



## **MOVING FROM COMMITMENT TO PRACTICE IN A COVID-19 CONTEXT**

*A Stakeholder Consultation for Informing Gender Transformative Financing and Budgeting  
(For Union Budget 2021-22)*

*A brief Report*

Organized by the Feminist Policy Collective (FPC), New Delhi

November 23 -24, 2020

## The Feminist Policy Collective (FPC)

FPC is an independent collective working on Transformative Policy and Financing for Gender Equality. The members comprise of feminist academics, researchers, policy experts, practitioners and campaigners, committed to strengthening gender transformative policies, plans and budgets in India. See more: <http://www.feministpolicyindia.org/>

### Context

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, governments all over the world, have been responding with additional budget commitments and economic recovery plans to tide over the crisis. Feminists globally have been advocating for a gender-responsive budgets and stimulus finance packages, especially for the most marginalized communities. The plethora of data collected over the last several months has clearly indicated the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, including women, girls, trans people from across diverse communities.

2019 and 2020 have been significant milestone years, that has marked the advancement of gender equality and women's rights world over. 2019, has seen the completion of 40 years of CEDAW, and 2020 marks the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the five-year completion of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There is deep concern that some gains and progress made on several measures of gender equality and women's rights are potentially at risk of being reversed, given the fall out of the pandemic.

The Government of India has been preparing its annual Union Budget for 2021-22. In this regard, it is imperative that a gender lens be integrated with an intersectional perspective addressing major vulnerabilities of women and girls to re-build a better future.

The stakeholder consultation convened by FPC, with feminist practitioners, researchers, civil society, academics, and women's groups was planned. The aim was to deriving insights from ongoing research and experiences on the ground, that would in turn inform the 2021-22 budget, and effectively address some of the adverse impacts of COVID-19 on women and girls. These insights along with recommendations were later shared with the concerned Ministries (Finance and Women and Child Development), to inform priorities for the upcoming budget for 2021-22.

## Brief Session Reports:

### Session I: State of India's women and girls in a pre- and post-COVID world

**Moderator: Jashodhara Dasgupta**

**Speakers: Dr. Ritu Dewan and Subrat Das**

The critical issues and a need for a broad-based discussion on the status of women in the COVID-19 scenario and how budgets need to be impacted for the future were highlighted in the session. People faced myriad and multiple problems during the pandemic, particularly women and transgender people. The ineffective policy responses resulted in further hardships than that caused by the virus itself.

The incidence of greater inequality was stressed upon, growing unemployment rates and negative GDP growth have been far worse than claimed by official figures. In such context, there has been a rise in unemployment, lowered wages, greater burden of household and health-care work, higher drop-out rates of girls from educational institutions due to the lack of access to technology and the digital divide and ongoing pressure on early marriages, domestic abuse and such.

Currently, the economy is at a sluggish pace and adversely impacts women due to their greater dependence on public provisioning. The Centre and States need to recognise the worsening condition of women on various parameters, such as nutrition, education, access to healthcare, labour market participation rate, etc. It was stressed upon that the government could not afford to adopt a conservative approach towards fiscal deficit at the moment and be bolder in this hour of crisis.

#### **Key Recommendations:**

- Increase income support to women and all vulnerable groups.
- Employment guarantee in rural, as well as urban areas, preferably increased to 200 days.
- Revamp basic services, like health, which have been the worst affected by the pandemic.
- Budget allocation for One-stop centres for women affected by violence and other problems.
- The government should not worry about fiscal deficit right now but try to increase spending.

The introductory session set a context to the consultation. Issues and gaps were discussed in great details, and subsequent sessions surfaced several key recommendations.

## **Session II: Women's Livelihoods and Drawing a Roadmap for Building Economic Resilience**

***Moderator: Suneeta Dhar***

***Speakers: Indrani Majumdar, Seema Kulkarni, Dr. Sona Mitra, Dr. Ashwini Deshpande***

COVID-19 has aggravated the existing inequalities and structural fault lines, leading to an unprecedented economic crisis, affecting lives and livelihoods of millions of women workers, largely in the informal sector globally and nationally.

Women's workforce participation rate in India, has declined over the last decade, despite an increase in women's literacy rates and a decrease in fertility rates. Research and data is available on the supply side constraints, though not so on the demand side constraints. This suggests that there are fewer jobs in the market for women, commensurate with their educational levels, salary expectations, safety at the workplace, etc.

The decline in the workforce participation rate for women workers in the informal sector has been higher in the rural areas as compared to urban areas. There is also an increase in non-marriage migration of women to cities. The absence of non-farm employment opportunities, precarity of existing agriculture-based jobs, and the new Farm Acts which may further reduce government investments in agriculture are some additional challenges. Further, the pandemic has severely impacted the MSME sector, that also employed a large number of women and has also impacted women led enterprises.

The data for India shows that post lockdown, the recovery rates in female employment is not as much as the case in male employment figures. Given the huge care burden on women, with increased domestic work, care of returnee migrants and prolonged school closures has created additional barriers to women re-joining and re-starting their work. Besides, data indicates a huge surge in domestic and other forms of violence on women with limited access to redress and safety.

### ***Key Recommendations:***

- Gender Equality should be at the heart of post-COVID economic restructuring processes.
- Urban employment guarantee scheme should be designed and ensure right to work for women workers rather than the household.
- MGNREGA – invest more resources, increase the number of employment days and beneficiary should be the individual rather than the household.
- Frontline women workers (Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHAs), Auxiliary Nurse-Midwife (ANMs), etc.) be recognised as workers and be covered under the ambit of minimum wages and social protection entitlements.
- Three areas for transformative financing within the agriculture sector include –
  - Allocations for evidence gathering and monitoring performance.
  - Programmatic allocations.

