

International developments and approaches in gender responsive budgeting

Rhonda Sharp and Monica Costa, University of South Australia

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Some GRB examples

Civil society initiatives

- **UK:** Women's Budget Group led by academic feminists, research-based approach (wbg.org.uk) with strong engagement with HM Treasury at times. Produce an assessment of the budget each year focused on the tax – transfer system.
- **Scotland:** New govt. 1999 made the budget process more participatory and transparent, women's groups took advantage of these opportunities and created a campaign–Engender Women's Budget Group (EWBG), with more than 300 members. Successful in changing the debate that 'infrastructure investment' was not just physical infrastructure but also social infrastructure.

Some GRB examples

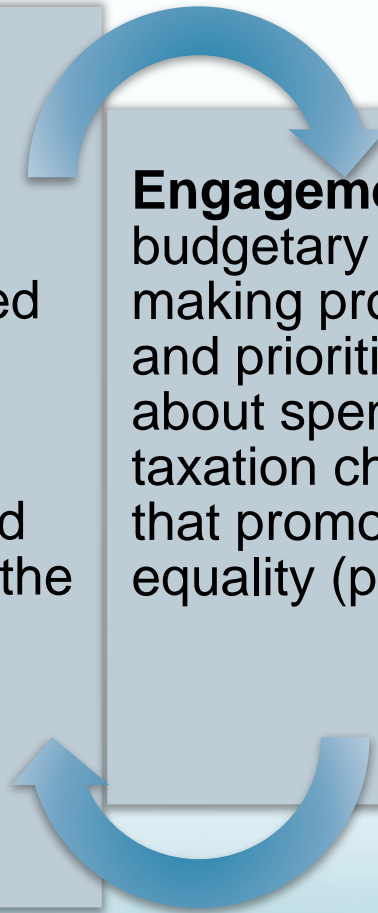
Government initiatives

- **Penang (Malaysia):** in 2012 began a pilot that explicitly combined gender analysis and participatory budgeting at the local level to enable women and men to bring about changes in their local government resource allocations wrt housing issues consistent with the KPI's of the local council with.
- **Nordic Country Cooperation project** in 2004-2006 5 countries cooperated on the development GRB work over 3 years under the coordination of the Nordic Council of Ministers improve economic governance, supporting documents for policies and gender disaggregated statistics.

Concept of gender responsive budgeting

Analysis (GIA) to unpack gender differentiated direct and indirect impacts of budgets and policies on the paid and unpaid economies (research)

Engagement with budgetary decision making processes and priorities to bring about spending and taxation changes that promote gender equality (politics)



Why GRB? Example: investing in productivity improvements in women's farming

- Women farmers have less access to resources than men farmers.
- FAO estimates that closing the gap could increase agricultural output in developing world, on average, by 2.5% to 4%.
- This would require investments to enable women to secure access to land, and seeds, fertilizers, credit, extension advice, and markets.
- It would increase the tax base and lead to increases in domestic revenue e.g. women would be able to buy more and would thus pay more in taxes like VAT.
- FAO estimates would reduce the number of undernourished people , on average by 12% to 17%.
- This would improve the efficiency of public expenditure in other sectors eg increase returns on investment in education; reduce malnutrition-related health expenditure.
- Source: Elson 2011

