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**BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN GENDER ANALYSIS
AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETS:
KEY LESSONS FROM A PILOT PROJECT IN THE
REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS**

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BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN GENDER ANALYSIS AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETS: KEY LESSONS FROM A PILOT PROJECT IN THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

Rhonda Sharp* and Sanjugta Vas Dev**

INTRODUCTION

Gender-responsive budgets (GRBs) are an important and widespread strategy for scrutinising budgets' contribution to gender equality. These initiatives use a variety of tools to assess the impact of government expenditures and revenues on the social and economic position of men and women, and boys and girls. Their purpose is to change policies, programs and resource allocations so that they promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. GRBs are not separate budgets for women and girls, or for boys and men. Instead they apply a gender lens (and other categories of analysis including age, socio-economic class, race, ethnicity and location) to the mainstream budget.

Put another way, gender-responsive budget initiatives are a gender mainstreaming strategy that directs attention to economic policy by focusing on government budgets (Sharp 2003: 5). In bringing a gender lens to budgets, GRBs are a means of linking the social with the economic within an overall policy framework. Budgeting, at its essence, is about the generation and use of public resources. Budgets matter precisely because they are powerful policy tools with profound consequences for social equity outcomes (Elson 1999; Cagatay et al 2000). As one donor that has recently begun supporting GRB initiatives puts it, 'government budgets have a central role in the planning and control of countries' economic activities and are powerful policy tools which can affect social equity' (ADB 2001: 1).

In sum, budgets reflect the economic, social and political choices of a nation, state or local community, including what is valued and what is not, and who is rewarded and who is not. GRBs unpack how the economic and social choices found within budgets structure or impede gender equality and women's empowerment.

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This paper examines a GRB pilot project undertaken in the small Pacific country of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI).¹ Titled 'Integrating a Gender Perspective into Public Expenditure Management in the Republic of the Marshall Islands', this pilot project was conducted over a one-year budget cycle (September 2002–September 2003), and formed part of a regional technical assistance project funded by the Asian Development Bank.² The technical assistance was provided by a University of South Australia (UniSA) consultancy team, comprising four advisors with expertise in gender, economics, policy and budgeting.

It is now widely appreciated that a gender analysis of a budget does not by itself result in the formulation of a gender-sensitive budget. The pilot project sought to combine gender budget analysis with the budget decision-making processes. In essence, it sought to develop a process for linking an understanding of gender with the policy and project work of ministries and their budgets, amongst government ministries as well as NGOs. This paper outlines the pilot project's approach, and the lessons learnt from its implementation.

This paper will set out the methodological approach underpinning the RMI initiative, discussing its evolution, implementation and outcomes. The methodology was developed in two stages, each of which corresponds to the key goals of the pilot project. We discuss the strategies chosen to advance these goals by relaying examples from the pilot project. In addition, we discuss the lessons learnt from the implementation of the RMI initiative, emphasising the attempt to bridge the gap between a gender analysis of budgets and the promotion of budgetary and policy change. In order to develop our understanding of the RMI pilot project, it is important that we gain some understanding of the context within which it took place. The following section provides a brief overview of the RMI's political economy and how gender fits into it.

GENDER AND THE RMI: POLITICS AND PROGRESS

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) can be described as a newly independent and developing country in a Compact of Free Association with the

¹ The RMI, a small and developing country located in the Pacific, is made up of 34 atolls, of which only 4 are presently inhabited. Around 50 000 people live in the RMI and are highly concentrated (50%) in the urban areas of Majuro and Ebeye. The geographical fragmentation and the highly scattered nature of small atolls with a limited resource base pose natural disadvantages to sustainable development and entail high costs for the delivery of social services.

² As another part of this regional technical assistance, a youth-sensitive approach to the Samoan budget was developed and piloted over the 2002–2003 budget cycle. Ms Jan Connolly and Mr John Spoehr were also part of the project team.