- Allocations for human resources.
- Direct cash transfer schemes like the *PM Kisan* should be in the name of women irrespective of title of the land ownership.
- Invest in agro-ecological farming that is food- and nutrition-centred and linked with the decentralized and expanded PDS.
- Expansion of the rural service sector.
- Policy and budgetary allocations specifically focused on improving the situation of farm suicide affected women farmers through prioritized coverage under programmes such as National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) & National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), a one-time settlement of non-institutional loans, freedom from institutional debts, housing and pension support, amongst others.
- Policies are required for financial strengthening of Self-Help Groups (SHGs).
- Policies are required for financial strengthening of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector and to address the demand side constraints.
- Greater government investment is required for skill development of women entrepreneurs including for leadership skills, managerial skills, digital finance, etc.

## Session III: Investments to enhance capacity of women and girls

**Moderator: Sarojini Ganju Thakur**

**Speakers: Dr. Dipa Sinha, Jyotsna Jha, Renu Khanna**

The specific objectives of this session were to focus on the following issues:

- Improving educational outcomes, skilling strategies and programmes in both traditional and non-traditional opportunities for women.
- Improving investments in health, nutrition and strengthening food security.
- Enabling mechanisms and investments in gender sensitive infrastructure to address women's care and unpaid work needs.

### **Education:**

- **Gaps and challenges** The main issues highlighted on investment on girls' and women's education were that while money is important what was equally and critically important was how the money was actually spent. The strong correlation between public investment and social development was pointed out which was brought very clearly in a 16 state study conducted by CBPS establishing a strong correlation between public investment on children and the child development index. Enhanced expenditure on its own will not bring about transformation - while more and more girls are coming to educational institutions their situation has not changed much in terms of social norms, equal opportunities and freedom. While there are variations between states, many restrictions continue.
- At the family level on social norms parents are committed to girl's education to the limit that it does not question their own decision making, their control on girls' life and mobility. Safety is a real concern and a strong alibi for disallowing mobility and freedom for fear of losing honour. It is not just about fear of sexual abuse, but also the fear of their daughters falling in love. Marriage is seen as the ultimate and non-negotiable goal.
- Educational institutions reinforce social norms as classroom studies and the focus in skill development on stereotyped activities such as tailoring and beauticians courses show
- Inadequate and ill-directed policy and programmes. There is a huge focus on cash transfers. Enabling conditions like transport, well-lit streets are overlooked.
- Disbursement of cash/scholarship is so slow and inconsistent.
- The New Education Policy is confused and status-quoist. RTE has not been extended to secondary education. Higher education's focus on privatisation can have adverse implications for women.

### **Health:**

#### **Gaps and Challenges:**

- Public health expenditure (centre and state governments) has remained constant at approximately 1.3% of the GDP between 2008 and 2015, which increased marginally to 1.4% in 2016-17. This has been less than world average of 6% and WHO

recommendation of 4%, and against the National Health Policy, 2017 promise of 2.5% of GDP by 2025.

- High reliance on out-of-pocket expenditure by households, which constitutes 70% of total expenditure on health.
- Human resources are another chronic problem. Private medical colleges are increasing, and are not serving public health systems, registered allopathic doctors in the public sector have gone down.
- Women in India are being deprived of specialist care with a shortfall of surgeons (85.6%), obstetricians & gynaecologists (75%), physicians (87.2%) and paediatricians (79.9%). There is also a shortfall in health infrastructure with only 11% of SHC, 16% of PHCs and 16% CHCs meeting the Indian Public Health Standards.
- Increase in privatization in healthcare.
- Data on health for the transgender community does not exist. There is a need to identify such data gaps and address them.
- During this COVID pandemic maternal health and reproductive health issues suffered majorly
- The contribution of the health care providers during COVID or the 'corona warriors' was undervalued with non-payment of salaries for months.
- This has huge implications for women in need of in-patient care. Households are more reluctant to borrow for financing female hospitalisation expenditure. This cuts across economic groups, with lower variation observed in the higher quintile groups.

### ***Nutrition:***

#### *Gaps and Challenges:*

- Recent data (September-October 2020) through the initiative of Right to Food campaign along with several civil society organisations called the 'hunger-watch' suggested that the situation of hunger is to do with the overall economic slowdown. The economic revival is slow and one big area of concern is the various government support programs are coming to an end.
- The silver lining is that where PDS and other such schemes available, they did work. Where Mid-day meal (MDM) was supplied, it also reduced unpaid care work burden as one-time meal was taken care of.
- There is an urgent need to address the issue of hunger and food security, else it will take the current progress steps back. Nutrition and health linkages are very strong, so food security schemes need to address the existing shortages. Threats on livelihoods, malnutrition in the households also puts pressure on care work of women.
- Another serious concern is the lack of data.

## ***Key Recommendations:***

### *Education*

- Any budget advocacy needs to have a wider framework. Needs to work simultaneously on equity and quality – they are intrinsically linked.
- Strengthening public education at all levels (with attention to various forms of private cost) is a must for attaining gender equality in education, no reduction in education budget.
- Special efforts and allocations needed for strengthening community engagement for ensuring return of girls (and boys) to schools and colleges to prevent early marriages, trafficking and labour.
- Money for gender review and reform of skill education/ science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education leading to change in institutional frameworks/pro frameworks/processes.
- Money for institutionalization of gender responsive processes and programmes on a priority basis in each university, school and all educational institutional systems
- Development of an inter-departmental gender mainstreaming institutional frame for ensuring consistency in policy & approach, and to ensure greater efficiency and effectiveness in spending.
- Defining transformative education to act as a background for all policies and institutional arrangements.

