

3. Gender Budgeting and Human Rights: A Pathway to Equity

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3.1 Introduction:

By incorporating a gender perspective into budgetary policies, gender budgeting has become a potent instrument for addressing systemic injustices and advancing social justice. It is essential to the advancement of human rights, especially equality and nondiscrimination. Gender budgeting aims to address disparities and build a more just society by looking at how public resources are distributed and affect various genders. The relationship between gender budgeting and human rights is examined in this chapter, with a focus on how they reinforce one another and practical implementation techniques.

3.1.1 Understanding Gender Budgeting:

The methodical integration of gender concerns into every phase of the budgetary process—from planning to implementation and assessment—is known as gender budgeting. It seeks to evaluate how fiscal policies affect men and women differently in order to make sure that budgetary allocations help to lessen gender inequality.¹ Gender budgeting aims to change how resources are distributed in order to produce fair results, in contrast to traditional budgeting, which frequently maintains current inequities. The idea became well-known in the 1980s thanks to international lobbying and feminist economists. Its significance was further reinforced by historic occasions such as the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), which called on governments to implement gender-responsive budgeting procedures.²

3.1.2 Human Rights Framework and Gender Equality:

Human rights, which include civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, are inalienable and universal. A number of international agreements, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), uphold gender equality as a fundamental human

¹ Janet G Stotsky, *Gender Budgeting: Fiscal Context and Current Outcomes*, (Jan. 25, 2017), <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2016/wp16149.pdf>.

² *World Conferences on Women*, UN Women Headquarters (Nov. 27, 2024), <https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/world-conferences-on-women>.

right. States are required by these frameworks to advance gender equality and eradicate all types of discrimination. A fundamental tenet of human rights, substantive equality transcends legal equality by removing systemic obstacles and guaranteeing fair results. Furthermore, intersectionality draws attention to the ways that gender inequality interacts with other types of discrimination, including caste, racism, and disability, underscoring the necessity of focused responses.

3.1.3 The Nexus Between Gender Budgeting and Human Rights:

By converting intangible ideals into concrete legislative measures, gender budgeting operationalizes human rights commitments. It acts as a vehicle for the realization of political, social, economic, and environmental rights.

For example, gender-responsive budgeting fulfils economic and social rights by guaranteeing fair access to social protection, healthcare, and education. Additionally, it advances women's civil and political rights by increasing their involvement in decision-making and government. The disproportionate effects of climate change and environmental degradation on women, especially in developing nations, are addressed by gender budgeting in the framework of environmental rights. Gender budgeting can lead to revolutionary change, empowering women and promoting social justice, as demonstrated by examples from Sweden and Rwanda.³

3.2 Challenges and Limitations:

Despite its potential, gender budgeting has a number of obstacles to overcome. Its implementation is frequently hampered by institutional resistance because ingrained bureaucracies may not have the political will or ability to make gender-sensitive reforms. Furthermore, thorough evaluations of budgetary implications are hampered by the lack of data that is broken down by gender and other characteristics. Initiatives to implement gender budgeting are frequently reduced to tokenistic processes that superficially classify spending as "gender-sensitive" while ignoring the underlying reasons of inequity. Additionally, the benefits of gender budgeting are frequently denied to marginalized groups including Dalit, Adivasi, and LGBTQ+ communities due to a lack of an integrated approach.⁴

3.2.1 Strategies for Effective Gender Budgeting:

Gender budgeting needs to take an integrative and comprehensive approach in order to have the most possible impact. Gender-responsive procedures can be institutionalized through strengthening institutional structures, such as creating specific gender budgeting cells inside finance ministries. Initiatives to increase capacity, such as training for stakeholders and policymakers, are crucial for boosting political commitment and technical proficiency. Gender budgeting may be made more accurate and transparent by utilizing technology and

³ https://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate_change/downloads/Women_and_Climate_Change_Factsheet.pdf.

⁴ (Dec. 21, 2017), https://nhrc.nic.in/sites/default/files/nhrc_journal_2017.pdf.

data analytics, which will allow for more focused and efficient actions. Furthermore, inclusiveness and accountability are ensured via participatory approaches that include underprivileged communities in budget formulation and decision-making processes, matching budgetary priorities with the needs of various populations.

