

Transformative Financing for Gender Equality: National Consultation 11-12 February 2019, New Delhi

Consultation
On
Transformative Financing for Gender Equality
11th-12th February, 2019, New Delhi

A Report

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Women's groups have met me and urged me to consider gender budgeting... This means that budget data should be presented in manner that the gender sensitivities of the budgetary process are clearly highlighted... I hope I will be able to implement some of the [of the Expert Group on classification system of government transaction] in the Budget for 2005-2006

Hon'ble P. Chidambaram, Minister of Finance, India Budget Speech 2004-2005

Last July, I promised to consider gender budgeting. Hon'ble Members will be happy to note that I have included in the Budget documents a separate statement highlighting the gender sensitivities of the budgetary allocations under 10 demands for grants... Although this is another first in budget-making in India, it is only a beginning and, in course of time, all Departments will be required to present gender budgets as well as make benefit in incidence analyses."

Hon'ble P. Chidambaram, Minister of Finance, India Budget Speech 2005-2006

Introduction:

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) was officially adopted in India in 2004 when the women's groups and feminist researchers joined the UNIFEM in urging the Ministry of Finance to make the budget gender-sensitive, towards ensuring equitable sharing of resources towards addressing gender equality. Consequently the 11th and 12th Five Year Plans promoted GRB at the national and subnational levels. Over the years GRB has expanded to the sectoral and sub-national levels owing to efforts of multiple actors- government, feminist researchers and donors especially the UN.

Over the years GRB has expanded to the sectoral and sub-national levels owing to efforts of multiple actors- government, feminist research and donors especially the UN. However the primary focus of GRB work in India - at the national as well as state level- is still the Gender Budget Statement (GBS), which has limited scope and suffers from various challenges. GBS has been reduced to a purely quantitative exercise, it is made to be an ex-post exercise, with no impact on the planning or budgetary process. Since, there gender disaggregated reporting does not give data on the actual number of beneficiaries, there are limitations regarding accuracy of allocations as reported in the GBS statement.

A key strategy for promoting the adoption of GRB in India has been the setting up of Gender Budget Cells (GBCs) within line ministries/departments. As of February 2015, 57 ministries/ departments had reported setting up GBCs. However, there have been some concerns regarding the effectiveness of GBCs, including lack of review/monitoring of their work. The Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) has pointed out that the central challenge faced by GBCs is the shortage of time and human resources for facilitating gender mainstreaming initiatives (CBGA, 2012)..

Background

A group of concerned feminist activists came together for a meeting in June 2018, convened by the National Foundation for India (NFI), to share concerns around these issues. There were discussions on ways to bring in feminist politics into the GRB work, and a larger national consultation was planned to take stock of GRB across states, and rebuild the conversation with the government as well. A few feminists from the larger group, volunteered to be part of the organizing committee, and via conference calls, held a planning meeting in December 2018 to plan this consultation. The aim was transform the nature and practice of GRB from its current focus on an ex-post analysis of the budget to a transformative agenda-setting approach towards financing gender equality. It was noted that GRB is central to implementing and achieving SDG 5 “Achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls” and relevant gender targets across the framework; GRB is also rooted in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA).

The outcome of the above processes was the co-convening of the National Consultation on ‘Transformative Financing for Gender Equality’, organized on February 11-12, 2019 hosted by the UN Women, and in partnership with OXFAM, NFI, IWWAGE, and SAHAJ Vadodara. The agenda of the meeting is provided in **Annexure-I**

The Consultation provided a platform for sharing on-going efforts across states, discussing achievements and challenges faced based on state and sector specific examples. It enabled women’s organizations to enhance their understanding of issues around resources for women’s rights and brought together organizations that had been working on budget advocacy projects with NFI. This consultation also aimed at expanding synergies among the women working in the Gender Budget Cells of different states and local feminist groups that engage with budget advocacy

Objectives:

This consultation brought together the key stakeholders including women’s rights group, budget advocacy groups, feminist economists, GRBC personnel and the Government’s nodal person for GRB, Joint Secretary of MWCD, GOI (See **Annexure II**–Participant List)

The larger goal of this consultation was to put ‘feminist politics’ back into Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and locate ‘gender responsive budgeting’ within the larger notion of ‘Transformative Financing for Gender Equality’, so that revenues and taxes as well as expenditure could be included within its ambit.

The objectives of the national level consultation were:

- To review and strengthen strategies for gender responsive budgeting in India based on what has worked, and what have been the challenges.
- Creating a common platform / forum for transformative financing for gender equality and women’s rights by bringing together women’s rights, traditional budget groups, feminist economists and CSO efforts together.

The expected outcomes of this consultation were:

- To transform the nature and practice of GRB from the principal current focus on GRB as an ex-post analysis of the budget to a transformative agenda setting approach for gender equality
- To establish a large national group including women activists and researchers from the states towards an effective advocacy process.

Based on this consultation, a stand-alone document was also produced on key asks regarding financing and budgeting for women's rights, highlighting the core issues.

Report of the Consultation - Sessions:

Overview

The inaugural session *Envisioning transformative financing for gender equality* provided the basis for further discussion on issues of GRB and the strategies needed to transform GRB in India. The next plenary session titled *Financing for whom? Voices from the field* involved experience-sharing on GRB by individuals and groups working amongst marginalised communities. Session II involved experience sharing of GRB across sectors like agriculture, sanitation, SDGs, infrastructure, and health. Session III involved small-group discussion on mechanisms for engagement at various levels of planning and in SDG monitoring.

The second day began by highlighting work done so far, achievements made and challenges faced in institutionalising GRB. The next session focused on formulating a set of key asks on financing and budgeting women's rights (gender) highlighting 5-6 core issues. The last session was an open session, towards discussing future engagement plans.

Day One

Inaugural Session: Envisioning Transformative Financing for Gender Equality

Moderator: Dr Syeda Hameed

The inaugural session was chaired by Dr Syeda Hameed, Former Member, Planning commission, GOI, and the panel included Jashodhara Dasgupta Executive Director, National Foundation for India (NFI) and Ms. Nishtha Satyam, Deputy Country Representative, UN Women. Dr Jayati Ghosh, Prof. (Economics), JNU was the key note speaker.

The session began with a welcome address by **Ms. Jashodhara Dasgupta**. She highlighted the objectives of the consultation and outline of the sessions over the two days.

Prof. Jayati Ghosh began by expressing her disappointment over GRB being reduced to an accounting exercise, with no real positive change on the ground. She said that, *'We the feminist*

economists were 'conned' into believing that GRB would be a very useful tool to build a focus on women's issues in public finance'.

She emphasised the need for a 'holistic' approach in undertaking GRB and move towards looking at 'transformative financing' overall. She said that there is need to shift focus from looking at allocations for women-centered schemes or programmes, to looking at the overall fiscal policy (patterns of spending and patterns of taxation) in its wider dimensions, and recognise the different ways in which various types of public expenditures can have impacts on women.

She stressed the need for focusing on the 'Outcome Budget'- in the sense of asking where the money was spent, how it was spent; was it spent in the ways in which it was intended to be, what actual difference had it made to the lives of women and so forth: all of which calls for vigilant monitoring. Prof. Ghosh pointed out that vigilant monitoring and holding the government accountable is crucial for GRB to be effective. She gave the example of the 'Nirbhaya Fund' which, in the absence of monitoring and government accountability, was frittered away in ways that had no relation with women's safety issues.