### *Health*

- Increase substantively the expenditure on health to at least 1.5 percent of the GDP in 2021-22 and plan on at least 0.3 percent increase every year till 2024-25 (to honour the NHP promise).
- Prioritise spending on strengthening and expanding public health services including primary health, Health and Wellness Centres with full, well trained and competent staff. Appoint Male Health Workers (to mobilise boys and men for preventing and addressing violence against women and girls, and to increase male participation in reproductive health, as well as to work with boys and men on their sexuality and health related issues).
- Health and Wellness Centres to include SRHR package – including health literacy and basic SRH services.
- Guarantee free medicines (including blood which is an Essential commodity to prevent haemorrhage and resultant maternal deaths), diagnostics (including cancer screening).
- Double the expenditure (at least) on the 7 million frontline workers – ASHAs, Anganwadi Workers (AWWs), AWHs. Regularise ASHAs as permanent staff with fixed salaries. Ensure social security, protection to all front-line staff.
- Invest (through capacity building) in developing gender transformative health programmes – Non-Communicable Disease (NCDs) and Communicable Diseases



(CDs) - with regular monitoring (including community monitoring) and external audits.

- Universal health coverage – through social health insurance, expansion of Employment State Insurance Scheme (ESIS) to cover informal sector - with awareness and integration of gender sensitivity.
- Need to strengthen the counselling and redressal centres in the hospitals as women would first reach these at the time of physical injury.
- Sexual Assault guidelines to be imparted to all the key members in the health sector.
- Provisions for menstrual health needs and the need to supplement the sanitation needs of women especially in informal workers like constructions workers, street vendors, who are lacking basic sanitation and menstrual needs.

### **Nutrition**

- Public Distribution System (PDS):
  - Universalisation of the distribution system to addresses issues of food insecurity.
  - Inclusion of pulses and oils in rations as they are primary sources of fat and proteins in our diets which should ideally be later expanded to include vegetables, eggs chicken, meat.
  - Extend *Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Yojana* (PMGKY) for another six months through which five kilos of rice and wheat and one kilo of dal is being given to households.
- *Aanganwadi* Centres: Recent order allows re-opening of *aanganwadi* centres, except in containment zones.
  - Enhance Supplementary Nutritional Programme (SNP) to include eggs and so on.
  - Maintain transparency of nutrition data, which centres will be open, etc.
- Mid-day meal:
  - Improve quality of meals.
  - Honorarium for cooks.
- Maternity Entitlements: During the pandemic, there has been poor coverage.
  - Long standing demand of removing the conditionalities for not just the first birth, but to include all births, and all women. Usually, the ones excluded belong to the lower-income groups or SC/ST groups.
  - Enhance the amount.
- Service providers:
  - Regularizing scheme workers – AWWs, ASHAS
  - Fill all vacancies (25% of supervisory posts are vacant)

In conclusion, the budget for education, healthcare, nutrition, PDS etc need to be made universal access and receive budgetary allocations as per good practice benchmarks. Union government needs to set benchmarks or create norms, so it becomes easier for state governments to increase their expenditure. There is a need to analyse the extent to which

investment needs to enhance to reach the desired goals of SDGs and to put more money in working more directly on changing gendered social norms through nation-wide continuous campaigns around these issues.

## **Session IV: Strengthening Gender Responsive Budgeting in India**

***Moderator: Anju Dubey Pandey***

***Speakers: Dr. Aasha Kapoor Mehta, Dr. Mridul Eapen, Dr. Nesar Ahmed, Dr. Vibhuti Patel***

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) is not about budget allocations for women, it is a process that centre-stages women's needs, both practical and strategic, at each step of policy formulation and the planning process. It includes the entire policy spectrum and not just the budget. It needs to go beyond binaries to also include the concerns of the transgender community and not treat women as a homogenous group. Women migrant workers, DNT (Denotified tribes) women, differently abled women, single women have largely been invisible in the mainstream discussion of GRB.

Two major gaps of the current GRB:

- Its limited ability to estimate the flow of budgetary resources to women from composite schemes due to non-availability of gender disaggregated data.
- The absence of a broader and comprehensive vision of gender equality and women's empowerment.

There should be 50% representation for women in all official bodies of decision making in governance at the central, state and urban/rural local self-government levels. Additionally, each Ministry/ Department needs to ask what the specific needs and priorities of women are, especially those from marginalized communities and resource poor settings, in their Department's domain of work. This requires Participatory Planning and Budgeting to enable them to understand the needs and priorities of women and include them in their plans.

GRB needs to focus on key areas for development of women such as skill development, employment generation, livelihood security for women, enhancing the reach of the crèche cum day care centres, and work on prevention of gender-based violence.

### ***Key Recommendations:***

- State commitment and will needs to be foremost in attempting to effectively implement GRB. In all official bodies of decision making in governance at union, state and urban/rural local self-government levels, there should be 50 percent representation for women. Capacity building workshops on GRB for actual budget makers, i.e., finance and accounts officers in each ministry and department needed.
- Initiate processes for visibility of gender in statistics and indicators and eliminate conceptual operational biases.
- A Ministry/ Department should be able to answer questions regarding the needs and priorities of women, especially those who are poor. Participatory Planning and Budgeting is needed to understand and include the priorities of women in all governmental plans.
- Address issues of allocations towards other marginalised women like DNT women, differently abled women, and transgender people.

