

Gender budgeting in India: A women empowerment process

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Abstract

Gender budgeting is one of the most important and pertinent concept in the present environment. The governments have slowly understood the importance of this concept. The current paper draws an evolutionary methodology of the various policies which government of India has drawn and implemented towards the gender equality and spending budget equally. The paper also highlights the role of Budgetary Policy of the government and discusses how "by providing adequate resources to women to the government achieves various objectives of gender equality.

Keywords: Gender budgeting, India, equality, economy

Introduction

The concept of gender budgeting is very important today. Yet several countries across the globe have adopted gender budgeting indicatives but the pioneering work was done in Australia and South Africa. The Australian approach of the gender budgeting is the "Three-way Categorization", such as-

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

In South Africa Gender Budgeting is "Five Step Approach", the five steps are: 1. Analyzing the situation of women, men, girls and boys, 2. Assessing the gender responsiveness of policies 3. Assessing budget allocations, 4. Monitoring spending and service delivery, 5. Assessing outcomes.

Theoretical Background

In India by definition "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."

Recently, In India Gender budgeting means an exercise to translate stated gender commitments of the Government into budgetary commitments. In this Strategy for ensuring Gender Sensitive Resource Allocation and a tool for engendering macroeconomic policy has been made. It entails affirmative action for empowering women. It covers assessment of gender differential impact of Government Budgets and policies (Revenue and Expenditure). Which enables tracking and allocating resources for women empowerment and opportunity to determine real value of resources allocated to women.

In fact, in India the strategic framework for gender sensitivity in resource allocation has been marking a specified minimum quantum of funds and benefits for women in all women related sectors, supplemented by targeted interventions for women in various sectors like health, education, employment, training and micro-credit.

Besides this in India Gender Budgeting may be defined as the process of "conceiving, planning, approving, executing,

monitoring, analyzing and auditing budgets in a gender sensitive way". It involves analysis of actual expenditure and revenue (usually of the Government) on women and girls. Further, it helps Governments to decide how policies need to be made, adjusted and reprioritized to attain gender equality. It is a tool for effective policy implementation where one can check if the allocation is in line with policy commitments and is having the desired impact on status and economic entitlement of women in society. It is important to note that Gender budgets are not separate budgets for men and women nor Gender budgeting is not about dividing the budget, say by 50 per cent for women and 50 per cent for men. Moreover, Gender Budgeting does not always imply an increase in the allocation for women-it is about prioritising as well. Therefore, it is not only accounting exercise and it aims at women and her empowerment resulting in gender responsive budget.

In this era of women empowerment and gender equity the need of Gender Budgeting is being increasingly felt. The Importance of Gender Budgeting arises from the fact the national budgets influence various sections of society differently by pattern of resource allocation and priority accorded to competing sectors. Women stand apart as one part of the population that needs special attention due to their vulnerability and lack of access to resources. Thus Budgetary Policy of the government has a major role to play "by providing adequate resources to women to achieve objectives of gender equality and growth through content and direction of fiscal policy and monetary policy, measures for resource mobilization and affirmative action for under privilege section including women". In this way the purpose of gender budgeting is to access quantum and adequacy of allocation of resource for women empowering and establish the extent to which gender commitments are translated into budgetary commitments. Nakray, K. (2009) ^[16].

Understanding Gender Budgeting Definition and Concept

Gender budgeting refers to the process of planning, programming, and budgeting that contributes to advancing gender equality and the fulfillment of women's rights. It involves analyzing government budgets from a gender perspective, assessing how they impact women and men differently, and ensuring that public resources are allocated

in a way that addresses gender disparities. Gender budgeting is not about creating separate budgets for women but rather integrating a gender perspective into all stages of the budgetary process.

Gender budgeting can be seen as a tool for promoting gender-responsive governance, ensuring that the allocation of public resources reflects the needs and priorities of both women and men. It involves a range of activities, including gender analysis of budgets, monitoring and evaluating budgetary allocations, and engaging stakeholders in the budgetary process.