She attributed in part the failure of the GRB to the defensive nature of feminists. She said that there has been a softening on some important demands, and lack of adequate monitoring as to where the money allocated for women's issues was being spent. Therefore, she urged feminists to be tougher, be hardliners about their demands, keep their voices high and demand from the government genuine standards of accountability.

She dismissed the question which is often raised when it comes to spending on women's issues: 'where will the money come from?' She pointed out that it is only in the context of social and economic rights of people that this question gets raised. She said that raising resources is a matter of political will, as required funds can be garnered by reducing tax exemptions, especially to big corporations, and ensuring greater tax compliance, as well as by effectively implementing laws on wealth and inheritance tax.

Ms. Nishtha Satyam, Deputy Country Representative, UN Women, stated the need for a national coalition of feminists to come together and develop a charter of specific asks from the government. She proposed that UN Women could play a key role in convening and bringing different actors together to make sure that the momentum that is gained during this process and over the years is maintained, and that the voice of this group is heard at the highest levels of the government. Reflecting on the impact of macro-economic policies on women's unpaid work, she assured that UN Women would be working in this area for the next 3-4 years.

Discussion

In discussion with participants, the importance of looking at the overall fiscal policy and not just at allocations for women-centered schemes was reiterated. It was pointed out that reduced government expenditures on crèche scheme, access to potable water, fuel and energy and so forth, has led to increased unpaid work by women/girls.

It was further discussed that GRB in the past few years had become a measure of fiscal consolidation, and targeted women in separate constituencies and did not view women holistically and as independent citizens.

The discussions stressed the need to focus on resource mobilization, beyond only examining budgets. Questions were raised regarding accountability of the government when the budgets allocated for women are not spent. It was discussed that accountability is key, and the government is accountable as per legal frameworks.

The discussion around Aadhar highlighted how it had been used as an instrument of exclusion, with problems such as spelling mistakes in names and bio-metric issues leading to denial of entitlements to marginalised people.

Further, gender should be seen as a spectrum and not as a binary, people from LGRBTQI should be centrally included in the GRB efforts.

A participant asked if there is any dis-aggregated funding/scheme for SC/ST women to deal with problems such as witch hunting and domestic violence in communities. Prof. Ghosh responded that it is not a good idea to fit everything in a scheme, these issues require wider/deeper solutions like change in school curriculum, engaging with media, creating awareness in communities.

Another question was on how the universal basic income scheme, current discussed was going to affect women. Prof. Ghosh replied that the scheme in its current form has not been well thought through, and is unfeasible. Instead she suggested an alternate and progressive way of providing a minimum income through a combination of universal basic services, universal employment guarantee, and universal pension for elderly and person with disabilities.

Ms. Syeda Hameed in her closing remarks congratulated the organising team for putting the event together. She appreciated UN Women's proposal of convening a national coalition of feminists. She said that the meeting is very timely and stressed the need to urgently push the feminists' agenda with intense lobbying efforts. She discussed briefly about some of the difficulties faced while introducing the concept of gender budgeting in the Planning Commission during her tenure.

Summing up

This session pointed the need to look at overall fiscal policy in its wider dimension and not just at budgetary allocations to women-centered schemes. It highlighted the importance of looking at outcome budget, and the importance of adequate monitoring and holding the government accountable.

Session- I Financing for Whom? Voices from the Field

Moderator: Ms Jashodhara Dasgupta.

Experiences were shared by individuals/ groups working with marginalized communities on Dalit human rights, Tribal and Adivasi women, single women, women with disabilities and the rights of Muslim women.

Ms. Beena Pallical, National Coordinator, National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), raised the issue of low budgetary allocations for women from SC and ST community. She highlighted that even the pitiful amount allocated was not being utilised for the assigned purpose, and being diverted to activities unconnected to women's priorities and realities.

She pointed to the need for pushing for greater economic resources and for targeted policies for women in these communities. Further, she highlighted the importance of involvement of SC and ST communities in planning and implementation of these policies, and the need for adequate monitoring starting from the panchayat level. She also referred to the absence of gender disaggregated data, which could enable GRB to be responsive to the needs of the women..

She mentioned how Dalit women were in manual scavenging, despite the law eradicating it, and criticised how large schemes such as 'Swachh Bharat' don't even mention manual scavenging problem; in fact there is a pitiful amount allocated for manual scavengers.

Ms. Vasvi Kiro, Founding member, Torang Trust, Jharkhand, highlighted the reduction in allocations for Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) and the diversion of these funds for general projects-like building roads, building infrastructure, etc.- which do not directly benefit women. She highlighted the high prevalence of malnutrition, anaemia and malaria among tribal women and yet the TSP does not address these significant issues.

She flagged the question of migration; even though there is high out-migration of the tribal population, particularly women, there are no laws for protecting them, no resources for their safety and right to decent wage. She also talked about internally displaced people due to mining, and how they had not managed to get any benefits of mega-development projects, and have become a sacrificial lamb in India's development story. She mentioned how T.B., poverty and unemployment were rampant among communities that have been internally displaced, and that the TSP does not address these real issues.

She raised the issue of low MSP for Mahua, which is a source of livelihood for many women in the tribal areas, while it is being sold at very high prices in other countries. She pointed out that the recommendations of Xaxa Commission had not been implemented by the earlier government as well as the current one.

Dr. Nesar Ahmed, Director, Budget Analysis and Research Centre, reprised the issue of GBS being reduced to an accounting statement, with no real impact on women's lives. He pointed out that various government departments are allocating arbitrarily 30% for women, without any analysis or proper planning. However, he is hopeful that the new budget circular that mentions

that departments must provide the basis of allocations for women, might force them to do better planning and engage in discussions.

He highlighted that the schemes/programmes for women in Rajasthan are not properly implemented – illustrating the example of the Girl child policy and Rajshri Yojana. He pointed out that women had not benefitted from them due to many conditions that are imposed that result in disqualifying them.

He also said that there is lack of proper guidelines for the implementation of TSP and SCP. He was concerned about issues faced by single women. He stressed the need to take a holistic approach, and look beyond the MWCD allocations, as women are important stakeholders in other areas too. He gave the example of agriculture and livestock - that are domains of women's involvement as well. He stressed the urgency to address TB in mining areas, where many women are losing their husbands to TB caused by mining, and also the need to support policies for victims of silicosis.

Ms. Meenakshi, Executive Officer, Centre for Promotion of Social Justice, Chennai, expressed her concern of how accessing spaces for disabled people is difficult. She pointed to the lack of internationally comparative data for disabled people and presented data highlighting the multiple marginalisation of disabled women, because of their low engagement in education and paid work.

She revealed the falling budgetary allocations for the nodal department - Department for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), and how the GBS of the DEPwD revealed the falling share of women within that. She pointed out the lack of gender disaggregated data within the nodal department. She pointed out that apart from the nodal department, only 4-5 ministries have programmes for disabled people, but they too don't have the gender disaggregated data, so it's not possible to evaluate the quality of programme from the lens of women and girls with disabilities. She brought attention to the fact that there are no specific programmes aimed at addressing issues experienced specifically by women and girls with disabilities.

