economic status of women in the country. Government should give adequate focus and priority on gender budgeting. This paper analyses the different initiatives taken by government at different phases for the empowerment of women and to reduce gender inequality prevailing in our society.

Key words: Development, empowerment, equality, gender budgeting, stakeholders

Gender responsive budgeting or gender analysis of budgets is a very useful tool being used in India to promote gender mainstreaming. Gender budgeting refers to presentation of budgetary data in a manner such that the gender sensitivities of budgetary allocations are clearly highlighted. Gender budgeting includes carrying out an impact analysis of government programmes and its budgetary allocations on the overall socio economic status of women in the country. A special reference by the Union Finance Minister in his budget speech for 2000-01 pertaining to the access of women to national resources marked the dawn of gender sensitive budgeting in India.

Ministry of Women and child Development (MWCD): In 2004-05, MWCD adopted the mission statement of budgeting for gender equity. After that, various initiative Ministry of Women and child Development for gender budgeting. Strategies and mode of activities in order to implement budgeting for gender equity was publicized to the various relevant agencies. Here we can mention some of these:

- a) Quantification of allocation of resources for women in Union/State/Local budgets
- b) Gender audit of policies of governments.
- c) Impact assessment of various schemes
- d) Analyzing programmes and strategies.
- e) Institutionalizing generation and collection of gender disaggregated data.

d) Consultations and capacity building.

Not only that ,guidelines for gender sensitive review of government expenditure and policies have been made for both beneficiary oriented sectors such as rural development, health, labour, drinking water, agriculture etc, and for mainstream sectors that is generally referred as gender neutral such as defence, power, telecom, transport etc.

The Ministry has arranged different workshops and training programmes for circulating the tools of gender budgeting. It has also recommended the review of the aspects like gender based profile of public expenditure, impact analysis, beneficiary needs assessment, participative budgeting and spatial mapping.

Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) had asked the different Ministries of the Government of India to establish gender budgeting cells for different purpose such as for undertaking review of the public expenditure policy, collecting gender disaggregated data, conducting gender based impact analysis, beneficiary needs assessment and beneficiary incidence analysis. These efforts were fruitful because 43 Ministries/Departments have taken initiatives to set up gender budget cells as a nodal agency for all gender responsive budgeting initiatives.

The National Policy for Empowerment of Women, 2001 had considered the importance of introduction of a perspective in the process of budgeting. To consider the issues, a task force was formed in 2001and it made a recommendation. On the basis of its recommendation, a sub group was formed which would suggest about the chalk out plan for introduction of gender budgeting in the government. The sub group recommended the setting up of gender budgeting unit in identified departments as well as formation of Interdepartmental Steering Committee in order to identify the issues for gender budgeting which cut across departments. Actually the initial gender budgeting efforts were confined only to education, health, nutrition, access to resources and public service etc, but the Department of Women and Child made a checklists in 2004 to assist all departments in gender budget exercises and i using these to develop a gender perspective in planning. These checklists include not only the conventional social sector departments as well as different gender neutral departments like transport, power, home etc. The department has also adopted, through a consensus approach, broad framework within the ambit of which the gender budgeting initiatives to be adopted by all stakeholders including central government departments and state government departments, NGOs, researchers and international bodies like United Nations Development Programme. The errand is to establish a harmony between the different activities and works taking place in domain of gender budgeting and gather the information on the subject.

Women's Component Plan (WCP) in Five Year Plans: WCP is first remarkable initiatives, the government took in order to address women related issues and needs on a systematic

basis involving the inputs from major Ministries/departments. WCP tried to ensure that not less than 30 percent of funds or benefits were specified for women under different schemes.

From the various five years plans we get the picture of evolving trends in gender perspectives. The seventh five year plan (1985-90) adopted the concept of monitoring of 27 beneficiary oriented schemes for women by Ministry of Women and Child Development. The task is still continuing and number of schemes is expanding.

The eight five year plan (1992-97) marked for the first time a gender perspective and the necessities of ensuring a definite flow of funds from the general developmental sectors to women. The plan document made an statement that the benefits of development from various sectors should not by pass women and special programmes on women should complement the general development programmes. The late, in turn, should reflect great gender sensitivity.

In October 1996, the planning commission specifically gave instruction the central ministries and departments and the state governments to identify a 'women's component' in the various schemes and programmes with which they are concerned to facilitate achieving the objectives of empowering women during the Ninth plan. On February 19,1999, the National Development Council, one of the highest policy making bodies in India, advocated the empowerment of women and socially disadvantaged groups as agents of socio economic change and development as a most important objective of the ninth five year plan. The most important strategy which was taken for achieving the objective was to identify a 'women's component plan' to ensure that not less than 30 percent of funds and benefits from developmental sectors flow to women. Special vigil advocated on the flow of the specified funds or benefits through an effective mechanism to ensure that the proposed strategy brings forth a holistic approach towards empowering women.

