

Cities, Gender Budgeting and Civic Governance

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The Budget is an important tool in the hands of the state for affirmative action for improvement of gender relations through reduction of gender gap in the development process. It can help to reduce economic inequalities, between men and women as well as between the rich and the poor [NCAS, 2003]. Hence, the budgetary policies need to keep into considerations the gender dynamics operating in the economy and in the civil society.[Paper presented at the National Conference of Mayors on Urban Poverty Alleviation organized by the National Resource Centre for Urban Poverty, Regional Centre for Urban Environmental Studies of All India Institute of local Self Government, Mumbai.]

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Elected women representatives (EWRs) in urban self government bodies have made their presence felt after the 74th amendments in the Indian Constitution in 1994. Now, we have 33 percent women in municipal bodies. But when gender audits of municipal budgets, reveal that there has not much shifting of resources towards urban poor women.

The Ninth Five Year Plan onwards provision of women component plan ensures that not less than 30 per cent of development sectors funds and benefits flow to women. Currently, 56 ministries and departments have set up Gender Budget Cell and as per GR of ministry of finance, they are expected to submit gender audit of allocation and actual expenditure on women.

The right to information has proved to be an important tool in the hands of civil society for transparency in public expenditure.

Municipal Budgets

In municipality, the accounts superintendent tables statement for income and expenditure in December. Also he/she gives estimates of income and expenditure for the financial year end and seeks responses from Municipal Commissioner, president of municipality, and the standing committee. The portion for committed fund can't be changed by councillors at the time of final approval. Revision of property tax takes place once in four years.

There are three sources of income for municipal councils/corporations

1. State and Central government's Allocation, State and Centrally sponsored schemes.
2. Revenues obtained through local taxes---water, electricity, road, etc.
3. Funds obtained from the Finance Commissions.

For the past 15 years, gender economists and women's groups are making efforts to answer the following questions:

- How to enable women to direct economy through designing and constructing fiscal policy?
- How to link economic governance to political governance?

- How to enable EWRs to participate in the budget-making efforts?

They have used methods of Participatory Appraisal (PA) and Focus Group discussion (FGD) to identify gender concerns.

Macro-economic Policies and Gender Audit of Municipal Budgets

Trend analysis of allocation to social sector in the pre (before 1991) and post (after 1991) structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) phase has revealed that poor women have suffered the most due to drastic budgetary cuts in PDS and public health, safe public transport and child care facilities, food security, drinking water and sanitation.

Gender sensitive budgets demand re-prioritisation of financial allocations by municipal bodies in favour of

- working women's hostels, crèches, cheap eating facilities, public toilets
- housing- subsidized for single/ deserted/ divorced/ widowed women
- nutrition- strengthening PDS, mid day meals
- health- Abolition of user fees for BPL population, one stop crisis centre in public hospital for women/girls survivors of violence linked with shelter homes
- skill training centres for women and tailor made courses
- safe, efficient and cheap public Transport-bus, train, metro
- water- Safe drinking water in the community centres
- waste Management- Technological upgradation- Occupational health and safety of recycling workers/rag pickers
- proper electrification in the communities
- multipurpose community centres, half way homes for elderly and mentally disturbed women

Method of Revenue Generation

The Government of Maharashtra has sent GR regarding allocation of 5 per cent of total revenues for women and children. Moreover, urban local self government (LSGs) bodies can raise revenues by heavy taxes on tobacco, alcohol, private vehicles and entertainment industry. Portion of fine collected for causing damage to environment (introduction of Green Tax), high speed driving, wrong parking and breaking rules can be used for welfare of women and children.

Surcharge, earmarked charge for specific purpose such as Education Cess-2 per cent of salary, income tax for disaster management has raised revenues for urban LSG. In Maharashtra, transport cess at the time of Bangladesh war in 1971, later on was diverted to EGS kitty.

Urban LSGs should organize discussion on needs identified by EWRs with GOs, NGOs and SHGs. They should be made aware of Socio-economic Profile of the Municipality. The ward officers should ensure scrutiny of needs and perceived problems by impartial experts who can also suggest methods to fulfil needs (labour, land, services). Financial aspects of programmes and projects should be discussed in a transparent manner.