3.2.2 Gender Budgeting in Practice: Global and Regional Perspectives:

Different socioeconomic situations and policy agendas have led to different implementations of gender budgeting around the world. It is incorporated into more comprehensive gender equality policies in the EU, which emphasize social inclusion and labour market involvement. Gender-responsive budgeting in areas like health and education has been pioneered by Latin American nations like Mexico and Argentina. Since 2005, India has led the way in gender budgeting in South Asia by including Gender Budget Statements (GBS) in its yearly budget. By tackling particular issues like women's health, education, and livelihoods, state-level initiatives in Tamil Nadu and Kerala have moved gender budgeting even further.⁵

3.2.3 The Role of Civil Society and International Organizations:

International organizations and civil society organizations (CSOs) are essential in encouraging gender budgeting and holding governments responsible. Through their advocacy, monitoring, and capacity-building activities, CSOs give policymakers insightful opinions.

To promote gender-responsive budgeting projects, international organizations such as the World Bank, UN Women, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) provide funds and technical help. By encouraging cooperation, exchanging best practices, and coordinating resources to promote human rights and gender equality, these collaborations increase the efficacy of gender budgeting.

3.3 Future Directions and Recommendations:

There must be coordinated actions at several levels in order to adequately utilize gender budgeting as a human rights weapon. By incorporating human rights concepts into gender budgeting, budgetary policies are guaranteed to advance social justice and substantive equality. Enhancing international collaboration can promote the sharing of best practices and expertise, spurring innovation and expanding successful projects.⁶ Researching gender budgeting further might yield fresh perspectives and approaches to difficult problems, especially in cutting-edge fields like digital inclusion and climate justice. In the end, gender

⁵ *Gender budgeting*, European Institute for Gender Equality (Aug. 30, 2024), https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/tools-methods/gender-budgeting?language_content_entity=en.

⁶ *What is gender-responsive budgeting?* UN Women Headquarters (Nov. 13, 2023), <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2023/11/what-is-gender-responsive-budgeting>.

budgeting will only succeed if there is consistent political will, institutional dedication, and active involvement from all parties involved, including governments, international organizations, and civil society.

3.3.1 Expanding the Scope of Gender Budgeting:

A flexible tool that can be adjusted to different social, political, and economic situations is gender budgeting. The scope of gender budgeting has expanded to encompass a variety of sectors and policy areas as societies face new difficulties. This enlarged scope highlights its applicability in tackling modern problems with clear gendered effects, like climate change, technological advancement, and global health emergencies.

A. Gender Budgeting in Climate Policy:

Women are disproportionately impacted by climate change, especially in underdeveloped nations where their livelihoods depend more heavily on natural resources. The goal of gender budgeting in climate policy is to make sure that the unique needs and vulnerabilities of women are taken into account in mitigation plans, adaptation plans, and climate action plans. This entails funding women's involvement in green technology, guaranteeing their access to infrastructure that is climate resilient, and promoting their roles as important contributors to sustainable development.⁷

In Bangladesh, for instance, gender-responsive budgeting in disaster management has concentrated on giving women specialized assistance during cyclones and floods, acknowledging their increased vulnerability as a result of their restricted mobility and restricted access to resources.

B. Gender Budgeting in Digital Inclusion:

Another crucial area where gender budgeting can make a significant difference is the digital gap. Women frequently encounter obstacles while trying to use digital technologies and the internet, particularly in rural and low-income areas. Gender gaps in political involvement, work, and education are sustained by these obstacles. In the digital sector, gender-responsive budgeting include funding initiatives for women's digital literacy, providing subsidies for reasonably priced technology, and enacting laws that encourage women to work in the computer sector.

Programs for gender-focused digital inclusion have been started in nations like Kenya and India. To bridge the digital gap, for example, India's Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (DISHA) program seeks to increase women's digital literacy, especially in rural areas.

⁷ *Explainer: How gender inequality and climate change are interconnected*, UN Women Headquarters (Feb. 28, 2022), <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2022/02/explainer-how-gender-inequality-and-climate-change-are-interconnected>.