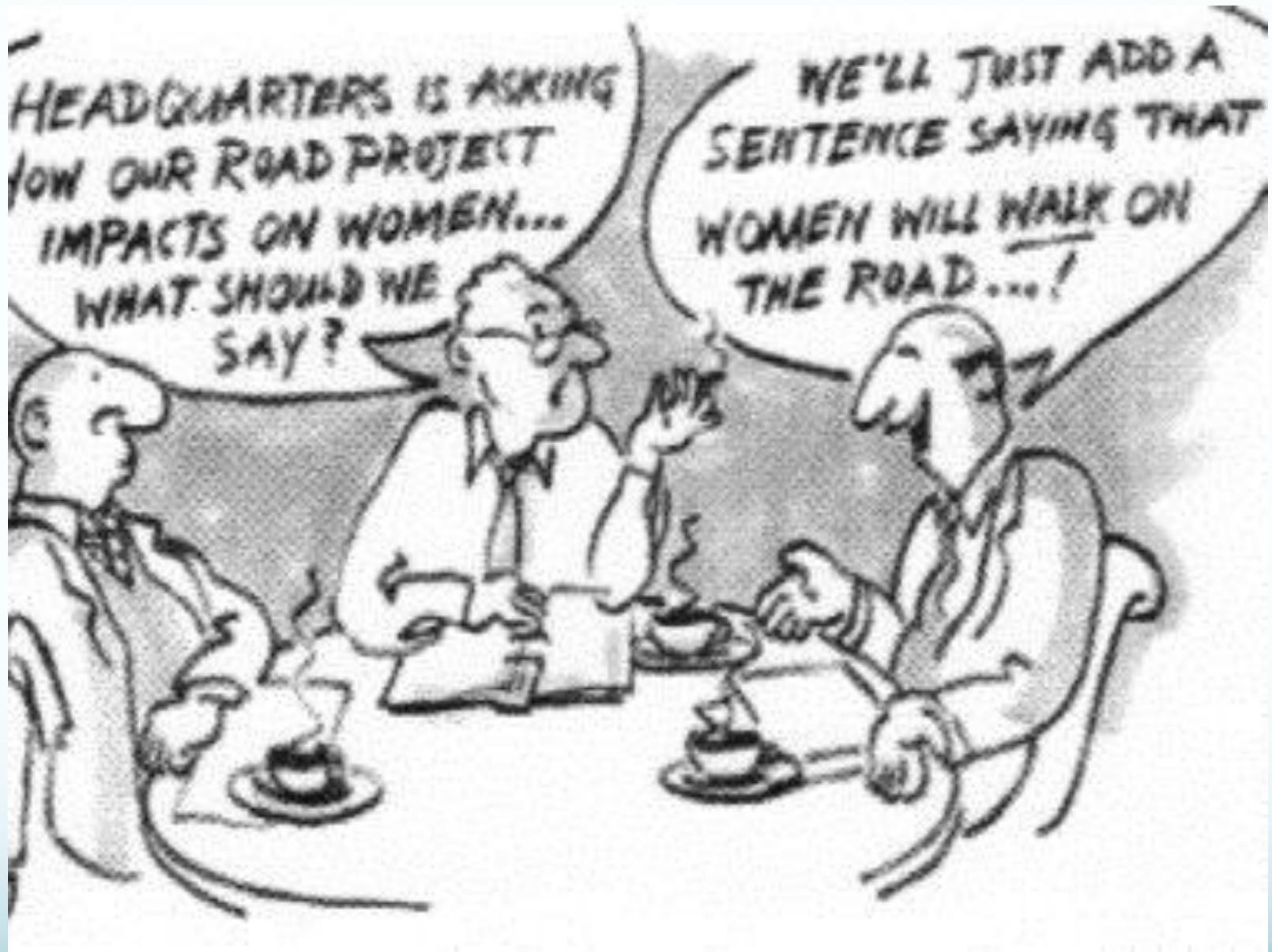
Challenges to ensuring fiscal polices promote gender equality

Attitudinal/cultural

- Belief that gender equality has already been achieved , often based on confusion of formal and substantive equality.
- Belief that budget measures that do not specifically target males or females are thereby ‘neutral’.
- Belief that GRB has been achieved if governments report funding allocated to women-specific programs.
- A belief that its not affordable.