Importance of Gender Budgeting

Gender budgeting is crucial for several reasons

Addressing Gender Disparities: Gender budgeting helps identify and address gender gaps in various sectors, ensuring that both men and women benefit equally from public resources. By analyzing budgetary allocations from a gender perspective, policymakers can identify areas where women and men may be affected differently and allocate resources accordingly.

Promoting Accountability: Gender budgeting promotes transparency and accountability in government spending by highlighting how budgetary allocations impact different genders. By making budgetary processes more gender-sensitive, gender budgeting ensures that public resources are used in a way that promotes gender equality and women's empowerment.

Enhancing Women's Empowerment: By ensuring that budgets are responsive to women's needs, gender budgeting contributes to women's economic, social, and political empowerment. By allocating resources to programs and initiatives that support women's empowerment, gender budgeting helps create an enabling environment for women to thrive and succeed.

Gender budgeting is not just about addressing gender disparities in budgetary allocations; it is also about promoting a more inclusive and equitable approach to governance. By integrating gender considerations into all stages of the budgetary process, gender budgeting helps create a more inclusive and equitable society where both men and women can thrive.

Historical Context of Gender Budgeting in India

Evolution of Gender Budgeting in India

The concept of gender budgeting in India gained prominence in the early 2000s. The Government of India formally adopted gender budgeting as a strategy in 2005-06, following recommendations from the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) and other stakeholders. Since then, gender budgeting has been integrated into the country's planning and budgetary processes, with various ministries and departments adopting gender-sensitive budgeting practices.

The evolution of gender budgeting in India can be traced back to the efforts of women's rights activists and civil society organizations who advocated for a more gender-responsive approach to budgeting. These efforts culminated in the adoption of gender budgeting as a formal strategy by the Government of India in 2005-06.

Key Milestones and Policy Initiatives

2000: The concept of gender budgeting was introduced in India, following global discussions on gender-responsive budgeting.

2001: The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women emphasized the importance of gender budgeting as a strategy for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

2004: The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) issued guidelines for gender budgeting, outlining the steps and processes involved in integrating gender considerations into budgetary processes.

2005-06: The Government of India officially adopted gender budgeting, and the Union Budget included a Gender Budget Statement (GBS) for the first time. The GBS highlighted budgetary allocations for women-specific and gender-sensitive programs across various ministries and departments.

2017: The NITI Aayog's Three Year Action Agenda emphasized the need for gender budgeting, highlighting its importance for achieving gender equality and inclusive development.

Since the adoption of gender budgeting, various ministries and departments have incorporated gender considerations into their budgetary processes, leading to increased allocations for women-specific and gender-sensitive programs.

Institutional Framework and Mechanisms

The institutional framework for gender budgeting in India involves various government agencies and departments, including

Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD):

The MWCD is the nodal agency for gender budgeting in India. It is responsible for providing guidelines and support to other ministries and departments on gender budgeting. The MWCD also monitors the implementation of gender budgeting and ensures that budgetary allocations are made with a gender-sensitive perspective.

Gender Budget Cells (GBCs): Gender Budget Cells have been established in various ministries and departments to facilitate the implementation of gender budgeting. GBCs are responsible for conducting gender analysis of budgets, monitoring budgetary allocations, and ensuring that budgetary processes are gender-sensitive.

NITI Aayog: The NITI Aayog, as the policy think tank of the Government of India, plays a key role in promoting gender budgeting and monitoring its implementation. The NITI Aayog's Three Year Action Agenda emphasizes the importance of gender budgeting and provides guidance on integrating gender considerations into budgetary processes.

Budgeting Processes and Tools

Gender budgeting in India involves several processes and tools:

Gender Budget Statements (GBS): Gender Budget Statements are included in the Union Budget to highlight

budgetary allocations for women-specific and gender-sensitive programs. The GBS provides a detailed account of the budgetary allocations made for women-specific programs and initiatives, as well as the gender-sensitive programs that address the specific needs of women.