She contended that there is political apathy towards women with disabilities, as there has been no specific mention of women with disabilities in any of the budget speech over a period of time. She argued that women with disabilities are not considered as primary stakeholders in government departments other than the nodal department. Even, the MWCD does not look at women and girls with disabilities as their primary stakeholders. This, she argued, is reflected in the lack of data in the programmes and policies of the Ministry and also none of the programmes talk about women with disabilities except shelters.

Rahima Khatun, State Convenor of Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan, and Secretary of Nari-O-Sishu Kalyan Kendra, West Bengal, reflected on how initially she herself didn't recognise the marginalisation of Muslim women, and it was only after the Sachar Committee report came out in 2006, did she realise the extent of their marginalisation.

She discussed about the invisibility of Muslim women in public places. Based on her study of four districts in West Bengal where proportion of Muslim women is higher than 25%, she highlighted some of the problems faced by them: early age at marriage, teenage pregnancy, and rampant prevalence of anaemia among pregnant women.

Based on her grassroots level work she contended that Muslim women are not aware of programmes/schemes launched for them, and pointed out the negligence of bureaucrats in implementing programmes/schemes for Muslim women, and the lack of adequate monitoring of these schemes at district and panchayat level.

Discussion and suggestions

The following important points were raised in the discussion:

- Need for allocating funds for capacity building and awareness generation. Currently, a very small share of allocated funds is going into these activities.
- Need to shift the discourse from 'schemes' to the 'issues'. The point is not to get trapped in schemes that are given; the point is to first understand the issues.
- Need to recognise intersectionalities of marginalisation in the overarching framework of gender. It was emphasized that women should not be treated as homogenous group, and an intersectional perspective is essential for transformative outcome. Another suggestion was to decentralise the process of gender budgeting with an intersectional perspective.
- Participants emphasised the need for data to analyse the gender outcomes and hold the government accountable.

Ms. Jashodhara Dasgupta ended the session with a very thoughtful note - she stressed the need to recognise not just intersections of disadvantages but also intersections of privilege. She suggested that the solidarity among feminist groups must come from realisation of privilege, otherwise this will lead to a competitive mode to proving who is most marginalized among them. She further continued that the discourse shouldn't be around victimhood but solidarity and agency, and towards a broader understanding as a movement.

Summing up:

This session brought out the experiences of Gender Budgeting (GRB) from the perspective and lived realities of a number of marginal groups. One of the key take aways from the session was that women should not be considered a homogenous group, one should take into account the different degrees of marginalisation experienced by different women from diverse backgrounds. This calls for an intersectional perspective. Another important point was the need for more accountability in government schemes in their response to marginalised groups.

Session-II GRB: Experiences across Sectors

Moderator: Dr Julie Thekkudan, Lead Specialist of Gender Justice, OXFAM India

This session examined the practice of gender budgeting across sectors like - agriculture, health, sanitation, SDGs, infrastructure - and highlighted shifts achieved in these spaces, challenges faced and the strategies to take GRB forward.

Agriculture:

Ms. Seethalakshmi, Member of National Facilitation Team of MAKAAAM (Mahila Kisan Adhikar Manch), discussed the experience of GRB in the agriculture sector based on an action research project that was undertaken by MAKAAAM and UN Women between 2015 and 2016. Using insights from the study, they also conducted training for officials in the agriculture department. The objective of the study was to analyse the way in which the schemes (particularly two schemes-NHM and ATMA) in the agricultural sector were being operationalised from a GRB lens.

She highlighted that despite the expansive definition of farmers given by NPFF 2007, most of the schemes continue to be based on pre-condition of land rights, consequently women farmers are excluded from most of the government schemes at the outset itself, due to absence of land rights. She pointed out that few schemes explicitly have allocated funds for women; however even schemes with overtly stated objectives of 'mainstreaming gender' do not have any proper guidelines for doing so. She revealed that the money allocated for capacity building and training of women farmers was diverted for general projects.

On the basis of the study she suggested important interventions:

- To increase the allocations for women farmers and workers (from 30% to 50%) in proportion to their presence in the agriculture and related sector (not arbitrary 30%). All schemes must have operational guidelines for mainstreaming gender that must be regularly updated.
- Within agriculture, since most schemes continue being land-linked, unless the structural reality of agriculture changes - women owning more land – there will not be major changes.
- She suggested a holistic approach, and the need to look at the extent to which macro-economic policies were sensitive to the changing needs and aspirations for women.

Sanitation:

Ms. Dharmistha, Independent Consultant, presented a study conducted by the National Foundation for India on the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) in urban areas. The purpose of the study was to understand needs and expectation of low-income working women around public toilets and see how SBM(urban) was addressing this both in terms of policy as well as resource allocation. The study was undertaken in 4 cities: Ajmer (Rajasthan); Anantpur (Andhra Pradesh); Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh); and Bhubhneswar (Odisha) .

She pointed out that the number of public toilets has increased post-SBM, however overall coverage was low. She highlighted the following gender gaps in the scheme, design and its implementation:

- There were no urinals for women, so women pay higher charges for using public toilets, which is a huge deterrent for using such toilets.
- Even though the policy might look gender neutral or even pro-women, there were clear gender gaps in government expenditure on toilet construction- Rs. 12 on men, Rs. 5 for women.
- A majority of the toilets lacked gender specific design like separate entrances for male/females, sanitary pad dispensers/ disposal mechanisms, racks, hooks, baby changing facilities, etc.

Other issues pointed out by her were: inadequate fund allocations from central government, timings of the toilets (close at 9 pm in many places), cleanliness and safety concerns.

Health:

Mr. Ravinder Singh Duggal, Independent Consultant, presented a framework for gender budgeting in the health sector. He argued for gender budgeting within an equity framework-taking into account factors like poverty, employment status, social security, state obligations, etc. He highlighted various reasons for health inequities - regional disparity, employment, class, social group and gender inequities. Other aspects identified were - age, disability, communal situation, etc. He argued that the low level of public health investments and expenditure constitute the first barrier to gender equity. He criticized the state's approach of focusing only on family planning and RCH when it comes to women's health. He suggested that the tax: GDP ratio needs to be increased for facilitating universal health care in India.

Ms. Renu Khanna, Founding Trustee, SAHAJ, discussed SAHAJ' study on select targets of SDGs 3 and 5 in 2017-18 in 5 states - Gujarat, Assam, MP, Punjab, Bihar. She also discussed the recently launched GOI scheme- *Ayushman Bharat*.

The SDG study pointed out that the budget allocations were not commensurate with the SDG goals, for example, funds required to set up a one-stop crisis centre (OSCC) is Rs. 37 lakhs per centre in each district, whereas funds allocated for this purpose were not even sufficient to set up just one OSCC in each state. Similarly, there were gaps in utilization as well: she pointed out that in schemes like ICDS and Maternity Benefits, the amount allocated was released late and not fully spent, which led to reduced allocations in the coming years.

Next, she discussed about the *Ayushman Bharat* scheme, which has a stated objective of reducing Out Of Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) for healthcare. She argued that the design of the scheme does not match the aim. She pointed out that amount allocated for upgradation of centres is not sufficient. Moreover, there is no clear roadmap stated to achieve the objective. She presented a general critique of the scheme, arguing that the insurance-based model is leading to cost escalations, which is eating into the funds required for long term strengthening of the public health system.