## Final Session: Presentation and Finalisation of Key Budget Asks

**Moderator/Speaker: Jashodhara Dasgupta and Sanya Seth**

The last session discussed policy asks from working groups, held in separate break-out sessions.

### Working Group 1: Financing for Women

*Members: Anju Pandey, Dipa Sinha, Hilda Grace Coelho, Nesar Ahmed, Paramita, Pragya Tikku, Ritu Dewan, Sarojini Ganju Thakur, Sejal Dand, Subrat Das.*

#### I. Institutional Processes / Mechanisms Required

- In the domain of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB), what is most important is to fix accountability of the Union Ministries for what they are undertaking to making their budgets more gender responsive. Earlier, during the 12<sup>th</sup> FYP period, the Results Framework Document (RFD) was used as a tool for accountability for making budgets and interventions gender responsive; this could be considered by the present Union Government again. In the UK, for instance, the Gender Equality Duty serves the purpose of fixing accountability.
- Gender disaggregated data systems, along with intersectionality as the primary lens – needs to be introduced / strengthened across sectors.
- Building feminist leadership of Public Finance Management Institutions (e.g., Finance Ministry, Finance Departments in States, Finance Commissions, among others) in India – both at the national and state level, is necessary for engendering fiscal policy and public financial management processes.
- Infrastructure sectors and schemes – especially the urban infrastructure schemes (e.g. AMRUT, Smart Cities Mission) – must adopt GRB.
- The gender disparity in access to Digital Technology Infrastructure needs to be recognised and addressed through proactive interventions by the government. Unless this disparity is addressed now, it will aggravate gender disparity not only in education and employment but also in other sectors.
- Special Component Plan for Scheduled Castes (SCP for SCs) and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) must be implemented properly with a strong emphasis on how these sub plans are benefiting *Dalit* and *Adivasi* women. Union Ministries should not be allowed to use ‘notional reporting’ of their budget outlays for general purpose schemes; they should introduce schemes or components within schemes meant specifically for addressing the challenges of *Dalits* and *Adivasis*, with special emphasis on *Dalit* and *Adivasi* women.

#### II. Fiscal Policy and Revenue Mobilisation

- Given the adverse gender implications of fiscal austerity, especially at the current juncture of the pandemic, the Union Government should not be obsessed with the Fiscal Deficit; it should adopt a bold and expansionary fiscal policy that enables the Union Ministries and States to engender their budgets.
- The Government should enable states to spend more on public services and emergency provisioning measures in the wake of the pandemic. States should not be

encouraged / pushed to increase their dependence on excise duty on alcohol for raising revenues, because of the particularly adverse gender impacts of the same.

- Rationalisation of expenditures required to generate resources for addressing burning gender issues across sectors.
- Untapped sources of funds, like those lying unspent with different types of welfare boards, need to be utilised pro-actively especially for benefiting women workers in the unorganised sectors.
- The emphasis on Direct Taxes needs to be strengthened considerably. There is a need for increasing the Corporate Tax rates and doing away with tax incentives more strictly. Re-introduction of the Wealth Tax and Inheritance Tax should also be taken up by the Centre.
- India had introduced an equalization levy of 6 % on sale of goods and services by e-commerce companies (over INR 20 million), that do not have a permanent establishment in India, which was amended to 2 % by the Finance Act 2020. There is need to increase the equalization levy, until there is a global consensus on tax norms for the digital economy.

### III. *Overarching Demands for Engendering the Union Budget 2021-22*

- Income support programmes are necessary at this moment, as under COVID-19 it is no longer a welfare measure, but a measure to compensate the poor, including women, for loss of livelihoods induced by the pandemic and the lockdowns.
- In addition to income support / cash transfers, what is required is a demand-driven Urban Employment Guarantee Scheme, on the lines of MGNREGS, which can be self-targeting and scalable. Such a programme should be extended to individuals, rather than households, with adequate number of guaranteed days of work and with every individual worker having their own bank accounts.
- There is a need for expansion of the MGNREGS entitlements, as the latest data for shows that households in many states have already reached the 100-day limit as in the Act, even when half the financial year is over.
- Government needs to universalise PDS, and increase budgetary support for mid-day meals, ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) and SAG (Scheme for Adolescent Girls) - to widen coverage of these schemes and improve service delivery.
- Union Budget 2021-22 needs to accord high priority to social protection for women and transgender persons – with special emphasis on women from marginalised communities – and provisioning of basic services given the higher dependence of women and girls on public sector provisioning.

### IV. *Some Specific Demands for Engendering the Union Budget 2021-22*

- Union Budget 2021-22 needs to provide support for affordable housing for migrant workers and transgender persons.
- The AWWs, AWHs, ASHAs, ANMs are bearing the burden of COVID-19 on the frontline, along with their regular maternal and childcare duties; their institutionalized presence has been vital in the fight against the pandemic. However, their working conditions remain poor; they are inadequately compensated for their work; and suffer from some fundamental and long-pending labour market deficits. The incentive system for the ASHA workers is even more complex, comprising of

components linked to defined tasks. These gaps merit immediate action by the government, which includes conferring 'workers' and 'government employees' status to them, with attendant benefits. These steps will enhance gender justice as these women workers hail from low-income families and communities.