Tenth five year plan (2002-07) also emphasised on gender budgeting in order to establish its gender differential impact and to transform gender commitments into budgetary commitments. It continued the process of dissecting the government budget to establish its gender differential impact and to transform gender commitments into budgetary commitments.

In the eleventh five year plan (2007-12), Women were recognised for the first time as equal citizens as well as agents of economic and social development. The plan document observed, "The approach to gender equity is based on the recognition that interventions in favour of women must be multi-pronged and they must: (1) provide women with basic entitlements, (ii) address the reality of globalisation and its impact on women by prioritising economic empowerment, (iii) ensure an environment free from all forms of violence against women (VAW)- physical, economic, social, psychological etc, (iv) ensure the participation and adequate representation of women at the highest policy levels, particularly in Parliament

and State assemblies, and (v) strengthen existing institutional mechanisms and create new ones for gender main-streaming and effective policy implementation.”

Gender Budgeting in Union Budgets: The finance minister in his budget speech for the financial year 2004-05 highlighted the perceived need for budgetary data to be presented in a manner that highlight the gender sensitiveness of the budgetary allocations. The finance minister observed, “Women’s groups have met me and urged me to consider gender budgeting. This means that the budget data should be presented in a manner that the gender sensitiveness of the budgetary allocations are clearly highlighted. An expert group on Classification System of Government Transactions has submitted its report on July 6, 2004. It has recommended appropriate systems for data collection and representation in the budget. The group has also recommended introduction of periodic benefit-incidence analysis. Government will examine the recommendations, and I hope it will be possible for me to implement some of them in the Budget for 2005-06.”

This has been followed by a more emphatic commitment in the budget speech of 2005-06, wherein the budgetary allocations under 10 demands for grants estimated at Rs 14379 crore were highlighted in a separate statement as a part of the gender budgeting exercise. The 2006-07 budget speech revealed an estimated allocation of Rs 28737 crore for the benefit of women under 24 demands for grants in Ministries and Departments.

For the success of gender budgeting gender outcome assessment and evaluation is the most necessary and important thing. For this it is necessary that the gender funds flowing into schemes are properly and correctly assessed. The finance minister has made it mandatory that gender outcomes form a part of the outcome budget prepared by every Ministry/Department as part of the budget documents.

Gender Budgeting at the Level of States: A meeting of the National Development Council was held on June 27-28, 2005 and in that meeting the Prime Minister emphasized upon the need for state governments to join hands in the area of gender budgeting. He observed, “The issue of gender bias is another area which needs focused attention. In the union budget for 2005-06, we have made a beginning in gender budgeting by incorporating a separate statement highlighting gender sensitivities of budgetary allocations under 10 Demands for Grants, to be extended to all Central Ministries. But this task will remain incomplete unless all the States join hands in ensuring development justice to women. This is one of the important instruments to tackle the growing violence against women, which begins even before their birth and continues through their entire life span. This is the right forum to pledge our wholehearted and unequivocal support for ensuring a violence free world for our women and girl children.”

The above statement reiterates the importance of extending gender budgeting initiatives to the state governments. Actually all important schemes of the central government is

collaborated with state governments and essential for effective implementation of any projects. So exercise in gender budgeting is incomplete without state government initiatives. States would also have to set up gender budget cells in key departments.

This is also true that state governments collectively spend a higher amount of women related expenditure than central government.

In spite of these promises and commitments and focuses on women's development and so called empowerment, the current status of women continues to be quite dismal in terms of important human development parameters like health, nutrition, literacy, educational attainments, skill levels, occupational status etc. There are a number of gender specific barriers which prevent women for gaining access to their rightful share in the flow of public goods and services. Unless the felt needs of women are incorporated and mainstreamed in the planning and development process it is apprehended that the fruits of economic growth are likely to completely bypass a significant section of the country's population which does not augur well for the future growth of the economy. This calls for a focused priority the strengthening and universalisation of gender budgeting in all its aspects.

Conclusion: India is now a first growing economy in the world. But it is also true that there still exists huge gender inequalities. Basically the women from marginalised, weaker and backward section are the worst sufferer. As a result women suffer a lot from socio-economic oppression which is the main barrier in obtaining overall development in our country. So, central and state governments have to play crucial role to promote gender equality. Various ministries and departments of the Union and State governments have promoted specific gender budgeting cells but the functional limitations of human resources and the limited budgetary scope has restricted the overall impact of gender budgeting in India. Presently only about five percent of the total Union budget is spent for women-centric activities. So ,a comprehensive and holistic approach is necessary for mainstreaming gender budgeting in India.

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