Expenditure Tracking: Expenditure tracking involves monitoring the expenditure on gender-sensitive programs to ensure that the allocated funds are utilized effectively. By tracking expenditure, policymakers can ensure that the budgetary allocations made for women-specific and gender-sensitive programs are used efficiently and effectively.

Gender Audits: Gender audits are conducted to assess the impact of budgetary allocations on gender equality and women's empowerment. Gender audits involve analyzing budgetary allocations and expenditures from a gender perspective, identifying gaps and challenges, and making recommendations for improving the gender sensitivity of budgetary processes.

Government Interventions and Policy

"Gender Equality in Law and Policy" is enshrined in the constitution of India. Realizing that women have unequal status to men in India, special laws have been enacted for the protection of women in society. The Important Constitutional Provisions are: I-Legal Framework i.e. (a) Women Specific Laws and (b) Laws affecting Women 2-Policies (a) Public Expenditure Programmes 3. Women and Legal Frame work: It engulfs Women specific Legislations, Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956. The Maternity Benefit Act 1961, The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961. Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986. The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987 Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, another instrument for attaining gender equality and women empowerment is the Five Year Plans. Gender budgeting was introduced in economic planning in the Seventh Five Year Plan and it continues since then. First time, the Seventh Plan introduced the concept of monitoring of 27 beneficiary oriented schemes for women by the Department of Women and Child Development. The Eighth Plan (1992-97) highlighted for the first time a gender perspective and ensured a definite flow of funds from the general developmental sectors to women and her empowerment. The Plan document made an express statement that "the benefits to development from different sectors should not by pass women and special programmes on women should complement the general development programmes. The latter, in turn, should reflect great gender Sensitivity". The Ninth Plan (1997-2002) adopted 'Women Component Plan' as one of the major Strategies and directed both the Central and State Government to ensure "not less than 30 per cent of the funds benefits are earmarked in all the women's related sectors". The National Policy for Empowerment of Women 2001 envisaged introduction of a Gender perspective in the budgeting process as an operational strategy. Tenth Plan reinforces commitment to gender budgeting to establish its gender differential impact and to translate gender commitments into budgetary commitments. The Approach Paper to the Eleventh Plan clearly states "Gender Equity requires adequate provisions to be made in policies and schemes across ministries and departments. It also entails strict adherence to gender budgeting across the board."

The provisions in the different five year plans reveals that efforts have been made to attain the objective of gender equity and women empowerment through Gender Budgeting, yet the desired result is still a far cry. Lahiri, A., Chakraborty, L., & Bhattacharaya, P. N. (2001) ^[13].

Now I would like to evaluate the gender budgeting in India As women empowering process. The tenth five year plan (2002- 2007) elaborate that the success of empowering women depends upon the holistic impact of various sectorial achievements. In this Direction efforts will be initiated/intensified during the Tenth Plan to coverage the existing services, resources infrastructure and manpower available both in the women specific and women related sectors with an ultimate objective of optimizing the benefits with greater cost effectiveness. To this effect, efforts will be made to coverage the services of health care, nutrition supplementation, safe drinking water, adult functional/legal literacy, gainful employment both wage and self employment, sanitation, health and nutrition awareness, knowledge and information about management of diseases, counseling towards safe motherhood practice, nutrition, welfare services etc. The integrated approach adopted by the two on-going programmes of women's empowerment viz. Swa Shakti and Swayamsidha will be further strengthened and expanded during the Tenth Plan with an ultimate objective of universalizing the same through the already available grass root level networking of Self Help Groups." While the Self help Group groups and collective power of women is critical in the empowerment process, in the absence of an institutional mechanism for convergence, it would prove difficult to have universal success, given the involvement of a multitude of departments and schemes, at the functional level.

