

Hand-outs from UNPAC's Gender Budget Workshop

What have Gender Budget Initiatives Accomplished?

Gender budget initiatives around the world have demonstrated significant successes. In particular, gender budget work has:

1. Influenced government spending

The Australia Women's Budget (1984-1996), which was a government-led initiative, brought about a significant increase in spending in areas of importance to women. For example, between 1985 and 1996 federal assistance to families with children rose 27% while assistance to the aged rose 24%. There was also a five-fold increase in child care places for working women. The Women's Budget served as an "early-warning system" when a neo-liberal agenda took hold. The Women's office was able to identify in advance what areas were likely to be cut and argue against those cuts.

The Philippines Gender and Development budget made a specific requirement that every government agency allocate at least five per cent of its budget to gender and development initiatives while maintaining the large objective of mainstreaming Gender and Development into the remaining 95 per cent of the budget. At the same time all government agencies are required to submit their Gender and Development plans to the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women for approval.

2. Influenced government policy

A major policy win of the United Kingdom Women's Budget Group occurred in the March 2002 Budget when the government announced that from 2003 onwards the new Child Tax Credit would be paid to the main carer – usually a woman – rather than to the main earner – usually a man. The group used the slogan, "*From the wallet to the purse*" (men carry wallets while women carry purses) to argue that giving money to women was more efficient and in-line with government policy on reducing child poverty because women's money usually has a greater positive impact on the well-being of children than men's. (*Unfortunately, this argument was won on the basis of a policy related to children rather than on gender equality.*)

The Working for Water Programme in South Africa followed the government's commitment to "*integrate gender analysis into budgetary processes*". The Programme decided that 60 per cent of all wages should be paid to women, 67 per cent in rural areas and placed a special emphasis on flexible working time for single parents. Of the 42,000 jobs created in the first part of 1998, 55 per cent went to women.

3. Demonstrated inefficiencies in government spending

In Korea, a gender budget initiative demonstrated that most of the beneficiaries of training and education programs were leaders or women from women's organizations. For example, a video conference education program attracted a lot of attention but it was questionable whether the process could affect ordinary women's lives. Given the high expense of the project, it would have been far more cost-effective and useful to organize lectures within each region or to pay local women's organizations to organize them.



What have Gender Budget Initiatives Accomplished? (con't)

4. Highlighted lack of real government commitment to gender equality

The Korean gender budget initiative demonstrated that some of the Korean government's women-related policies such as sponsoring beauty contests (over 100 held nationally), courses for girls in make-up, skin care, and etiquette, and the 'A happy wife and a successful husband' lecture held at a Women's Fair actually reinforced stereotypical notions of femininity rather than challenging gender stereotypes and empowering women.

5. Provided women's organizations access to government decision-makers

The United Kingdom Women's Budget Group has capitalized on Prime Minister Tony Blair's policy of participatory government and now has privileged, sustained access to officials in Treasury.

The Tanzanian Gender Networking Program has worked hard to build alliances which has led to a great deal of trust between government and non-governmental players. The TGNP now acts as an ongoing consultant to the Ministry of Finance in the area of gender responsive budgeting.

6. Involved and empowered women to be a part of the budget process and made the budget process more participatory

The Ugandan gender budget initiative led by the Forum for Women in Democracy has served to make the entire National Budget process increasingly more participatory. Civil society organizations such as the Forum for Women in Democracy and the Uganda Debt Network are members of the Poverty Eradication Working Group under the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development whose mandate is to ensure that government budgets address the needs and concerns of marginalized groups such as women, people with disabilities, and those living in poverty.

Many initiatives have worked with the media to educate the broader population on issues around women's equality and the budget.

7. Increased accountability and transparency of government budgets

The Uganda Gender Budget Initiative's advocacy campaign contributed to the creation of the Budget Law and Budget Act which has increased involvement in the budget process by both civil society and parliamentarians and provided increased access to government budget documents that would previously have been inaccessible.

*Please note that we are happy to share our resources with other groups and individuals doing similar work around the world. However, we do ask that you credit the **UN Platform for Action Committee Manitoba (UNPAC)** and list our website address as a contact: www.unpac.ca. We would also very much appreciate hearing from you should you use our materials. Please write to us at project@unpac.ca and tell us how you have used our work.*