Analytical and political challenges to GRB

- Lack of understanding of how to obtain relevant data and construct relevant indicators.
- Lack of familiarity with how to apply gender-aware analysis of the quantitative impacts of taxes and expenditures and to the quality of programs
- Lack of familiarity of how to design and cost the programs required for gender equality.
- Focus on ex-post budget analyses.
- Focus on appropriations/inputs and lack of attention to disbursement, outputs, and impact.
- Lack of political will- lip-service to gender equality.
- Lack of capacity and limited power on the part of women's organisations and their allies to effectively contest budgets.



History of GRB

- 1984/85 Australian federal government women budget pilot
- 1985/86 South Australian women's budget pilot
- 1987 UK Women's budget group established
- 1992 Philippines GAD budget initiative
- 1995 Beijing Platform of Action calls for GRB
- 1995 South Africa's first 'Women's Budget' published by researchers who were heard in Parliament
- 1996 Commonwealth Secretariat Pilot begins which grows GRB initiatives globally (later develops into a partnership with IDRC and UNIFEM)
- 2000 UN General Assembly called upon government to undertake GRB
- 2006 South Korea makes GRB part of its Finance Law (So does Vietnam in 2015)
- 2008 UNIFEM identifies 90 countries had undertaken a GRB initiative
- Australian federal government ceases publishing a Women's Budget Statement after nearly 30 years
- 2015 IMF GRB study announced

Key themes and developments

1. Normative approaches to gender equality
2. Critical role of unpaid work in gender impacts of budgets
3. Role of gender-focused institutions in promoting and GRB agenda

1. Normative approaches: Equality approach

- Focuses on eliminating discrimination in opportunities and the equal allocation of resources, benefits or access to services.
- Emphasis on men and women's different needs and circumstances.
- e.g. In South Africa a zero rated VAT was applied to paraffin on the grounds that poorer women headed households were more likely to use paraffin for cooking.
e.g. Huy (Belgium) introduced greater flexibility in working hours including making training available during working hours (before courses were outside working hours) as women's career progression measures.
- Most GRB work has been framed by this approach but it is often augmented or interchanged with human rights and capabilities approaches.

Normative approaches: Human rights approach

- **Human rights approach** links the budget with governments' human rights commitments under international instruments on the basis of the guarantee of equality between men and women.
- Human rights indicate, for example, the requirement to ensure affordability of rights and the fulfillment of those rights: **South Africa** (user fees) the National Electricity Regulator has a lower tariff for poorer consumers: government charges a flat rate a month for a low-amp current (covers lighting, TV, radio and refrigeration).
- **CEDAW Article 16** requires that in family relations, men and women should be treated as equals, with the same rights. This implies that women must be treated as autonomous claimants on, and contributors to, the budget rather than as dependents that benefit from and contribute to government budgets via their relations with male family members.

Normative approaches: Capabilities approach

- **Capabilities approach** focuses on impact of the budget on individual opportunities to achieve well-being and agency (capabilities) while acknowledging women's life experiences and their role in the care economy.
- Places a particular emphasis on mapping social reproduction
- Useful to highlight the complementarity/contradiction between services in fulfilling a capability.
- **Municipality of Modena (Italy)** – access and control over work:
 - provision of childcare services by Public Education department was seen as contributing to improve women's opportunity to be employed.
 - however, the allowance paid to parents during the child's first year of life (Social and Health Services department) was seen as encouraging mothers to leave work, reducing their employment opportunities.
 - A monitoring of parents' employment condition after the first year of the allowance has been suggested as a result of this assessment.

Equality, human rights and capabilities approaches together contribute a range of criteria for integrating a gender perspective into budgets and policies.

2. Role of unpaid work in gender impacts

- Cost shifting to the unpaid economy
- Lifetime gender impacts

Transference of costs to unpaid economy

Need to check if policies are really cutting costs or transferring costs:

- Measures to improve efficiency of paid health services may transfer costs to unpaid economy.

Day surgery cuts costs of hospitals, but discharged patients still need care- typically provided unpaid by family, friends and neighbors, especially women.