The implementation of gender budgeting in India has yielded several positive outcomes, contributing to women's empowerment in various ways. Gender budgeting has played a crucial role in improving girls' access to education. Targeted investments in schemes such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) program have led to increased enrollment and retention rates among girls. Scholarships and financial incentives for female students have also encouraged higher education participation. Gender-responsive budgeting has led to significant improvements in women's health outcomes. Programs like the Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) and the National Health Mission (NHM) have focused on maternal and child health, reducing maternal mortality rates and improving access to healthcare services for women. Gender budgeting has facilitated women's economic empowerment by promoting skill development and entrepreneurship. Initiatives like the Support to Training and Employment Program (STEP) and the Mahila E-Haat platform have provided women with opportunities for skill training, market access, and financial inclusion. Targeted budgetary allocations have strengthened social protection and welfare schemes for women. Programs like the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) and the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) have enhanced women's access to clean cooking fuel and sustainable livelihood opportunities, respectively.

Despite the progress made, the implementation of gender budgeting in India faces several challenges and constraints. There is a lack of awareness and understanding of gender budgeting among government officials and policymakers.

Capacity-building efforts are needed to enhance their ability to implement and monitor gender-responsive budgeting effectively. The availability of gender-disaggregated data and indicators is limited, hindering the accurate assessment of the impact of budgetary allocations on gender outcomes. The implementation of gender budgeting varies across states and sectors, leading to inconsistencies and gaps in addressing gender disparities comprehensively. Deep-rooted patriarchal norms and attitudes continue to pose significant barriers to gender equality and women's empowerment. Overcoming these societal barriers requires sustained efforts and cultural transformation.

Kerala, a state in southern India, has been a frontrunner in implementing gender budgeting. The state's efforts to integrate gender considerations into its budgetary processes have resulted in notable achievements, particularly in health and education. For instance, Kerala's Kudumbashree program, a women-centric poverty eradication initiative, has empowered women through microfinance and entrepreneurship support, significantly improving their socio-economic status. Rajasthan, a state in northwestern India, has made significant strides in gender budgeting, particularly in the area of education. The state government's initiatives, such as the Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (SABLA) and the Mukhyamantri Rajshree Yojana, have focused on promoting girls' education and addressing issues like child marriage. These efforts have contributed to higher enrollment rates and improved educational outcomes for girls in Rajasthan.

To strengthen the impact of gender budgeting on women's empowerment in India, the following policy recommendations are proposed: Invest in capacity-building programs for government officials, policymakers, and stakeholders to enhance their understanding and implementation of gender-responsive budgeting. Improve the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data to facilitate evidence-based policymaking and monitoring of gender budgeting outcomes. Strengthen institutional mechanisms, such as Gender Budgeting Cells (GBCs), to ensure effective coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of gender budgeting initiatives across all levels of government. Promote community participation and engagement in the gender budgeting process to ensure that the voices and needs of women are adequately represented. Conduct awareness campaigns to challenge patriarchal norms and attitudes, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment as societal priorities. Ensure adequate budgetary allocations for gender-specific programs and initiatives to address the diverse needs and challenges faced by women across different sectors.

Gender budgeting is a powerful tool for promoting women's empowerment and gender equality in India. By integrating a gender perspective into fiscal policies and budgetary processes, the Indian government has made significant strides in addressing gender disparities and promoting inclusive development. However, challenges such as limited awareness, inadequate data, and societal norms continue to pose barriers to the effective implementation of gender budgeting. Addressing these challenges through targeted policy interventions, capacity building, and community engagement is crucial for realizing the full potential of gender budgeting as a transformative strategy for women's empowerment in India.

Detailed Policy Recommendations for Enhancing Gender Budgeting in Uttar Pradesh

1. Capacity Building

Develop Training Programs: Implement comprehensive training initiatives for government officials, policymakers, and stakeholders to enhance their understanding of gender budgeting principles and practices. These programs should cover gender analysis, the creation of gender-responsive budgets, and monitoring gender outcomes.