She showed evidence that RCH allocation within NHM reduced from 40% in 2016-17 to 15 % in 2018-19, and the allocation for maternity benefit scheme has been halved. She pointed out other drawbacks of the insurance-based health scheme: low awareness, low enrolment, and low utilization and low claims, particularly by women. Besides pointing out the general critique of the insurance scheme, she discussed the following gender gaps in the scheme:

- Many Sexual and RH conditions are not included in insurance schemes
- Some of the states have not included maternity/child birth because they are 'non-random events'
- The scheme doesn't recognise female-headed households
- Issues of availability of certain services like contraceptive services, abortion services, etc.

Infrastructure:

Ms. Ritu Dewan, Vice President, Indian Society of Labour Economics, discussed the gendered impact of infrastructure, and how gender mainstreaming can be done in infrastructure. She began by discussing that no work has been done on gender-infrastructure linkages, because it is not even recognized as an issue. The focus of her study was on roads, in her study she found positive association of roads with female and male casual work participation, which led her to conclude that physical infrastructure is important not just for physical mobility but also societal mobility. She further argued that physical infrastructure has a huge potential of being a gender equalizer. In her study she also found that roads were associated with improvement in health indicators, including immunization, it had positive impacts on education, positive impact on work participation rate and also associated with change in patterns of employment. She suggested the following interventions which can be made for gender budgeting in physical infrastructure: doing a pre-project Rapid Gender Assessment Surveys, examining the Gender Ratio accessing appropriate physical infrastructure, collection of gender disaggregated data.

Summing up:

The experience across sectors showed that most of the schemes are not designed from a gendered perspective. Even schemes which have an overly stated objective of addressing gender concerns didn't really seem to address them on the ground.

Session –III Mechanisms for Engagement: Presentations and Group Discussions

Moderator: Ms. Seema Kulkarni, MAKAM and SOPPECOM

This session focused on the tools being used for gender budget analysis and accountability at the panchayat level GRB; state level planning process; at the level of Union budget; and for SDG monitoring. This session was divided into two parts. In the first part, anchors shared an overview of the issues/good practices regarding the above-mentioned four themes.

A. Gram Panchayat

Ms. Arunima Sen, Programme Analyst, UN Women, discussed about the importance of GPDP, which was introduced on the recommendation of 14th Finance Commission in 2015. She explained that overtime focus of GPDP has shifted from being just an instrument of local planning to a tool for poverty alleviation. She highlighted that GPDP gives opportunity for bottom-up planning and a direct impetus of impacting development from the grassroots level. She explained that GPDP is an important tool which comprehensively touches the lives of people.

B. State planning process

Ms. Hilda Grace Coelho, Founding Member, Centre for Rural Studies and Development, Andhra Pradesh, discussed about the various mechanisms of engagement with the state planning process. She explained that her organization works on identifying people's issue at the district and at the state level, based on these issues a charter of demands is formulated. These demands are then presented on a pre-budget consultation with a number of stakeholders like activists, principal secretaries of the concerned social sectors, policy makers. After the consultation, it is ensured through social pressure that the desired changes are implemented. She explained that often political events are used to push for people's agenda. She explained the important role played by UN Women in training the officials, which then lead to formulation of a comprehensive GRBS in some departments. She also highlighted the importance of ground level research, which is used to hold government accountable.

C. SDG monitoring

Ms. Renu Khanna, Trustee, SAHAJ, proposed that SDGs should be used as an opportunity by feminists to mobilise alliances and coalitions. She proposed the following mechanisms for SDG monitoring:

- Engaging with CSOs across states;
- Preparing reports on the experiences of CSOs. She explained that reports which are well researched go a long way in the process of dialoguing with state machinery.
- Calling out for engagement with bureaucrats and NITI Aayog. She suggested that reports can be formulated by using NITI Aayog's SDG index on gender equality.

She emphasized the importance of evidence generation-data analysis workshop for analyzing large data sets from a gendered perspective, and micro level studies. She also pointed out the importance of institutionalizing state and CSO dialogues.

D. Union Government

Subrat Das, Executive Director, CBGA, discussed about GRB at the Union Government (UG) level- achievements and issues. Mr. Das highlighted a dismal picture of achievement of GRB at the level of the Union government. He explained that very few ministries and departments have taken encouraging measure with regard to gender budgeting. He flagged certain issues:

- Weak mandate of the GBCs in terms of introducing substantive changes in programmes and schemes, and introduction of new schemes.
- Lack of strong political and bureaucratic leadership for gender budgeting at the UG.
- Need for capacity building among officials.
- Less space for participation of CS actors and sector experts in the policy formulation after devolution of 5 year planning process.
- Dearth of availability of - both ideas and expertise and also people who will ask tough questions to hold the government accountable.

Mr. Das emphasized the need of taking holistic approach, he explained that GRB cannot deliver alone, it needs to be supported by an overall progressive legal and policy framework focusing on equity and social justice. Other important things that he pointed out for GRB to work are- need for a progressive fiscal policy on social sector front, need for proper implementation of schemes by state government, and the need for adequate monitoring.

Summing up:

This session highlighted the need for adequate monitoring of government programmes. Other important points included the need to collect gender-disaggregated data from the Panchayat level itself. The session also highlighted the importance of micro studies in holding the government accountable.

In the second part of this session, participants were divided into four groups based on the themes: identifying stakeholders; nature of engagement; required legwork for engagement-data gathering, capacity building etc.; and what is the ask for the government in terms of institutionalizing the processes. After the discussion, an overview of the discussion was presented by one member from each group the next morning. The highlights of the group discussion are reported in **Appendix- A.1**

Day Two

Session-IV Perspectives on Implementation of GRB

Moderated by: Sarojini Ganju Thakur, IAS (Retd.) and Gender Expert

This session highlighted the work done so far, achievements made, challenges faced, and (good) practices in institutionalizing GRB.

At the beginning, the moderator **Ms Sarojini Ganju Thakur** provided a summary of the entire discussion of the previous day, flagging key discussion points.

She highlighted that initially the context had been set out, and the Opening Plenary session had examined to what extent GRB has made a real difference in the lives of women in India, what have really been the outcomes of gender-sensitive budgets. It had been concluded that this was turning into a technical exercise of allotting percentages, while there was actually a need to

examine the entire fiscal policy. Women were always given promises of various schemes but their implementation was diluted because money was never enough: yet the state was pleased to provide tax concessions to many actors. There is an important role that civil society groups could play in such a situation, and this was a timely discussion. She summarized the action points that came out of the session, which included:

- Putting the feminist politics back into GRB, enhanced accountability
- Focus on outcomes - engendering economic policy and pre and post budget analysis
- Creating a common platform need to continue, and hopefully lead to National Coalition for continued advocacy work
- Revenue-based strategies, and need to be strategic in looking at resources before budgets

For the second session on 'Financing for whom- voices from the field' Ms Thakur mentioned that the speakers representing various groups – Dalits, Adivasis, single women, women with disabilities, Muslim women and so forth had all stated that the government's plans were not responsive to general needs of women, and even less to differential gender needs. They seemed largely out of touch with ground realities of these groups. Mostly the word 'development' indicated giving priority to infrastructure, and the actual benefit to populations was insignificant. Real issues like manual scavengers, displacement of vulnerable groups were not addressed, neither were skills actually developed among women who may be rehabilitated. A persistent problem is the lack of availability of gender-disaggregated data, owing to which the impact of various programmes is invisible. It was critical to develop robust gender-disaggregated data linked to outcomes, since today basic data and categorisation was not available, for example even for disabilities, or needs of transgenders. Often the categorization is arbitrary and improved guidelines are required.