- Surveys should be carried out under every education scheme (*Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan*, Mid-day Meal etc.) and gender disaggregated data collected to check progress on re-enrolment and attendance by girls, post COVID-19.
- Girls can continue learning during school closures by getting free access to digital technology infrastructure such as mobile phones, laptops, and free data packs.
- In remote areas with limited electricity and digital infrastructure, free learning materials like the distribution of textbooks and printed materials should be provided so that girls can study at their convenience.
- National Education Policy, 2020 recommends that GoI will constitute a Gender Inclusion Fund to provide equitable quality education at all levels of education. In this budget, the Government should allocate resources to this fund and lay down clear guidelines on how the corpus would be spent to address gender specific issues.

## **Working Group 2: Women in Work**

*Members: Radhika Desai, Vibhuti Patel, Asha Kapur Mehta, Ishita Mukhopadhyay, Gunjan Bihari, Aaliya Waziri and Sona Mitra.*

The key asks emerging from the WG 2 discussions could be divided into asks for women's economic engagement and women's unpaid and care engagements. Within that the emerging key asks have been as follows:

- Strengthening and expanding Employment Guarantee: Repayment of dues to workers under MGNREGA, adequate budgeting for current increases in demand for work post-COVID, extending workdays to 200 day with separate job cards for women (individual entitlements in place of household entitlements is needed), and extending employment guarantee to urban areas.
- Minimum wages to be announced for all women workers in informal employment including domestic workers.
- Expansion of jobs in the care sector with provisions of social security and social protection.
- Unorganised sector workers' insurance and pensions need to be augmented and separately budgeted for.
- Budget should provision for separate wages for women in public employment, especially ASHAs, AWWs and AWH and all the frontline service providers. Women frontline workers should be counted as 'workers' and not remain honorarium-based temporary service providers. There should be provisions for
  - minimum wages as defined in the Pay Commission (at least Rs. 18K a month).
  - social security enrolment and benefits including eligibility for maternity entitlements.
  - PPE and other protective measures at work for COVID workers.

- Women in self-employment need support - especially women’s businesses need infrastructural support and investments. Budgetary allocations should improve access to digital training, banking, skill development for leadership and managerial abilities.
- New institutional forms of women workers/self-employed women who are rooted in the recognition of their ‘worker’ status, rather than under the umbrella of “SHG women” (that makes invisible women's production contribution and does establish a relationship of right to state resources) - similar to Farmer Producer Groups wherein women farmers get inputs as farmers. Beyond the important aspect of recognising women as workers, it will enable the designing of a composite package beyond credit for the specific “occupational” needs.
- Gendering of skill development programmes is an important requirement to prevent women from falling out of workforce. Skill development programmes should be extended to women in their younger ages as they look to re-entering the workforce post maternity/familial breaks.
- Provisions for Skill training audits of Skill Missions at the State/UT level to understand existing skilling programmes/trainings available for women and girls, and existing gaps that do not address demand. MSDE (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship) /NSDC (National Skill Development Corporation) to develop a framework for identifying skills/vocations to advance employment opportunities and to be able to engage in the future of work - including technology focused, Artificial Intelligence, and engaging with digital platforms.
- Reduce loan burdens on SHGs and women’s collectives. Major asks for strengthening SHGs would be:
  - (a) moratorium on SHG loans
  - (b) interest subvention scheme for SHGs/MSMEs
  - (c) liquidity easing through emergency transfers by expansion of the *Jan Dhan Yojana* – for every SHG woman and ensure cash transfer for the next 6-9 months, at the least
  - (d) fresh capitalization of the SHGs/enterprises through specially designed economic stimulus packages
  - (e) create assured markets for the enterprises by setting public and private procurement targets
  - (f) intensify business development services for the SHGs/enterprises to undertake livelihoods planning and restart their businesses.
- Reframing the discourse and practice of women's self-employment/entrepreneurship to move beyond provision of credit with interest subsidy and no collaterals to a composite package of credit, training, marketing, etc.
- Gender mainstreaming the Labour Departments - Gender disaggregated information on women migrants needs to be made available. Budgets should be allocated to Labour and Employment Ministry for preparing sex-disaggregated rosters for migrants.
- Migrant worker supportive budgets should include needs for place of stay, hostels, low rental housing by the state, and 20% household and income support for women headed households.

- Income transfers to women by expanding the *Jan Dhan Yojana* account holders. Women in SHGs, NREGA workers, registered and unregistered construction workers could be included for such income transfers.
- Infrastructure support to enable women and facilitate their workforce participation – investments to improve water supply, fuel and energy requirements, electricity provisions, housing, better roads and transport for safer mobility, infrastructure to promote occupational safety at workplaces, and strengthening safety of women from domestic violence.
- Infrastructure to improve women’s care needs – universalising creches and expansion of the National Creche programme, budgets for Maternity Entitlement Benefits to all women workers, Universalization of neighbourhood and/or worksite facilities (as appropriate) for ECD (Early Childhood Development) facilities and childcare centres (especially targeted towards informal economy workers) - resources to be mapped and converged across ICDS + MHRD (under NEP2020) + NREGA (worksite childcare provision) + provisions under various labour laws (e.g. Building and Other Constructions Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996)
- Social protection measures - increased amount for old age and widow pensions from the current central provision of Rs. 200/- per month to Rs. 600/- per month with additional provisions at the state level.
- For women in agriculture, major asks would be:
  - Registration of women workers across diverse livelihoods,
  - Widows of victims of farm suicides need to be supported with income transfers,
  - Access to credit, markets at the farm gate, storages for farm produce and related infrastructure,
  - Direct cash transfer schemes like the *PM Kisan* to be in the name of women irrespective of land ownership,
  - Investments in collective farming,
  - Invest in farmer producer organisations of women and support them to grow,
  - Agro-ecological farming that is food and nutrition centred and is linked with the decentralized and expanded PDS,
  - Specific policies that focus on vulnerable sections like women farmers from farm suicide households like income support, housing and asset ownership.
- Creating employment focused on urban women and expansion of the rural service sector where young women can access meaningful employment.
- Outcome budgets need to be regularised to audit programmes and check the temporary versus permanent effects.
- Allocating fresh budget for MOSPI to include provisions to collect sex disaggregated information on indicators crucial to human development in addition to the current availability.
- Making reservations/mandatory allocations of at least 33% resources for women/transgender workers in any composite scheme. For e.g., in a recent scheme providing street vendors credit for post-COVID recovery, ensuring women vendors



