

Moving forward with gender-responsive budget call circular and gender budget statement in Pakistan

Introduction

Gender responsive budgeting (GRB) aims to mainstream the gender dimension into all stages of the budget cycle. The approach involves analysis of the differential impacts of public expenditure as well as revenue policy on women and girls, and men and boys, respectively. In addition to the impact analysis, gender-responsive budgeting makes proposals for a reprioritization of expenditures and revenues which takes into account the different needs and priorities of women and men, girls and boys.

Pakistan is currently moving towards a medium-term budget framework (MTBF) at federal level and in the province of Punjab. MTBF is a form of budgeting that links budgets with policies. The MTBF approach places a lot of emphasis on the outcomes or impact of government policies and budget. Outcomes and impact are also at the heart of GRB work because the aim of GRB is to make a real difference in the lives of Pakistan's women and men, girls and boys. GRB thus fits in well with MTBF.

The Gender Responsive Budgeting Initiative (GRBI) of the Government of Pakistan was initiated in 2005 with the support of UNDP and its cost sharing donors namely, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Royal Norwegian Embassy, to assist in making the country's budgets more gender-responsive. The GRBI is working on an incremental basis, so for the first years it has focused on the federal budget and the budget of Punjab, and on three sectors – Education, Health and Population Welfare.

Already in its first two years, GRBI has made important gains in showing how budget approaches and instruments can be made more gender-responsive. This pamphlet describes what has been done in respect of the budget call circulars at federal level and in Punjab, and in terms of a gender budget statement for Punjab.

What are budget call circulars?

Budget call circulars are the official notices that are issued by the Ministry of Finance or Finance Department near the beginning of each budget cycle – usually in November of each year. The purpose of the circular is to instruct other government ministries and departments how they must submit their demands for budgets for the coming year. The officials within the ministries and departments then use this format to draw up their budget submissions. These submissions are subsequently inspected by, and negotiated with, the Ministry of Finance or Finance Department before going to Cabinet. With traditional budgeting, submissions consist mainly of tables of financial numbers. When countries move towards a system such as the MTBF, the submissions include more narrative, as well as numbers showing delivery performance.

Gender responsive amendments in the budget call circular

One way that the circulars can be improved from a gender perspective is to require that all relevant performance indicators be sex-disaggregated, and that gender-related

indicators be included wherever relevant. In Pakistan, the federal and Punjab governments have introduced this requirement, and also asked ministries and departments to write about gender when discussing their missions, visions, goals and activities.

At the federal level, a range of such changes were introduced for 2007/08 (amended call circular issued in December 2006). This new budget call circular will be used for 2007/08 by the three pilot GRB ministries – Education, Health and Population Welfare- as well as by 12 other ministries that have so far been included under the incremental MTBF reform.

Extracts from 2007/08 federal budget call circular

Ministerial policy objectives

Indicate gender-related objectives in the Ministry's own policy as well as objectives relevant to the sector from general GoP policies.

Key output indicators

Indicate the required disaggregations, such as sex/gender and age group for services delivered to individuals.

Input indicators

Indicate the relevant disaggregations. In particular, indicate the current gender/sex breakdown of both qualified and unqualified staff.

Mission statement and functions of the Ministry

Specify where and how functions contribute to the achievement of gender equity.

Objectives statement of the Ministry

Disaggregate targets and performances measures where appropriate. In particular, indicate sex/gender disaggregation wherever possible. Include specific performance measures related to gender equity.

Key output indicators in the medium term

Disaggregate key output indicators wherever relevant. In particular, disaggregate by sex/gender wherever possible. Include specific output indicators related to gender equity.

In Punjab, the first changes were introduced for the 2006/07 budget, with further changes for 2007/08. The amended call circular in Punjab is applicable for all departments as the MTBF is not being introduced incrementally in the province.

Extracts from 2007/08 Punjab budget call circular

Sectoral mission statement

Departments should indicate where their services are meant to provide any particular benefits to men, women, girls or boys within the larger population context.

Three year goals

Where goals refer to individuals, Departments should include gender-related goals, e.g. moving towards gender-parity in school enrolment. Wherever possible, quantified gender-disaggregated indicators may also be included.

Strategic issues

The problems and issues, including gender-related matters, expected to hinder the Department in achieving its goals may be listed under this field.

Major initiatives / activities planned

Any initiatives intended to promote gender equity or to address gender issues may be highlighted.

Performance targets

Output and outcome indicators relating to individuals should be gender-disaggregated.

GRBI is providing technical backstopping for the relevant officials of Ministry of Finance, Finance Department, and pilot ministries and departments to assist them in understanding how to respond to the new requirements in the gender-responsive call circulars.

What is a gender budget statement?

A gender budget statement is a gender-specific *accountability document* produced by a government agency (ministry or department) to show what its programmes and budgets are doing in respect of gender. A gender budget statement therefore shows:

- ⌘ the agency's intention to do something in respect of gender equality; and
- ⌘ that the agency is putting money where its mouth is (i.e. budget is following the policy commitment).

In some countries, the gender budget statement is included in the main budget document. In other countries, the gender budget statement is produced as a separate report, but tabled on or around budget day.

The gender budget statement is prepared after government agencies have completed the process of drawing up the budget and allocating resources to different programmes in response to the annual call circular. Preparation of the gender budget statement is therefore not part of the process of prioritisation of policies and budgets. Instead, the gender budget statement is a "post mortem" report. However, reflections of government officials, parliamentarians and civil society on what is contained in the gender budget statement could result in changes in prioritisation in the following budget year.

Because the gender budget statement is a summary, it cannot cover all activities of government. The following two questions help choose what activities the gender budget statement should focus on in a particular sector:

- ⌘ *Where is most money going?* This question is important because the GRB approach is aimed at mainstreaming gender i.e. at ensuring that gender is considered in the main policies and spending of government.
- ⌘ *Which programmes are most important for gender equality?* This question is useful because sometimes there is an activity which costs relatively little but which can make a big difference for gender equality.

Gender budget statement - Punjab

In 2006, the GRBI commissioned the drafting of pilot gender budget statements for the for the Education, Health and Population Welfare sectors in Punjab. This was done after a series of workshops which explored what gender budget statements should look like in Pakistan and after development of a handbook for government officials on how to do the task. The Finance Department of Government of Punjab has released the gender budget statement (2006-07) covering the sectors of Education, Health and Population Welfare. Each of the departmental statements covered between four and six programmes.

Format of Punjab's gender budget statement

- ✍ Programme name
- ✍ Sub-programme name (where relevant)
- ✍ Gender issues
- ✍ Planned activities
- ✍ Budget for previous and current financial year
- ✍ Inputs (including targets and actual progress on ground)
- ✍ Outputs (including targets and actual progress on ground)
- ✍ Overall achievements

Way Forward

A government that has a call circular that addresses gender issues and that produces gender budget statements will facilitate participation in budget discussions by parliament and civil society. It will do this, among others, by addressing the common complaint from people interested in women's empowerment that they cannot 'see' gender in the budget because of the format in which it is presented. Because the budget information produced as a result of the gender-aware call circulars and gender budget statements will be more explicit as to what government is planning to do in respect of gender issues, the new information provided will make analysis, discussion and advocacy easier.

In addition, in responding to call circulars and in drawing up gender budget statements, officials may discover some inadequacies in available gender-related statistics. This can stimulate them to improve their information systems so that they produce better information in the future. Over time, as this information becomes publicly available, evidence-based analysis, discussion and advocacy will be further facilitated.