Organize Workshops and Seminars: Hold regular workshops, seminars, and conferences to share knowledge and best practices related to gender budgeting. These events can facilitate experience sharing and foster collaboration among different departments.

Integrate Training into Curricula: Incorporate gender budgeting training into the curricula of public administration and governance training institutes to ensure new recruits are proficient in gender-responsive budgeting from the start of their careers.

2. Enhanced Data Collection and Analysis

Strengthen Data Collection: Improve mechanisms for collecting gender-disaggregated data across all sectors by collaborating with statistical agencies, research institutions, and civil society organizations to gather comprehensive and reliable information.

Establish Gender-Specific Indicators: Develop and standardize indicators to measure the impact of budget allocations on women's outcomes, covering areas such as health, education, employment, and social protection.

Use Data for Policymaking: Utilize collected data to guide the formulation of policies and programs, ensuring budget allocations effectively target the specific needs and challenges faced by women.

3. Strengthening Institutional Frameworks

Enhance Gender Budgeting Cells: Strengthen the role of Gender Budgeting Cells in various government departments by ensuring they are adequately staffed and resourced to coordinate, monitor, and evaluate gender budgeting initiatives.

Foster Interdepartmental Coordination: Promote better coordination among departments to ensure a cohesive approach to gender budgeting through regular interdepartmental meetings and joint planning sessions.

Establish Accountability Mechanisms: Implement clear accountability structures to hold departments responsible for executing gender budgeting, incorporating gender outcomes into departmental performance evaluations.

4. Community Engagement

Encourage Community Participation: Foster active participation from communities, particularly women, in the gender budgeting process through local committees and forums where women can express their needs and priorities.

Train Community Leaders: Provide training and support to community leaders to enhance their capacity to engage

effectively in the budgeting process, ensuring community inputs are well-informed and impactful.

Conduct Inclusive Consultations: Engage in inclusive consultations with stakeholders, including civil society organizations and marginalized communities, to gather diverse perspectives and ensure the budget addresses the needs of all society segments.

5. Awareness Campaigns

Challenge Patriarchal Norms: Launch awareness campaigns to challenge deep-rooted patriarchal norms and attitudes, promoting gender equality and emphasizing the importance of women's empowerment for societal progress.

Utilize Media and Technology: Use media and technology to reach a broader audience, leveraging social media, television, radio, and digital platforms to spread messages about gender equality and the benefits of gender-responsive budgeting.

Educational Programs: Incorporate gender equality and women's empowerment into school curricula and community education programs to educate the younger generation and promote long-term societal change.

6. Adequate Budget Allocations

Allocate Sufficient Funds: Ensure adequate financial resources are allocated to gender-specific programs and initiatives, targeting budget allocations to address women's diverse needs across different sectors.

Monitor and Evaluate: Conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of budgetary allocations and expenditures to ensure effective use of funds, identifying gaps and areas for improvement.

Introduce Budget Flexibility: Implement flexibility in budgeting processes to allow for adjustments based on emerging needs and priorities, ensuring gender-responsive budgeting remains relevant and responsive to the changing socio-economic landscape.

Detailed Policy Recommendations: Adequate Budget Allocations

Ensuring adequate budget allocations is fundamental to the success of gender budgeting and the empowerment of women in Uttar Pradesh. Allocating sufficient financial resources to gender-specific programs and initiatives addresses the diverse needs and challenges faced by women across different sectors, promoting gender equality and fostering inclusive development. Here are detailed policy recommendations to enhance budget allocations for gender-responsive programs in Uttar Pradesh:

1. Ensure Sufficient Funding

Targeted Allocations: Allocate adequate financial resources to gender-specific programs and initiatives. This includes ensuring that budget allocations are not only sufficient but also effectively targeted to address the diverse needs of women across various sectors such as education, health, employment, and social protection. Adequate funding is essential for the successful implementation and sustainability of these programs.