who are at the bottom of the pyramid of micro-entrepreneurs get included in sufficient numbers.

- Transfer Rs. 7,500 to accounts of those who are not paying income tax.
- Earmark women's component in the Scheduled Caste Sub Plans and the Tribal Sub plans.

### **Working Group 3: Gender and Health, Nutrition & WASH**

*Members: Renu Khanna, Nilangi, Arnica, Jashodhara Dasgupta, Udit Chatterjee*

Social Accountability: For health, water, sanitation and nutrition – ground level involvement in priority setting plus planning, monitoring and budget allocation- with regular monitoring (including community monitoring) and external audits with leadership of women, girls and trans persons (all affected groups).

#### *I. Health*

- Increase the outlay - A specific percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Union Budget should be dedicated to the health sector. Increase in tax funded expenditures on health.
  - Prioritise spending on strengthening and expanding public health services including primary health.
  - Per Capita Health Expenditure of various states – see best practices (reference to National Health Profile).
  - Per Capita Health Expenditure based on employment & as women are the worst affected as 95% of working women are in informal sector with the lowest investment. Equity clause is needed under the Universal health coverage – through social health insurance, expansion of ESIS to cover informal sector - with awareness and integration of gender sensitivity.
- Focus on Primary Health
  - Health and Wellness Centres with full, well trained and competent staff (VNR 2020 states that health service providers need to be doubled). Appoint male Health Workers. Health and Wellness Centres to include SRHR package and appointment of trained **Nurse Midwives/Women's Health/Practitioners** in these centres (who can help with childbirth in community level).
  - HWCs to including health literacy and basic SRH services – normal childbirth, primary treatment for RTIs, cancer screening, contraceptive supplies and medical abortion pills [877 babies and 61 women died in Meghalaya died in last 4 months. this was reported in the month of August. this was mostly during the pandemic].
  - Invest (through capacity building) in developing gender transformative health programmes – NCDS and CDs and **Mental health services**.
- Equitable health protection for all
  - Start with COVID and demand for Primary Care to be strengthened – not PMJAY and insurance for In-Patient care and expand to out-patient care. Focus on Diagnostics as well as cancer screening, and free medicines (including blood as essential medicine) especially in remote areas.

- C-Sections are unavailable at public facilities and compel women to access private facilities; how can these additional costs be covered by public health system.
- Transgenders - Reassignment Surgery should be provided in Public Hospitals and covered under Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY)/Ayushman Bharat Yojana.
- Infrastructure – a) Support for transportation especially for far off areas /indigenous communities/women disability; b) how about looking at hospital rooms/beds/toilets for transgenders.
- Health workforce
  - Nurse Midwives/Women’s Health/Practitioners to be posted at all the HWCs for better community access.
  - Service providers - Regularise scheme workers/jobs for women in government schemes such as NHM, ICDS, sanitation, etc. Double the expenditure (at least) on the 7 million frontline workers – ASHAs, AWWs, AWHs. Regularise ASHAs as permanent staff with fixed salaries.
  - More Care Workers - Need mobile units, day care centres and hospices, and trained personnel for home nursing, police training to address the issue of elderly abuse and so on.
  - Ensure social security, protection to all frontline staff. We can spell out specifically what regularization will entail –
    - minimum wages as defined in the Pay Commission (at least Rs.18K a month).
    - social security enrolment and benefits including eligibility for maternity entitlements.
    - Proper career track & fill all vacancies (supervisory levels).
    - PPE and other protective measures at work.

## *II. Nutrition*

- PDS rations – Universalisation, Inclusion of pulses and oil and extending PMGKY for another six months.
- Anganwadi centres – Encourage local foods and community cooking, enhance SNP (eggs), transparency in nutrition data, SABLE implementation and other efforts for anaemia prevention of adolescent girls.
- Early Childhood Care – Universalization of neighbourhood and/or worksite facilities (as appropriate) for ECD facilities and childcare centres (especially targeted towards informal economy workers) - resources to be mapped and converged across ICDS + MHRD (under NEP2020) + NREGA (worksite childcare provision) + provisions under various labour laws (e.g., BOCW).
- Mid-day meal (dry rations/cash) – enhance budgets and cook’s honorarium.
- Maternity Entitlements – there is poor coverage, remove conditionalities to availability of contraception, enhance amount.

### III. Water Sanitation

- Menstrual Hygiene management.
- Ensuring universal doorstep access of water for drinking and household purposes to reduce women's unpaid work burden.
- Sufficient toilets in public places which are friendly for women, men, disability and trans-persons with full maintenance.