Civil society groups must be allowed to give their opinions on suitable budgetary allocations and generation of revenues from local sources. They can verify/cross check collected data

and results of the surveys/interactive workshops and prepare a vision document. Sub-committees can work out details of different budget heads and it must have all stake groups of the ward. Presentation of reports of these sub-committees should be made thro' EWRs to the municipal authorities. Currently women's groups are lobbying for reprioritization of allocation to reflect women's interests. E.g. Financial allocation for implementation of DV act, PCPNDT Act, utilisation of funds earmarked for Swadhar scheme for women in difficult circumstances and working women's hostels in urban centers.

Women's groups have been discussing the micro economics involved in dealing with problems faced by women at ward levels such as drinking water, health centers, garbage-disposal and are moving beyond grievance redressal. Women's groups such as Anandi(Ahmedabad), Alochana (Pune), Stree Mukti Sangathana (Mumbai), National Alliance of Women's Organisations (Bhubaneshwar), Shingamma Srinivasan Foundation (Bangalore), Action India (Delhi) are organizing workshops for awareness about technicalities of budget, building knowledge about programmes, schemes, projects under different departments, gathering procedural information about critical issues/felt needs, skills of proposal writing. Stack groups in support of EWRs are Self Help Groups, gender sensitive administrators, corporators /councilors, individuals within political parties, NGOs and Women in the communities. They make efforts to seek allocation under appropriate budget heads to identify streams of revenue, available revenue and the required expenditure.

Some Unresolved Issues

Decision-makers in the urban LSG bodies need to address the following issues demanding urgent attention:

- How to bridge the gap between notional allocation and actual allocation.
- Accounting, auditing and record keeping of gender disaggregated data and allocation.
- How to achieve physical and performance/ achievement targets.
- Implementation of maternity benefits, Tribal Sub Plan, Scheduled Caste Plan for the urban poor.
- Major departments claiming indivisibilities of allocation of resources.
- Notional allocation projected as real allocation.
- Absence of uniform guidelines and procedures.

Gender Budgeting in Urban LSG Bodies

The process of gender budgeting demands special programmes targeting women based on enumeration of differential impact of expenditures across all sectors and services-gender disaggregated impact on literacy, school drop outs, mortality, morbidity, malnutrition, illnesses, safety and security. Hence, they need to ensure the review of equal opportunity policies and opportunities in the public sector-jobs, school education, wages, health care, skills, technical training, and computer education.

NIPFP has recommended the following classification of financial allocation on schemes and programmes for gender audit as well as gender budgeting.

- Women specific schemes where 100 per cent of the allocation is required to be spent on women, targeted 100 per cent to women by Ministry of women and Child Development (MWCD).
- Pro-women schemes where at least 30 per cent of allocation and benefits flow to

- women. E.g. All anti-poverty programmes.
- Gender Neutral Schemes meant for community as a whole (Employment generation programmes, Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM).
- Residual schemes for disaster management.

The All India Institute of Local Self Government, AIILSG gives details of all schemes under these four categories through its publications, workshops and training programmes. Moreover, it also teaches the elected representatives the efficient ways of programme implementation through budgeting from below [Virmani, 2002].

Budgetary allocation for Protective and Welfare Services

These are the schemes directly benefiting women for crisis management of situations arising out of economic and socio-cultural subordination and dehumanisation of women such as shelter homes, short stay homes, rehabilitation schemes for women survivors of violence, pensions for widows and destitute women.