Incremental Budgeting: Adopt an incremental budgeting approach to gradually increase the allocation of funds to gender-responsive programs. This method ensures a steady and sustainable increase in financial resources dedicated to women's empowerment over time, allowing for the expansion and improvement of existing initiatives.

Priority Setting: Prioritize budget allocations for sectors that have a significant impact on women's empowerment. Focus on critical areas such as maternal and child health, girls' education, women's skill development, and social protection schemes. Prioritizing these areas ensures that limited resources are used effectively to create the maximum impact.

2. Monitor and Evaluate Expenditures

Regular Monitoring: Implement regular monitoring and evaluation of budgetary allocations and expenditures to ensure that funds are being utilized effectively. Establish robust mechanisms to track the flow of resources and assess their impact on gender outcomes. This will help identify gaps, inefficiencies, and areas for improvement, ensuring that resources are used efficiently.

Performance-Based Budgeting: Introduce performance-based budgeting to link financial allocations with specific gender outcomes. This approach ensures that departments and programs are held accountable for achieving measurable results in terms of women's empowerment and gender equality. Performance-based budgeting promotes transparency and accountability in public spending.

Feedback Mechanisms: Develop feedback mechanisms to gather inputs from beneficiaries and stakeholders on the effectiveness of budget allocations and program implementation. This feedback can provide valuable insights into the challenges faced on the ground and help improve the design and delivery of gender-responsive programs.

3. Introduce Budget Flexibility

Flexible Budgeting Processes: Implement flexibility in budgeting processes to allow for adjustments based on emerging needs and priorities. This approach ensures that gender-responsive budgeting remains relevant and responsive to the changing socio-economic landscape. Flexible budgeting allows for the reallocation of funds to address unforeseen challenges and capitalize on new opportunities.

Contingency Funds: Establish contingency funds to address urgent and unexpected needs related to gender equality and women's empowerment. These funds can be used to respond to crises, such as natural disasters or economic downturns, that disproportionately affect women and girls. Contingency funds provide a financial safety net to protect and support vulnerable populations.

Mid-Year Reviews: Conduct mid-year budget reviews to assess the progress of gender-responsive programs and make necessary adjustments. Mid-year reviews provide an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of budget allocations and reallocate resources to areas that require additional support. This proactive approach ensures that programs stay on track and achieve their intended outcomes.

4. Engage Stakeholders in Budgeting Processes

Participatory Budgeting: Involve stakeholders, including civil society organizations, women's groups, and community representatives, in the budgeting process. Participatory budgeting ensures that the voices and needs of women are adequately represented in budget decisions. This inclusive approach enhances the relevance and effectiveness of budget allocations.

Transparency and Accountability: Promote transparency and accountability in budget processes by publishing detailed budget reports and making them accessible to the public. Transparent budget processes build trust and enable stakeholders to hold the government accountable for its commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Capacity Building for Stakeholders: Provide training and capacity-building support to stakeholders to enhance their ability to participate effectively in the budgeting process. Empowered stakeholders can contribute valuable insights and advocate for adequate budget allocations to gender-responsive programs.

Strengthening Institutional Frameworks for Gender Budgeting in Uttar Pradesh

Strengthening institutional frameworks is crucial for the effective implementation and sustainability of gender budgeting initiatives in Uttar Pradesh. Robust institutional mechanisms ensure that gender-responsive policies and programs are coordinated, monitored, and evaluated systematically, leading to tangible improvements in women's empowerment and gender equality. This section outlines detailed policy recommendations to enhance the institutional frameworks supporting gender budgeting in Uttar Pradesh.

1. Enhance Gender Budgeting Cells (GBCs)

Establish and Strengthen GBCs: Ensure that Gender Budgeting Cells are established in all relevant government departments and are adequately staffed and resourced. These cells should be responsible for integrating gender perspectives into departmental budgets, policies, and programs.