Ms Thakur summarized the third session on 'Experiences across sectors' which included agriculture, Swacch Bharat, Health, SDGs, and Infrastructure. Regarding schemes and budgets at field level, it emerged that the mandated 30% allocations do not translate into reality, and often there are no guidelines, or resource diversions, and definitely lack of data. There was a need to understand the differential needs of men/ women/ transgender users within all service sectors. There is also need to analyse differential impact on women and men which can impact on design, toilets, roads, access to health, agriculture and so forth. The fact that there is no monitoring and reporting on 'gender-responsive budgets' makes it difficult to evaluate how far the designs of any scheme actually match the requirements and fulfil the commitment.

Finally Ms Thakur mentioned that there were presentations and group discussion on the various options to work on GRB, such as with Panchayats, State Planning processes, SDG monitoring and in the Union GRB process.

Mr. K Moses Chalai, Joint Secretary, MWCD, GOI appreciated the coming together of so many organisations. As discussed on Day 1 of the consultation, Mr. Moses reiterated that gender budgeting has not been given adequate importance in government departments. He mentioned that 57 ministries have a GBC, but they are not really active. He highlighted that over the years the total amount allocated in GBS has been going up in absolute terms, however there is little

change in terms of the percentage. He stressed the 'need to go up and deep', implying that there is need for increased allocations, and for deepening of the gender budgeting in different sectors. He pointed out that Expenditure Finance Committees (EFCs) are very effective for flagging our concerns. He assured the group that a representative of MWCD would in future participate in all EFCs of government and that would create an opportunity for mainstreaming gender in all new initiatives. He too pointed out the need for gender disaggregated data to evaluate the impact of different programmes. At the end, he highlighted the importance of political leadership for effective operationalization of gender budgeting.

The Moderator, **Ms Sarojini** commented that it was good to see the change being made. She reiterated the importance of EFCs. In addition to political leadership, she highlighted the important role played by CSOs for effective operationalization of gender budgeting.

Dr. Mridul Eapen, Member, Kerala State Planning Board presented the model of Kerala's gender budgeting. She highlighted that the share of women in overall budget of Kerala has been going up, in 2019-20 it reached 16.9%, which is above the level recommended by Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA). Ms. Mridul explained following key mechanisms which makes GRB more feasible in Kerala

- 1) Integrating GRB in the planning process itself, and not making it an ex-post analysis of budget. Doing planning by taking an expansive view of women's lives, i.e. taking into account not just paid work of women, but also their unpaid work, which is often a substantial part of their lives. Integrating social policies to reduce women's unpaid work in the macro-economic framework for a transformative outcome is crucial.
- 2) Need for building capacity among officials: the importance of political commitment and creating a gender-aware society through mass campaigns and introducing gender sensitiveness in school education.
- 3) She stressed the need for gender disaggregated beneficiary data from the ministries and how it has helped Kerala in generating more robust estimates rather than guesstimates which further helped in concrete planning.

Ms Suneeta Dhar, Advisor, JAGORI discussed governance and budgetary challenges of women's safety in public spaces, based on a study done by JAGORI and CBGA, in Delhi and Jharkhand. She contended that state's actions for promoting women's safety reflects its patriarchal mindset of tracking the perpetrators (through CCTVs, emergency applications, etc.) rather than preventing the crime, and changing mindsets of people. She pointed towards the spatial bias in police protection mechanisms, and how the marginalised communities living on the peripheries of the city were underserved by access to services.

She pointed out that the public transport services lacked the last mile connectivity even in nation's capital. The complex structure of Delhi's governance, characterized by controls by different governments makes it a challenge to ensure and design a holistic programme on women's safety.

She highlighted a few gaps in mechanisms for women's safety in Jharkhand: inadequate budgetary allocations for support mechanism for women in distress; women helplines were not working; inadequate police staff; low women staff at higher levels of police; less number of toilets for women as compared to men; location of shelter homes in isolated places and their low capacity in relation to demand; shelter homes lacking basic facilities of electricity, water, sanitation etc.

Ms. Dharmistha, Independent Consultant, discussed about her experience of introducing the exercise of gender budgeting in labour ministry. She suggested starting with a situation analysis and then getting into schemes. Based on her experience she suggested some institutional mechanisms for effective gender budgeting:

- Strengthening the GBCs and renewing them every year.
- Conducting review meetings with MWCD was found to be very useful by her, as it gave a sanction to the agenda and also helped in pushing it forward in the department.
- To have a system of data consolidation wherein all data related to different programmes, schemes and policies can be fed into and accessed by different stakeholders.
- Constant renewal of trainings and capacity building among department officials.

She concluded that GBS should not be taken as be-all and end-all for GRB, it should be there as an entry point. She stressed for focusing more on action plans.

Ms. Pooja Singh, Consultant, UN Women Gender Budget Cell in Madhya Pradesh discussed about UN Women's experience of implementing GRB. She highlighted that an Inter-departmental Monitoring Committee (ITMC) was set up based on the recommendation of a study done by UN Women, MWCD and Sanket organisation in 2014. She pointed out that ITMC has been the pillar of GRB in M.P, it has members from Planning dept., MWCD and Finance Ministry. It's mandate is to review and monitor the GBS of the government departments, undertake capacity building in the state, and examine the scope of reaching out to other actors.

She highlighted some of the success of the ITMC in terms of implementing GRB: establishment of GRBCs in government departments; inclusion of a chapter on gender in annual report of the departments; inclusion of gender expert in EFC and SFC committee of the state; introduction of a two-hour module on gender in curriculum of state academies; success received in agriculture sector where gender disaggregated data was reported on Tejasvini scheme. She pointed out that no work has been done so far on assessing the impact of GRB, and there are challenges due to non- convergence in departments.

Comments and suggestions:

Participants suggested to Mr. Moses to have **pre-budget consultations** with CSOs and other stakeholders and institutionalize this process within the government. Other suggestions included a broader engagement of NGOs, CSOs for feasibility of projects, and regular meetings. Some CSOs offered Mr. Moses that they could provide resource persons for training and capacity building.

Mr. Moses responded very positively to these suggestions. He agreed that there is a need to broaden the consultation with NGOs, CSOs and other organisations, he further suggested that perhaps **meeting twice a year** with stakeholders may be feasible. He welcomed the suggestion of participants to provide a pool of resource persons for training and capacity building, he specified that in the coming period there is need for training and handholding.

He highlighted the importance of outcome tracking, and mentioned that the Ministry is serious about this task. He ended the discussion on a positive note by mentioning that MWCD will actively participate in EFC meetings, which could be prove to be very effective for pitching gender issues and they has been good response to that as well.

Summing up:

This session highlighted the importance of the following mechanisms for comprehensive gender budgeting: integration of gender budgeting with the planning process; strengthening GRBCs every year; Constant renewal of training and capacity building among officials; focusing on action plan; and greater engagement between different stakeholders- government at different levels, CSOs, researchers etc.