C. Gender Budgeting in Global Health Crises:

The gendered aspects of global health crises were brought to light by the COVID-19 pandemic. Women, who make up a sizable share of frontline healthcare workers, were at higher risk of exposure and had to take on more caregiving duties at home.⁸ By providing funds for protective gear, mental health support, and healthcare worker compensation in addition to specific health services for women, such prenatal care, gender budgeting in healthcare guarantees that public health interventions take these gendered implications into account

In order to ensure that recovery efforts addressed the disproportionate economic and social costs on women, nations like as Canada integrated gender analysis into their COVID-19 response plans.

3.4 Intersectionality and Gender Budgeting: Addressing Multiple Layers of Discrimination:

The term "intersectionality," coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, highlights the ways in which different types of discrimination—including those based on sexual orientation, race, class, caste, and disability—intersect to produce distinct oppressive experiences. By addressing these intersecting disparities, gender budgeting becomes a more effective instrument for advancing human rights when it is guided by an intersectional paradigm.

A. Addressing Caste and Class in Gender Budgeting:

Gender budgeting must take into account these intersecting identities in nations such as India, where caste and class dynamics significantly impact access to resources and opportunities.

For instance, the caste and gender of Dalit and Adivasi women exacerbate their marginalization. Targeted funding for initiatives that address the unique difficulties these people confront, like limited access to livelihoods, healthcare, and education, would be necessary for effective gender budgeting in such settings.

One such example is Kerala's Kudumbashree initiative, which aims to eradicate poverty and empower women via self-help organizations. It incorporates a caste-sensitive strategy, guaranteeing that its programs assist Dalit and Adivasi women.

B. Disability and Gender Budgeting:

When it comes to social protection, employment, and public services, women with disabilities frequently experience dual discrimination. Resources are allotted to guarantee accessible infrastructure, inclusive education, and specialized healthcare services when gender budgeting takes a disability perspective into account. For example, a gender-

⁸ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10658397/>.

sensitive element of Australia's National Disability⁹ Insurance Scheme (NDIS) attempts to enhance assistance for women with impairments.

C. LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Gender Budgeting:

Getting work and basic services is extremely difficult for the LGBTQ+ population, especially for transgender people. LGBTQ+-focused gender budgeting can support livelihood programs, healthcare services that are suited to their needs, and anti-discrimination campaigns.¹⁰ By including LGBTQ+ issues into their gender budget frameworks and emphasizing healthcare and anti-violence activities, nations like Argentina have led the way in these efforts.

3.5 Gender Budgeting as a Driver of Economic Growth and Development:

Gender budgeting serves more general economic goals in addition to advancing social justice and human rights. Studies indicate that social cohesion, productivity, and economic growth are all positively impacted by gender equality. Gender budgeting can help realize the full potential of human capital by addressing gender differences in health, education, and labor force participation.

A. Enhancing Women's Economic Participation:

Encouraging women to enter the workforce is one of the main ways that gender budgeting affects economic growth. More women are able to enter and stay in the workforce because to policies that provide funding for childcare services, parental leave, and workplace flexibility. This increases national productivity in addition to raising household earnings. For instance, Sweden has high rates of female labor force participation and a more equitable allocation of unpaid care work as a result of its gender-responsive labor market policies, which include generous maternity leave and subsidized childcare.

B. Addressing the Care Economy:

The care economy, which includes both paid and unpaid caregiving, is an important but sometimes disregarded area of traditional economic planning. Women are disproportionately responsible for providing unpaid care, which restricts their access to paid work. Gender budgeting allots funds to support care services like elder care, daycare, and healthcare because it acknowledges the economic worth of caregiving.¹¹

⁹ https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/wpcontent/uploads/sites/23/2020/09/Paper_.pdf.

¹⁰ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8916108/>.

¹¹ *Improving care economy is vital to growth and well-being*, World Economic Forum (Oct. 15, 2024), <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/10/caring-care-economy-key-growth-and-well-being/>.

In an effort to lessen the care burden on women and advance gender equality in the workforce, nations such as South Korea have made investments in extending public care services as part of their gender budgeting initiatives.

C. Education and Skill Development:

There are long-term financial advantages to using gender budgeting to support women's education and skill development. It raises women's earning potential, improves their employability, and helps to combat poverty.¹² Targeted scholarships, career training programs, and campaigns to promote girls' enrollment in STEM professions are all part of gender-responsive budgeting in education.