Budgetary allocation for Social Services Expenditure for capacity building, reduction of domestic drudgery and better quality of life for girls and women

- Education
- Health
- Crèche
- Working women's hostels
- Housing
- Nutrition
- Water supply
- Sanitation-toilets, drainage
- Fuel
- Waste management
- Transport

Budgetary Allocation for Economic Services to Provide Economic Opportunities to Women

- SHGs-credit, loans to self employed women
- Training programmes-Vocational training in Sunrise sectors. e.g. Biotechnology, IT, etc,
- Physical infrastructure-transport, energy
- Urban housing-10 per cent reserved flats/tenements for single women
- Marketing facilities for women entrepreneurs and self employed women- 10 per cent of shops reserved for businesswomen, women vendors/traders in municipal markets, women's *haats /bazars*
- Public Toilets for women without userfees
- Safe and efficient transport for working women and women vendors

Budgetary allocation for Regulatory Services to put in place institutional structures and mechanisms

- State Commission for Women/ Municipal Commission for Women
- Women Development Cell in municipal bodies
- Budgetary allocation and space for ward-wise WDC for prevention of sexual harassment

of women in the organised and unorganised sectors

- Women's cell at the police stations, LSG bodies' offices, municipal hospital and schools
- Awareness generation programmes

State governments must devolve substantive powers, funds, functions and functionaries upon LSG bodies. The central government should strive for simplifications of programme guidelines by central ministries and departments regarding women specific schemes- Swadhar, working women's hostels, maternity benefits for BPL, etc. Moreover, centrally sponsored Schemes must be recast to empower municipal bodies. PRIs must get untied funds to formulate plans according to their needs and priorities. Structures and mechanisms for RTI Act must be put in place to sort out problems concerning utilisation of funds allocated for area development. To avoid urban unrest and guarantee socio-economic justice, at least 100 days of employment at minimum wages must be provided under EGS in all urban centres.

Elected representatives, ward officials and NGOs working in the area should act as facilitators in preparation of the plan for area development and social justice. The UN system has supported allocation of resources for women in PRIs, right from the beginning. "The evidence on gender and decentralisation in India thus suggests that while women have played a positive role in addressing, or attempting to address, a range of practical gender needs,¹ their impact on strategic gender needs² is not remarkable." [UNDP, 2002]. Hence, WERs deserve to be empowered to address the strategic gender needs.

There is a need for provisions in the composite programmes under education, health and skill development to target them specifically at girls/women as the principal beneficiaries and disaggregated within the total allocation. It may also be necessary to place restrictions on their re-appropriation for other purposes.

Conclusion

Budgets garner resources through the taxation policies and allocate resources to different sections of the economy. Budget is an important tool in the hands of the state for affirmative action for improvement of gender relations through reduction of gender gap in the development process. It can help to reduce economic inequalities, between men and women as well as between the rich and the poor [NCAS, 2003]. Hence, the budgetary policies need to keep into considerations the gender dynamics operating in the economy and in the civil society. There is a need to highlight participatory approaches to pro-poor budgeting, bottom up budget, child budget, SC budget, ST budget, green budgeting, budgeting for differently abled people, local and global implications of pro-poor and pro-women budgeting, alternative macro scenarios emerging out of alternative budgets and inter-linkages between gender-sensitive budgeting and women's empowerment. Serious examining of budgets calls for greater transparency at the level of international economics to local processes of empowerment. There is a need to provide training and capacity building workshops for decision-makers in the government structures, municipal bodies, parliamentarians and audio-visual media [Patel, 2004].

Gender commitments must be translated into budgetary commitments. By using our Right to Information (2005), transparency /accountability for revenue generation and public expenditure can be ensured. For reprioritisation in public spending we must prepare our 'bottoms up budgets' and lobby for its realisation in collaboration with the elected representatives. Gender economists must lift the veil of statistical invisibility of the unpaid 'care economy' managed by poor women and highlight its equality and efficiency dimension and transform macro-policies so that they become women friendly.

Notes

¹ Strategic gender needs Strategic Gender Needs are different in different economic contexts and are determined by statutory provisions, affirmative action by the state, pro-active role of the employers to enhance women's position in the economy and social movements.

² Practical gender needs Practical Gender Needs are identified keeping into consideration, gender based division of labour or women's subordinate position in the economy. They are a response to immediate perceived necessity, identified within a specific context. They are practical in nature and often are concerned with inadequacies in living conditions such as provision of fuel, water, healthcare and employment. For details see, Moser, 1993.

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