### **Working Group 4 - Sexual and Gender Based Violence**

*Members: Sanya Seth, Suneeta Dhar, Lakshmi Lingam, Fathayya Khan, Arshiya Kochar and Adrita Bagchi.*

A consolidated list of recommendations that emerged from this discussion are as follows:

- Overall allocations for women specific VAWG programmes and schemes should be increased to INR 11,000 crores annually in an incremental manner. Bottlenecks to effective fund utilisation needs to be removed.
- Capital expenses should be budgeted for annually in schemes which provide for construction support, so that maintenance of quality infrastructure for VAWG response and redressal is possible on an on-going basis.
- The central government share should be 90% to 100% of these budgetary allocations as against the current centre-state sharing arrangement of 60% to 40%. The central support focused towards women-specific programmes and schemes should be a policy decision, issued as guidelines by the Ministry of Finance.
- Expansion of the Nirbhaya Fund for another five to ten years to support such interventions with a clear plan for long term funding of services created.
- All districts in the country should have the following nine services—
  - Dedicated all-women PCR van linked to the Helpline.
  - One-Stop Centre and/or Crisis Intervention Centres at sub-district levels attached to the District Hospital.
  - One *Swadhar Greh* or shelter home for every four-lakh population.
  - One Protection Officer with independent charge, dedicated service providers and administrative support for implementation of PWDVA.
  - Local Complaints Committee with dedicated office space and staff for implementation of Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act.
  - District Legal Service Authority (DLSA) with office space- and full-time secretary.
  - Mobile Forensic Van attached to Women's Desks at Police Station.
  - Anti-Human Trafficking Units.
  - Empanelled specialists such as psychiatrists, persons specialised in sign language, experts working with children, and other specialised services required.
  - Benchmarks need to be created for universalisation of all the VAWG services. Their numbers per population should be fixed and a consistent approach must be taken for availability and quality, at the district and sub-district level.

- One Stop Centre Scheme – Increase budget for increased reach of One Stop Centres and for training of all key stakeholders. The Scheme needs to be reviewed in the following ways:
  - Referral systems from grassroots to OSCs, including by ASHAs need to be strengthened.
  - Cooperation between the Home Ministry, MWCD and Health Ministry needs to be strengthened.
  - Medico legal care guidelines need to be implemented. Budget for training for all key stakeholders.
  - Outreach programmes should be conducted to spread awareness about these services, which is very low at the moment.
  - Institute a national level helpline for OSCs and Shelter Homes.
- Unit costs of ingredients of all schemes should be revised to bring them at par with current market prices. Programme costs, especially those related to food, clothing and medical expenses need to be revised. A standard benchmark of what is being provided generally by the government for college hostels maybe used for the same.
- Staff shortages in various departments need to be fulfilled.
- Focused gender sensitisation and training of existing work force in police, judiciary, legal aid, health, and social sectors. These should be made a separate budget head within each of the training institutes of all department trainings and all dedicated trainings as well as sessions within mainstream trainings should be funded and linked to this head to enable tracking of the same. These trainings need to be done on essential services framework.
- It is also to be noted that there is a low level of representation of women in these services, therefore, budget allocation and special measures is needed to increase women in the judiciary including more female public prosecutors, para legal, and judges. Reservation for women in police and law enforcement agencies is needed.
- Administrative Training Institutes and Central Training Institutes should mainstream their trainings on gender, creating gender enabling environment, gender responsive governance, including budgeting for all Ministries and Departments. Mandatory courses to be institutionalised that are evaluated by a third party.
- Budget allocation to National and State commissions for women, which have practically no money.
- Several schemes have large quantum of unspent balance, while so many women suffer in various ways. Introducing a penalty for underspending could be discussed.
- Increase transparency through public investment for data systems, including crime records bureau, NFHS, Census etc. Investment for gathering data on VAW and victimization surveys is also needed.
- Linking the outcomes of the spending on women with SDGs could be helpful in monitoring progress.
- POSH Act - Specific allocations required for training and capacity building, publicity, and awareness of local committees especially in rural areas. Sector-

specific SOPs for personnel, officials, and functionaries to respond to VAW during humanitarian crises need to be designed.

- PWDVA - Increase budget allocation for human resources, including protection officers.
- Dedicated budget for education of informal sector workers on rights, special programs for making working spaces safe.
- Allocations needed for new campaigns (design and execution) on women's voice, choice, and agency.
- Allocations needed for short stay homes at the block level for immediate shelter and alternative accommodation for women and specialized centres and short stay homes for trans persons, sex workers etc.
- Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT Act) needs to be strengthened.

*Additional resources:*

- VAW against single women and widows' empowerment: (Link: <http://ncwapps.nic.in/PDFFiles/VrindavanCommitteeReport02022018.pdf>)
- Based on the gaps revealed by the AT HOME AT RISK rapid survey series undertaken by a network of women's groups, the following are recommendations for survivor-centred, improved and timely service provision for domestic violence. (Link: <http://www.jagori.org/publication/home-risk-rapid-survey-findings-shelters>)

*Policy:*

- In the absence of a policy framework that intersects PWDVA 2005 with a public health emergency, the Rapid Survey revealed many systemic gaps that can be addressed by a blueprint that emphasises service provision for domestic violence.
- Draft and implement emergency-related SOPs as a part of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, and other relevant laws pertaining to shelters and homelessness.
- Constitute a monitoring committee that comprises representation from women-led human rights organizations and helplines.
- Skill building of frontline responders (such as tele-counsellors) in emergency interventions and health-safety protocols.
- Ensure 24\*7 availability of crisis intervention services.