Gender parity in education has been aided by Bangladesh's secondary education stipend program for girls, which is financed through gender budgeting and has greatly increased female school enrollment and retention rates.

3.6 Political Participation and Governance: Gender Budgeting as a Tool for Inclusion:

Enhancing women's political involvement and governance is another important function of gender budgeting. It supports inclusive decision-making and fortifies democratic institutions by guaranteeing fair resource distribution and encouraging openness.

A. Empowering Women in Governance:

By providing funding for capacity-building initiatives, leadership development, and electoral support for female candidates, gender budgeting can enable women in government. This guarantees that women's opinions are heard during the policy-making process in addition to increasing their representation in political institutions.

With women now holding the majority of parliamentary seats in Rwanda, where gender budgeting has been a key component of the country's post-conflict rehabilitation, they have a big say in national policy and budgetary choices.

B. Strengthening Accountability and Transparency:

By compelling governments to report on how public monies are distributed and used to address gender imbalances, gender budgeting improves accountability. Increased public confidence in government is a result of this transparency, which also motivates civil society to take an active role in campaigning and monitoring.¹³

¹² <https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education>.

¹³ <https://internationalbudget.org/publications/addressing-gender-responsive-budget-implementation-how-civil-society-is-holding-governments-accountable-to-gender-promises-in-budget-execution/>.

Comprehensive reporting procedures are part of Mexico's government's gender budgeting system, which enables civil society organizations to monitor spending and hold decision-makers responsible for the results of gender equality.

3.7 The Role of International Organizations in Promoting Gender Budgeting:

By offering financial support, policy recommendations, and technical assistance, international organizations are essential to the advancement of gender budgeting. Additionally, they help countries adopt and execute gender-responsive budgeting practices by facilitating programs for knowledge-sharing and capacity-building.

A. UN Women and Gender Budgeting:

Globally, UN Women has been leading the charge to promote gender budgeting. UN Women provides tools, training, and technical assistance to governments in order to help them incorporate gender considerations into economic policy through its Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) initiative. Additionally, it collaborates extensively with civil society to improve accountability and advocacy systems.

B. The World Bank and IMF:

The significance of gender budgeting in promoting inclusive growth and development has been acknowledged by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) more and more. They highlight the economic advantages of gender equality and offer financial and technical assistance to nations implementing gender-responsive reforms.¹⁴

The World Bank's Gender Action Plan, for instance, describes methods for incorporating gender considerations into its lending activities, such as funding social protection initiatives and infrastructure that is gender-responsive.

C. Regional Organizations:

The promotion of gender budgeting is also greatly aided by regional organizations like the African and European Unions. For example, the EU has set an example for member states by incorporating gender budgeting into its development initiatives and budgetary structures.

3.8 Future Directions and Innovations in Gender Budgeting:

Gender budgeting must change to meet new possibilities and problems as it develops. New approaches to improving its efficacy are provided by developments in technology, data analytics, and participatory governance.

¹⁴ *Gender*, (Aug. 29, 2024), <https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/Gender>.

A. Leveraging Big Data and Technology:

By offering real-time insights into the gendered impact of fiscal policies, big data and technological advancements have the potential to completely transform gender budgeting. Policymakers can use data analytics tools to track progress, find inequalities, and make well-informed decisions.

More public involvement in budgetary procedures can be facilitated via mobile applications and internet platforms, guaranteeing that underrepresented views are heard.

B. Integrating Climate and Gender Agendas:

Gender equality and climate change are closely related. In order to ensure that climate finance is gender-responsive and that women are actively involved in climate action initiatives, future gender budgeting efforts must incorporate climate issues.¹⁵

C. Expanding the Scope to Emerging Sectors:

Gender budgeting should broaden its scope to include new industries like biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and the gig economy as the global economy changes. These industries provide fresh chances and difficulties for gender equality, necessitating bold legislative actions to guarantee fair results.

One revolutionary tool that helps close the gap between human rights promises and actual policy implementation is gender budgeting. It fosters gender equality and aids in more general economic and social growth by tackling systemic injustices and encouraging fair resource distribution. However, persistent political will is necessary for its success.

¹⁵ PwC India, *Gender equality in climate action: Women at the core*, (Mar. 11, 2022), <https://www.pwc.in/assets/pdfs/consulting/esg/gender-equality-in-climate-action.pdf>.