Training and Capacity Building: Provide regular training and capacity-building programs for GBC members to enhance their understanding and skills in gender analysis, gender-responsive budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation. Well-trained GBC members are essential for the effective implementation of gender budgeting initiatives.

Interdepartmental Collaboration: Foster collaboration among GBCs across different departments to ensure a cohesive and integrated approach to gender budgeting. Regular interdepartmental meetings and joint planning sessions can facilitate the sharing of best practices and the development of coordinated strategies.

2. Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

Develop Comprehensive Monitoring Frameworks: Establish comprehensive monitoring frameworks that include clear indicators and benchmarks to assess the impact of gender budgeting initiatives. These frameworks should

track progress towards achieving gender equality goals and identify areas for improvement.

Regular Audits and Reviews: Conduct regular audits and reviews of gender budgeting processes and outcomes to ensure accountability and transparency. Independent audits can provide objective assessments of the effectiveness of budget allocations and their impact on gender outcomes.

Impact Assessments: Carry out impact assessments of major gender-responsive programs and policies to evaluate their effectiveness and identify lessons learned. Impact assessments provide valuable insights into what works and what needs adjustment, informing future planning and resource allocation.

3. Institutionalize Gender Analysis in Budgeting Processes

Mandatory Gender Analysis: Make gender analysis a mandatory component of the budgeting process in all departments. Gender analysis involves examining how budget allocations impact women and men differently and ensures that resources are distributed equitably.

Gender Budget Statements (GBS): Require all departments to prepare and publish Gender Budget Statements as part of their annual budget documents. The GBS should outline the gender-specific allocations and expenditures, providing transparency and accountability in public spending.

Guidelines and Toolkits: Develop and disseminate guidelines and toolkits on gender-responsive budgeting to assist departments in integrating gender analysis into their budgeting processes. These resources can provide practical advice and best practices for effective gender budgeting.

4. Promote Accountability and Transparency

Public Reporting: Ensure that information on gender budget allocations and expenditures is publicly available and easily accessible. Public reporting enhances transparency and allows stakeholders to hold the government accountable for its commitments to gender equality.

Feedback Mechanisms: Establish feedback mechanisms to gather inputs from beneficiaries and stakeholders on the effectiveness of gender-responsive programs. Feedback from the ground can provide valuable insights into the challenges and successes of gender budgeting initiatives, informing continuous improvement.

Performance Evaluation: Integrate gender outcomes into the performance evaluation frameworks of government departments. Departments should be held accountable for their contributions to gender equality goals, with performance indicators linked to the successful implementation of gender-responsive programs.

5. Foster Stakeholder Engagement and Participation

Inclusive Policy Formulation: Involve a wide range of stakeholders, including civil society organizations, women's groups, and community representatives, in the formulation and implementation of gender budgeting policies. Inclusive

participation ensures that diverse perspectives are considered and that policies are responsive to the needs of all segments of society.

Capacity Building for Stakeholders: Provide training and support to stakeholders to enhance their capacity to engage effectively in the gender budgeting process. Empowered stakeholders can advocate for adequate budget allocations and hold the government accountable for its commitments to gender equality.

Public Awareness Campaigns: Conduct public awareness campaigns to educate citizens about gender budgeting and its importance for women's empowerment and gender equality. Increasing public awareness can generate broader support for gender-responsive policies and programs.

Conclusion

Success stories rest on individual efforts rather than institutionalized 13 mechanisms. Central sector schemes and centrally sponsored schemes have limited flexibility and may require a re-look at the design and implementation of the schemes. Further the Self Help Group movement is not uniform in its success spread across the country. Summing up it is submitted that while all the above approaches have merit and benefits, but perhaps in isolation, these approaches are not complete in themselves to achieve women's empowerment. In a nutshell the efforts undertaken in regard of women empowerment is commendable but much is yet to be done by both public and private sector. Only then the objective of women empowerment and the constitution obligation of 'Gender equality in law and policy' will be met.