*Resources:*

- Limited resources have increased the vulnerability of survivors and disempowered state functionaries such as Protection Officers.
- Increase the cadre of frontline contacts - Protection Officers and Helpline counsellors - to ensure fast response to survivors.

- Facilitate greater digital penetration and connectivity for survivors via internet, mobile kiosks and other media.
- Ensure better integration of technology in judicial interventions and mental-health related counselling.
- Enlarge the network of OSCs to cover every district.

#### *Inclusive Shelters:*

Given the absence of a rights-based and intersectional approach in state-run services, people with diverse gender identities, sexual orientation, abilities, and those who choose to exercise their 'right to choice' vis-a-vis inter-caste/faith relations are often left out by service providers.

- Establish shelter homes for trans persons and safe homes for inter-faith, inter-caste, same-gender couples.
- Ensure shelter homes are accessible for women with disabilities (physical and mental).

#### *Perspective Building:*

The Rapid Survey Series exposed the insensitive attitude of state functionaries towards persons with certain gender and social identities as well as the issue of domestic violence.

- Build functionaries' capacities on legal procedures, as mentioned in PWDVA 2005 and other relevant laws.
- Engage government officials, especially police, in sustained sensitisation sessions on gender-based violence.

#### *Structural inequities and Violence*

Women not only bear the brunt of stark socio-economic inequalities but face further injustices and violence that arise from ongoing structural forms of violence.

- Strengthen women's food security, income security, social security (such as pensions, health benefits and insurance, disability benefits) and resilient livelihoods to buffer them against sudden financial distress and violence.

Finally, the two-day consultation ended with a vote of thanks by Jashodhara Dasgupta and an acknowledgement of participation from diverse stakeholders.

## Annexure I: Agenda of the Consultation

### MOVING FROM COMMITMENT TO PRACTICE IN A COVID-19 CONTEXT

#### A Stakeholder Consultation for Informing Gender Transformative Financing and Budgeting (2021-22) November 23 - 24, 2020

##### Agenda

Day 1: 23 November 2020 (Monday)			
Session	Session outline	Time	Speakers
<b>I. State of India's women and girls in a pre- and post-COVID world</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflecting on the current state of India's economy</li> <li>Impact of labour codes and changes to labour laws on accessing decent work, and the impact of newly passed farm laws on women farmers</li> <li>Existing and new issues in gender transformative financing</li> <li>Impacts on women in formal and informal labour</li> <li>Relief and economic stimulus packages: gaps and opportunities</li> </ul>	11:00 am - 12:00 noon	<p><b>Moderator:</b> Jashodhara Dasgupta</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b> Ritu Dewan  Subrat Das</p>
<b>II. Women's livelihoods and drawing a roadmap for building economic resilience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenges and opportunities for improving and expanding employment opportunities for women in the formal and informal sector (rural and urban settings)</li> <li>Social protection and social safety nets for informal sector workers, especially the migrant workers</li> <li>Strengthening the eco-system and support needed for women entrepreneurs towards availability of finance, markets and digital technology</li> </ul>	12:00 noon - 1.15pm	<p><b>Moderator:</b> Suneeta Dhar</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b> Indrani Mazumdar  Seema Kulkarni  Sona Mitra</p>
	<b>LUNCH 1.15pm - 2.00pm</b>		
	<b>(Session continued)</b>		2.00 pm – 2.30 pm

<b>III. Investments to enhance capacity of women and girls</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving educational outcomes, skilling strategies and programmes in both traditional and non-traditional opportunities for women</li> <li>Improving investments in health, nutrition and strengthening food security</li> <li>Enabling mechanisms and investments in gender sensitive infrastructure to address women's care and unpaid work needs</li> </ul>	2.30pm – 4.00pm	<b>Moderator:</b> Sarojini Ganju Thakur  <b>Speakers:</b> Dipa Sinha  Jyotsna Jha  Renu Khanna
<b>Wrap up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Day 1 wrap up and capturing key points from each session</li> <li>Day 2 agenda</li> </ul>	4.00pm – 4.30pm	Sanya Seth
<b>Day 2: 24 Nov 2020 (Tuesday)</b>			
<b>IV. Strengthening Gender responsive budgeting in India</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthening existing GRB systems and enhancing capacities of ministries and state governments</li> <li>Improved systems for gender data collection, analysis and using it for better policy and budgetary decisions</li> <li>Future possibilities of gender audits</li> </ul>	11:00 am - 12.30pm	<b>Moderator:</b> Anju Pandey, UN Women  Aasha Kapur Mehta  Dr. Mridul Eapen  Nesar Ahmed  Vibhuti Patel
<b>FPC Working Group meetings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss Recommendations and Key Asks from Day 1</li> <li>Identify next steps and key stakeholders</li> </ul>	12.30pm – 1.30pm	<b>Moderators:</b> Respective WG anchors
<b>Lunch 1.30pm – 2.15pm</b>			
<b>Presentation and finalization of Key Budget Asks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report back from the working-groups and presentation of key budget asks</li> </ul>	2.15pm - 3:15pm	<b>Moderators:</b> Sanya Seth & Jashodhara Dasgupta



## Annexure II: Participants List

<b>Moving From Commitment to Practice in a COVID-19 Context: A Stakeholder Consultation for Informing Gender Transformative Financing and Budgeting (2021-22)</b>				
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