Session-V Developing the Women's Manifesto

Moderator: Ms Suneeta Dhar, Jagori

The focus of the session was to discuss the connecting points of the feminists' demand, which is endorsed not just by participants present at the time of consultation, but also by a wider social movement and others. It was decided that a working group will work on the discussed convergence points and formulate a joint manifesto, which then will be shared with NITI Aayog, MWCD and other agencies.

Ms. Karuna Nundy, Advocate, Supreme Court of India discussed about the well-known [Womenifesto-2014](#) which was formulated by 70 independent civil-society activists and is a 6-point plan and it set out its positions on female economic empowerment, female access to education and political representation, the quick administration of justice in cases of sexual violence, and better policing. She was clear that manifestos should be precise, short and focused.

Ms. Archana Jha, National Programme Coordinator and Project Head for Political Empowerment of Women with Centre for Social Research, presented the women's manifesto- a 11 point demand formulated by the National Alliance of Women's Organization. The manifesto included a demand of 50% reservation for women in parliament and legislation. Other points included - health sector, education, equality of women in legislation, gender budgeting, women's involvement in decision making bodies, dealing with climate change and the environment, and economic empowerment of women.

Ms. Ritu Dewan, discussed the draft feminist manifesto that was formulated by the organizing committee of the consultation following the June 2018 meeting. This manifesto has a 7 point demand including: creation of separate ministries/departments for Women and Children, enabling women's participation in planning and budgetary processes at all levels of governance, implementing GRB and redesigning the GRBS; addressing gender-based violence by challenging the fundamentals of violence; enabling economic and political empowerment of women; strengthening health and nutrition intervention by going beyond RCH and by using life cycle approach; addressing women's concern in agriculture and climate change; and finally enabling gender responsive urbanization. The final demand relates to addressing how patriarchal norms reflect in macro-economic and financial architecture.

Comments and suggestions:

After the three manifestos were presented, there was very lively and exuberant discussion. However given the lack of time, only few issues could be discussed. Nevertheless, participants were encouraged to send in their inputs by mail and the draft joint agenda is given in the appendices (**see Appendix 2**). The following suggestions and comments were provided:

- The changing demographics of increased life span and singlehood in old age should be taken into account while formulating health policy.
- Processes for capturing diversity across states, and across sectors is important.
- All issues should be examined through lens of intersectionality, and gender should be seen as a spectrum and not as a binary.
- Inclusion of issues of internally displaced women.
- Issues of inadequate monitoring and evaluation of government programmes should be included.
- Taking into account impact of GST on women, and asking for compensation where women have lost their jobs.

Session VI- Ways Forward

Moderators: Mr. Amitabh Behar, CEO, OXFAM India and Ms Sona Mitra, Principal Economist, IWWAGE.

Mr. Amitabh Behar emphasized that instead of focusing on the content, the need of the hour is to focus on strategies, processes and action plans for financing for gender equity. He raised the issue of declined spaces of engagement in the current political climate.

Ms. Sona Mitra insisted on the need to renew the whole work of gender budgeting by looking at holistically and integrating it with broader women's question. She argued that in its current form gender budgeting has become a tool for fiscal consolidation and targeting of schemes. She pointed out that gender budgeting has become a tool for reducing expenditure; few schemes and constituencies are given importance in the name of GRB, while the rest are neglected. She emphasized the need to begin with gender aware policy analysis, and the need to demand that it cannot be a tool for fiscal consolidation and targeting. She suggested moving forward with a

decentralized approach; by engaging with District Planning Committees (DPCs), state's organisations, and NGOS.

After the comments of Ms. Mitra and Mr. Behar, the floor open for discussion. Following are some of the main highlights:

- Institutionalization of spaces so that policy implementers, researchers and organisations working on gender issues can come together and interact. In this direction it was suggested to have a knowledge resource centre, where the stakeholders can upload and access the information regarding gender issues. This will help in establishing strong critical mass of information and knowledge around gender issues. Ms. Jashodhara pointed out that UN Women does have a repository, apart from that, a group of participants is planning to set up a repository which will focus on feminists work in India since the last several years.
- Need for setting up of a feminist watch/policy group was reiterated throughout the two days of the consultation. The feminist group shall plan to raise issues across different sectors at the state and national level, and work systematically both at the pre-budget stage and later.
- Re-energizing and investing in smaller and focused studies, that would bring out deeper insights and layers of gender issues.
- The importance of decentralized engagement. GPDP was identified as an important tool in the hand of feminists to influence the planning process at district level.
- Pursuing collection of gender dis-aggregated data from the panchayat level itself.
- The need for greater economic analysis of programmes and policies. Currently economic analysis is being done in the academic institutions, however, it does not necessarily feed into movement building. This gap between academics and movement building needs to be filled.
- Identifying sources of resource mobilization was also considered as crucial for gender budgeting to be successful.

Finally the Consultation ended with a vote of thanks by Pragya Tikoo of NFI, and lunch.

Annexure I- Schedule of the Consultation

**CONSULTATION
ON
TRANSFORMATIVE FINANCING FOR GENDER EQUALITY**

February 11th -12th, 2019
'We the people' Hall, UN House, New Delhi

Day 1: 11th February 2019

Time	Session and panelists	
09.00 -09.30 am	<i>Registration and Tea</i>	
Inaugural Session	Envisioning Transformative Financing for Gender Equality	
09.30 -11.00 am	Welcome address and opening remarks followed by context setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jashodhara Dasgupta, National Foundation for India ● Nishtha Satyam, UN Women ● Jayati Ghosh, Prof. (Economics), JNU University <p>Moderator: Dr Syeda Hameed (Former Member, Planning Commission, GOI)</p>
11.00 -11.30 am	<i>Tea</i>	
Session-I	Financing for whom? Voices from the field	
11.30 am -01.00 pm	Experience sharing by individuals and groups working on the issue Dalit human rights, tribal and Adivasi women, single women, Women with disabilities and rights of Muslim women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Beena Pallical, National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights ● Vasavi Kiro, Torang Trust ● Dr Nesar Ahmed, Budget Analysis and Research Centre ● Meenakshi Balasubramanian, Equals, Centre for Promotion of Social Justice ● Rahima Khatun (Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan and Nari –O- Sishu Kalyan Kendra) <p>Moderator: Subhalakshmi Nandi, International Centre for Research on Women</p>
01.00 -02.00 pm	<i>Lunch</i>	
Session-II	GRB: Experiences across sectors (State level interventions across sectoral analysis)	

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02.00 -3.30 pm	Engagement between different sectors like agriculture, sanitation, health, SDGs, transport and bring out the shift being achieved in these spaces, challenges faced and strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seethalakshmi, MAKAAAM • Dharmishtha, Independent Consultant • Ravinder Singh Duggal, Independent Consultant • Renu Khanna, SAHAJ- Society for Health Alternatives • Ritu Dewan, Indian Society of Labour Economics <p>Moderator: Julie Thekkudan, Oxfam India</p>
3.30 -4.00 pm	<i>Tea</i>	
Session-III	Mechanisms for Engagement: Group Discussion and presentations	
04.00 -6.00 pm	<p>What tools being used for gender budget analysis and accountability</p> <p>a) GRB at Panchayat level b) State planning process c) SDG monitoring/ SDG gender index to track progress (Sahaj) d) GRB in the Union Budget</p>	<p>Each anchor to share an overview of the issue/good practices and then lead to group discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arunima Sen, UN Women • Hilda Grace Coelho, Centre for Rural Studies and Development • Renu Khanna, SAHAJ- Society for Health Alternatives • Priyanka Samy, Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability <p>Moderator: Seema Kulkarni, MAKAAAM and SOPPECOM</p>