- Encouraging use of working –age volunteers (mainly women) in public services reduces costs now-but may increase future poverty of elderly women who lack superannuation benefits

Impacts are different according to lifecycle stage

- Many policies impact differently on different age groups of women and men.
- Downstream gender impacts of policy and funding may reinforce unequal gender relations (eg the lack of parental leave and affordable quality child care in early life has implications for attachment to the workforce and retirement incomes)
- Not doing something to improve gender power relations can be more costly to the government when life cycle effects are taken into account (eg the cost of domestic violence).

Sweden's lifecycle gender impact assessment in its Budget Bill

- Sweden's 2005 Budget Bill showed how parental leave and part-time work associated with small children affected the income and pension base of a woman and man in an example household.
- It demonstrated that the loss of income over ten years was SEK 304,000 for the mother compared to SEK 10,000 for the father, which it noted would also be reflected in their future retirement income pensions (Government of Sweden, 2006).

Box 3. Identifying an important gender gap – the costs of caring

The 2011–12 Women's Budget Statement highlighted the cost of caring for women by reporting key research findings:

- The estimated 'opportunity cost' of caring in Australia in 2010 was A\$6.5 billion or A\$49,818 per carer per annum (Access Economics 2010).
- Women aged 30 years, with two or more children, caring for a child with a disability and whose highest level of education is less than, or equal to, completion of secondary school are expected to earn less than A\$100,000 over their working life. Women sharing the same characteristics but without the primary caring responsibility will earn four times that amount over their working life (Nepal et al. 2008: 3).

Gender focused institutions

The concept of acting to benefit women has been termed '**substantive representation**', and there has been increased interest in how and when such substantive representation occurs.

Gender focused institutions: these institutions may include women's wings within political parties, women's policy machinery in the bureaucracy, women's movement organizations, international agencies. They offer pathways for the promotion of GRB.

UK: August 2010 the Fawcett Society filled for a ‘Judicial Review’ of the new Government’s 2010 ‘emergency’ budget.

It asked the court to examine whether the law was followed in the design of the budget – in particular the legal requirement that the government consider its different impact on men and women.

Court did not grant ‘Judicial review’ of the budget but agreed that the budget was subject to the equality law and needed to be reviewed given its unequal impact.



Photo: Charlie Woodworth in The Guardian (7 Dec 2010)

GRB and gender focused Institutions: parliament

A small number of case studies has suggested a positive link between parliamentary institutions mandated to focus on gender equality and positive changes to the budget:

- **South Korea** the Gender Equality and Family Standing Committee in the National Assembly, particularly its Chair, were instrumental in inserting GRB in the 2006 Finance Law.
- **Timor-Leste** women's cross-party parliament caucus has been successful in acting as a collective to pave the way for GRB:
 - in 2009 the caucus ensured the passage of a resolution that puts the focus on gender as an integral part of policy and budget making processes.
 - caucus secured a role in the review of the budget before it is enacted.

These examples have their limits but have been significant in challenging the politics around the budget and its process

- Highlights the importance of gender focused institutions both inside and outside government seeking to make governments accountable for their budgets
- The collaboration within and between gender-focused institutions has been important for their success in challenging policies and budgets for their gender impacts.
- Political context and economic policy frame the discussion about what GRB can deliver. Innovations are nested in traditional ways of doing budgetary politics.

In summary ...

- Diversity of approaches.
- Diversity of normative frames highlighting different criteria for assessing the gender responsiveness of budgets
- Gender analysis (GIA's that are inclusive of the paid and unpaid economies based on good data) and a lifecycle view are critical.
- Budgets are ultimately political decisions and combination of inside and outside actors makes for more effective action to change the budget (lessons also on the work on participatory budgeting).
- Changing budgetary and economic context requires flexible and adaptive GRB strategies that incorporates responses to government resistance to being accountable for negative budgetary impacts on gender equality
- WHERE TO NOW FOR AUSTRALIA??