Gender budgeting in India stands as a pivotal mechanism for advancing women's empowerment and fostering gender equality. Through integrating a gender perspective into fiscal policies and budgetary processes, it ensures that public resources are allocated in a manner that addresses the unique needs and challenges faced by women. Over the years, India has made significant strides in institutionalizing gender budgeting, evidenced by initiatives like the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001), the establishment of Gender Budgeting Cells (GBCs) during the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2007-2012), and the introduction of the Gender Budget Statement (GBS) in 2005-06.

The impact of gender budgeting on women's empowerment in India is multifaceted. In education, gender budgeting has been instrumental in increasing enrollment and retention rates for girls, driven by programs such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP). These programs have provided scholarships and financial incentives, making education more accessible to female students. In healthcare, initiatives like the Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) and the National Health Mission (NHM) have focused on maternal and child health, resulting in improved health outcomes for women and reduced maternal mortality rates.

Economically, gender budgeting has empowered women by promoting skill development and entrepreneurship. Programs such as the Support to Training and Employment Program (STEP) and the Mahila E-Haat platform have offered women opportunities for skill training, market access, and financial inclusion. Additionally, targeted budgetary allocations have bolstered social protection and

welfare schemes for women, with initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) and the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) enhancing women's access to clean cooking fuel and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

However, despite these achievements, several challenges hinder the effective implementation of gender budgeting in India. A lack of awareness and understanding of gender budgeting among government officials and policymakers necessitates robust capacity-building efforts. The limited availability of gender-disaggregated data and indicators hampers the accurate assessment of budgetary allocations' impact on gender outcomes. Moreover, the fragmented implementation of gender budgeting across states and sectors results in inconsistencies and gaps in addressing gender disparities comprehensively. Deep-rooted patriarchal norms and societal attitudes continue to pose significant barriers to gender equality and women's empowerment, necessitating sustained efforts to overcome these societal hurdles.

The experiences of states like Kerala and Rajasthan provide valuable insights into successful gender budgeting practices. Kerala's Kudumbashree program, a women-centric poverty eradication initiative, has empowered women through microfinance and entrepreneurship support, significantly enhancing their socio-economic status. Rajasthan's initiatives, such as the Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (SABLA) and the Mukhyamantri Rajshree Yojana, have focused on promoting girls' education and addressing issues like child marriage, contributing to higher enrollment rates and improved educational outcomes for girls.

To further strengthen the impact of gender budgeting on women's empowerment, several policy recommendations are essential. Investing in capacity-building programs for government officials, policymakers, and stakeholders will enhance their understanding and implementation of gender-responsive budgeting. Improving the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data will facilitate evidence-based policymaking and monitoring of gender budgeting outcomes. Strengthening institutional mechanisms, such as Gender Budgeting Cells (GBCs), will ensure effective coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of gender budgeting initiatives across all levels of government. Promoting community participation and engagement in the gender budgeting process will ensure that the voices and needs of women are adequately represented. Conducting awareness campaigns to challenge patriarchal norms and attitudes will promote gender equality and women's empowerment as societal priorities. Ensuring adequate budgetary allocations for gender-specific programs and initiatives will address the diverse needs and challenges faced by women across different sectors.

In conclusion, gender budgeting in India has proven to be a powerful tool for promoting women's empowerment and gender equality. By integrating a gender perspective into fiscal policies and budgetary processes, the Indian government has made significant progress in addressing gender disparities and promoting inclusive development. However, to realize the full potential of gender budgeting as a transformative strategy for women's empowerment, it is crucial to address the existing challenges through targeted policy interventions, capacity building, and community engagement. The continued commitment to gender

budgeting will not only advance women's empowerment but also contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society, benefiting the nation as a whole.

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