DAY 2: 12th February 2019

Time	Session and panellists	
09.30 – 09.45 am	Recap of Day 1	Presenter: Sarojini Ganju Thakur, IAS (Rtd) and Gender Expert
Session IV	Perspectives on Implementation of GRB	

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09.45 -11.15 am	Highlighting work done so far, achievements made, challenges faced and (good) practices from the ground after institutionalising GRB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr K Moses Chalai, Joint Secretary, MWCD, Govt. of India • Mridul Eapen (Member, Kerala State Planning Board) • Suneeta Dhar, Jagori • Dharmishtha, Independent Consultant • Pooja Singh, UN W Gender Responsive Budgeting, DWCD, Govt. of Madhya Pradesh <p>Moderator: Sarojini Ganju Thakur, IAS (Rtd) and Gender Expert</p>
11.15- 11.30 am	<i>Tea</i>	
Session-V	Developing the Women's Manifesto	
11.30am -12.30 pm	Formulate the women's agenda for recommendations to Niti Aayog, MWCD and other agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ritu Dewan, Indian Society of Labour Economics • Archana Jha, 33% group • Karuna Nundy, Advocate, Supreme Court of India <p>Moderator: Suneeta Dhar, Jagori</p>
Session VI	Moving Forward: Plans and Partnerships	
12.30 -01.30 pm	Future engagement plans	Moderators: Amitabh Behar, Oxfam India and Sona Mitra, IWWAGE
01.30 -02.30 pm	<i>Conclude with lunch</i>	

Annexure II- Participant List

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Appendix A.1: Group discussion

Gram Panchayat

Neerja, Member, Life education and development support, Ranchi, presented the highlights of the group discussion on Gram Panchayat level. The group had identified the following stakeholders for GRB at the Gram Panchayat level: traditional gramsabha; SHGs; School Management Committee (SMCs); Panchayat Raj institution (PRI) members; Forest committee; Labour group; government officials including- BDO, BEO, BPO from MGNREGA, BPM from NRHM and Rozgar Sewak.

The nature of engagements identified were: capacity building among PRI members, individual and community sensitisation, ensuring women participation in gram sabha from all CVOs for incorporating women's issues.

The group had identified the need for institutionalisation of the following processes: Collection of gender segregated data at the panchayat level; simplifying GPDP guidelines and adding the gender component in GPDP training manual, and engaging youth groups in panchayat.

State Planning Process

Ms. Shoumeli, working at UNICEF, discussed about the challenges and good practice of gender budgeting in the state planning process. She pointed out the challenges of capacity building at higher levels of government officials, and inadequate allocation for schemes on violence against women, and stop centres. The modes of engagements identified were: engagement of CSOs with the state, national level consultation within state to engage state level officials. She highlighted the work done by UNICEF with government of Maharashtra. She pointed out that UNICEF is trying to bring together the department of finance, Women and Child department, and planning, along with other stakeholders from academia and civil society to institutionalise the process of GRB. She further explained that UNICEF has developed a methodology document which goes beyond quantitative process of gender budgeting and they have taken it down to the panchayat level.

The required leg works discussed were: beginning with situation analysis in different government department and sectors, capacity building at all levels of government, need for greater convergence among stakeholders those within and outside the government. The group suggested separation of women and child department, institutionalising women participation in pre-budget process, review of last 14 years of GRB in India, and most importantly to have a feminist watch group to take cognisance of everything happening and making our voices louder to the government.

SDG monitoring

Ms Rashmi, working at SAHAJ presented the highlights of the group discussion on SDG monitoring process. The stakeholders identified by the group were: government starting from local to national level, municipal corporations, academic and research institutes, CSOs, CVOs, NGOs working with marginalised groups, parliamentary forum for SDGs, SDG cells in states,

District Planning Committee (DPCs), CAG training institutes present in some of the states, media, forums like young leader forum, youth ki awaaj. SIDA reports and Beijing plus 25 happening next year were identified as important platforms.

The group discussion pointed out importance of stakeholder mapping exercise, examining relationship between different stakeholder and how they can influence each other. Evidence building through different reports, and through research in academics, and reviewing of SDGs 8, 9 and 11 with gender as a cross cutting issue were identified as important mode of engagement. Required leg work include forming a feminist watch group. The asks from the government were for gender disaggregated data, proper tracking of gender sensitive indicators, and engaging with different think tanks that are involved in these issues like ARISE.

Union government

Mr Nesar Ahmed, Director, Budget Analysis and Research Centre presented highlights of group discussion on GRB at the Union Government level. The stakeholders identified were: government officials at higher levels like ministers, secretaries, oversight agencies like CAG, various commissions, parliamentary standing committees, EFCs, committee of secretaries, political parties, media, GRBC in different departments, Central Statistical Organisations, NITI Aayog, chief controller of account in every ministry, community organisations and CSOs, NGOS working with marginalised groups like transgender, sex workers group etc.

The mode of engagements discussed by the group included: newsletters, one-to-one meetings, sharing reports, pre-budget consultation, engaging with ministries atleast twice a year for priority issues. The institutional arrangements that were put up in the discussion were: asking the GRBCs to come up with gender action plan, and following up of these plans through adequate monitoring, and asking NITI Aayog to include indicators on gender outcome.

Appendix: A.2 Feminist Policy Manifesto 2019

*The following **Manifesto** was developed around a **National Consultation on Transformative Financing for Gender Equality** (11-12 February 2019) which was attended by over 70 participants from 15 states in addition to Delhi, including representatives of government, UN, research and academic institutions, lawyers and civil society organizations. The manifesto has been drafted by a group of concerned feminists towards promoting transformative financing to ensure gender equality.*

.....
The persistence of gender inequalities in all socio-economic indicators and the alarming incidence of exploitation, oppression and discrimination faced by women in India through their lifecycle highlights an urgent need for substantive measures by national and state governments as well as all political parties of all hues. This '**Feminist Policy Group**' is therefore putting forward the following demands based on substantial and undisputed evidence of gender inequalities across all sectors.

- I. **Strengthen the institutional architecture to support gender equality and advance women's rights**
 - a. **Separate Ministries and Departments of Women and Children:** The existing institutional set up for addressing issues related to women and children within the same administrative umbrella actually results in invisibility of the differential resources allocated within these agencies to women and children. The overall resources for delivering women-specific schemes are often limited in scale and scope. To address this, separate departments/ministries to deliver and monitor programs for women may more effectively address women's needs, interests and priority concerns. At the same time, the draft National Policy on Women(2016) needs to ensure convergence and collaboration with other development sectors and ministries such as transport, education, urban development, finance, health, agriculture, environment, human resource development, labour and skill and information and broadcasting. Future schemes for women need to envision futurist goals and move towards empowering women and transgender rights within the constitutional framework. The role of the Commissions for Women also need to be revisited.
 - b. **Create platforms to include feminist voices in planning processes at all levels of governance:** Institutional processes for planning, budgeting and implementation for governance can be strengthened by the participation of women and gender rights groups. Mainstreaming of gender in budgeting and for planning legislation, policies and programmes across sectors will lead to gender sensitive needs-based planning, monitoring and bridge gaps in the implementation of programmes for women.
 - c. **Strengthen Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and Re-design the Gender Budget Statement (GRBS):** To a large extent, the impact and implementation of the GRB has generally been limited due to over emphasis on the quantification of resources allocated to women through gender budget statements rather than a focus on outcomes and what impacts the lives of women and men. The GRB has been weak due to limitations in budgetary resources for operationalising schemes, under-utilisation of allocations, lack of

evidence and data due to insufficient monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Reporting of GRBS to include both quantitative and qualitative information on allocations and interventions can enable an informed understanding of gaps and challenges. There is an urgent need to improve transparency in budgetary allocations and introduce mechanisms for evaluation. The methodology for resource distribution can also be made more robust by the inclusion of indicators like the Gender Equality Attainment Scale. In each Union Ministry, processes for GRB could be strengthened by focusing on::

- Strengthening Gender Budget Cells (the mandate for GRB Cells has remained unfunded);
- Commissioning a situational analysis from a gender and rights lens in the sector or sub sector being focused upon; and,
- Facilitating the generation of gender (and other social groups) disaggregated data on beneficiaries or a benefit incidence analysis from a gender lens.

II. End Violence Against Women

Violence against women, both in the public and private sphere, has been a long-standing and increasing challenge. Government programmes such as, helplines, one stop centres, shelter homes and compensation for survivors of violence are woefully inadequate and have not reached every district/community. There is an urgent need to review and support mechanisms under the Nirbhaya Fund. None of the existing programmes challenge the systemic causes of violence against women, especially against the most marginalised; the approach must move beyond strengthening law and order and focus on prevention, education (from school onwards), strengthening community based services, skill development, employment and support women's agency and dignity.

III. Increasing women's labour force participation and addressing barriers to their economic empowerment

Declining rates of women's labour force participation, currently as low as 27%, are concerning. Over 90% of women work in the informal sector, where low wages and lack of social protection continue to be barriers to women's work. Social norms around women's primary role as 'caregiver' and the dual burden of managing work with home responsibilities remain major constraints to women's economic participation. Ensuring women's safety, access to resources, enforcement of dignified labour standards and instituting anti-discrimination laws, right to grievance and sexual harassment redressal mechanisms, are some of the aspects that need immediate attention so women can access decent work and opportunities for leadership and decision-making across all sectors.

IV. Enable representation of women in political processes

Women's agency and leadership can be strengthened by ensuring representation of women in all political decision-making and in all matters of governance. Even as the 73rd and 74th amendments facilitated participation of women in rural and urban local bodies, women continue

to be marginalised in the political sphere, especially within the legislative bodies at state and national levels. Passing the [Women's Reservation Bill](#) is an urgent and immediate demand from women's groups and represents a commitment towards women's empowerment and increasing their influencing on policies and decision-making.

V. Strengthen health and nutrition interventions for women

The National Health Mission's (NHM) Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) program has been an important step towards ensuring women's health. However, it has reduced women's health issues to reproductive health, with little recognition of other health concerns that affect women, such as mental health issues, cervical and breast cancer, to name a few. A significant proportion of women continue to be undernourished and anaemic, which affects their overall health, maternal health outcomes and their productivity. Government interventions that focus on improving the nutritional status of only pregnant and lactating mothers and children, fail to adopt a lifecycle approach. India's changing demographics and longer life spans, including increasing numbers of older women and categories of single women need to be factored into health policy making. Budgetary outlays for the health sector have been chronically low and urgent increases to at least 2.5% of the GDP are needed.

VI. Ensure gender equity in agriculture and climate change

'Feminization' of agriculture and of the non-farm rural sector is growing, yet women remain invisible in the discourses on the agrarian crisis. Women rarely own land or assets and as a result, their access to credit, government subsidies and schemes is restricted. Wage differences between women and men for agricultural labor show marked differences, and women most often are not even recognized as farmers, and their work in the fields seen as an extension of the household work. Concrete measures need to be taken to mainstream gender in all programmes such as land reforms, technological and capacity building, etc., in agriculture, horticulture, dairying, forestry, fisheries, weaving and associated occupations.

In regions with high rates of farmer suicides, investments are needed in counseling and supportive services for women farmers. Livelihood support for women in debt-ridden households and increasing access to government schemes is critical.

Gender and Climate Change: Increasing evidence on the disproportionate impacts of climate change for women and a direct bearing on responsibilities carried out by women needs recognition. Gender concerns must be mainstreamed in the climate discourse with specific policy efforts to enhance the adaptive capacities of poor and marginalized sections of women to cope with the uncertain climate vulnerabilities. Further, steps need to be undertaken to ensure that ownership of water resources by women is encouraged, particularly in drought-prone regions to address the unequal power-relations in society.

VII. Ensuring gender inclusive and gender responsive urbanisation

Women's aspirations have largely been excluded from the processes of urbanization, even as it is well-acknowledged that rapid urbanization has impacted women's lives in many ways. Female citizens face a larger share of urban challenges, particularly related to poverty, inadequate housing, water and sanitation and safety and violence. Lack of a gender lens in infrastructure development in housing, transport and public spaces leads to structural inequalities and violence against women. The recently launched SMART cities proposals have not adopted a gender sensitive or responsive approach; few proposals mention women's rights as equal citizens and fewer still seek to understand the diverse needs of women. Creating avenues for participation of women's rights groups in the execution and evaluation of urban development programs and budgets can ensure that physical and social infrastructure is gender responsive and allows women to benefit from the opportunities of the Indian urban futures.

VIII. Engendering the macroeconomic and financial architecture

Patriarchy is a macroeconomic construct, and unless this is recognised, no intervention to enhance gender equality can succeed.

- a. Increasing public provisioning of services for women and reducing barriers such as user fee in sectors of transport, energy, health, nutrition, sanitation and education:** Public provisioning of social sectors has been declining, and combined with falling subsidies and rising user fees has led to exclusion of women from almost all avenues of development, e.g. employment, schooling, public transport, mobility, nutrition, clean energy, health access, etc. Shrinking public provisioning of services and increasing out of pocket costs not only impedes women's labour force participation but also infringes on their right to full participation as citizens.
- b. Improving gender sensitivity in fiscal policies, particularly in the design and implementation of taxation policies:** The design of the Goods & Services Tax as well as its introduction and manner of implementation has been gender-insensitive, especially in its choice of commodities and the rates applicable of particularly those that poor households are dependent upon. Also, women's economic empowerment in the formal economy will be boosted by the re-introduction of the Standard Tax Exemption for women, and that too at an amount higher than the erstwhile Rs.10,000.
- c. Redefining the category of 'single' women in administrative and data systems, and addressing discriminations faced by 'single' women and female headed households:** Greater recognition to the changing demographic landscape with increasing lifespans and gender transformative conceptualisation of 'single women' and 'female headed households' is urgently needed to be amalgamated in administrative and public data systems which can then be used for resource allocations. Identifying instruments of exclusion as well as conditionalities that disadvantage these populations from social services or lead to discriminations in matters of law and policy need to be urgently addressed.