United States.³ In spite of its sovereign status, the political economy of the RMI is still highly dependent on the US. For example, under the Compact the US has full authority and responsibility for security and defence of the Marshall Islands and continues to use one of the country's atolls as an army base. The Compact also includes an arrangement for financial compensation from the US for its nuclear testing, which occurred in the region between 1948 and 1958.⁴ As a result of this arrangement, the RMI economy remains heavily dependent on revenue from the US, with over 80 per cent of government revenue being derived directly or indirectly from US Compact grants. Other sources of revenue are limited. The government is the major employer, followed by the commercial and retail sectors. The construction industry is expanding, but there is limited domestic production. The most significant sectors are fisheries, copra, handicrafts and subsistence agriculture. The export base of the RMI is very narrow, with imports of US\$60 million far outweighing exports of US\$8 million in the fiscal year 2001 (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2003).

Marshallese citizens live with a relatively new democratic political system combined with a hierarchical traditional culture. The semi-Westminster-style constitution, adopted in 1979, established a Nitijela (parliament) comprising 33 members, elected every four years by universal suffrage. Every inhabited atoll is represented, with the largest representation granted to Majuro (the RMI capital), with five members, and Ebeye, with three members. There are no political parties in the RMI. The President, who is both Head of State and Head of Government, is elected from the Nitijela and appoints a cabinet from its members. The current RMI government has committed itself to improving financial management practices and providing transparent and accountable government (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2003).

Despite its low to middle level income and generally positive political circumstances, health and education indicators for the country from the United Nations Development Program are disappointing. The *Pacific human development report* reveals for example that 25.2 per cent of adults in the RMI are illiterate, 23.5 per cent lack access to safe drinking water and 17 per cent of children under five years are underweight (UNDP 1999: 18). Furthermore, as the UNDP (2002) notes, literacy rates are low and burgeoning population pressure is putting ever-increasing strains on social sector spending. The worsening poverty is highlighted by the gender situation. According to the Human Development Index and the Human Poverty Index, the status of women is significantly lower than that of men in the

³ The islands were governed under US administration as part of the UN trust territory of the Pacific Islands for four decades from around 1947 and were given independence in 1986.

⁴ Several of the islands – the Bikini Atoll in particular – served as testing sites for atomic bombs through the 1960s, and many of their inhabitants have suffered from radiation poisoning, while their home islands remain too contaminated to be resettled.

RMI (UNDP 1999: 24).⁵ Significant problems currently affecting women in the Marshall Islands include:

- the comparatively low participation of women in paid employment (29.7% of public sector employees were female in 2001) (Office of Planning and Statistics 2002: 52);
- a high rate of school dropout among girls;
- a high rate of teenage pregnancies (from 2000 to 2002, the rate of pregnancy amongst young women and girls aged under twenty years rose from 20 to 22%, indicating a growing problem) (Chutaru 2003: 11);
- a high rate of malnutrition, as well as health problems such as anaemia and iron deficiency.

In spite of such problem areas, some concrete economic gains have been made over the past three decades. For example, the percentage of adult females who were high school educated has jumped from less than 4 per cent to over 33 per cent between 1967 and 1999. While only 15 per cent of adult females were employed in the RMI in 1967, over one third of this group was employed in 1999 (Graham and Paul 2002).

In order to consolidate the considerable improvements and ameliorate some of the growing concerns, the RMI government established the Women's Desk in 1979. It is currently contained within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Today, the Women's Desk has the enormous task of coordinating all government activities concerning women and development, despite a severe lack of resources and inside-government gender expertise. The Women's Desk currently employs one full-time staff member and has a total budget of US\$50 000. In 2002, after the salary of the Women's Desk Officer was deducted, the remaining budget was largely allocated to supporting the Women United in the Marshall Islands (WUTMI) conference. Consequently there were no financial or human resources available to target the growing health and education problems specifically affecting Marshallese women and girls.

Just as seriously, it was noted that the RMI women's policy expired in 2001 and the RMI government is yet to become a signatory to the UN Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Such poor progress on the international front indicated early on in the project that the RMI government, like many others, did not consider gender to be a priority area.

⁵ The RMI is traditionally a matrilineal society, with the inheritance of property and traditional rank passing through women. Consequently, women have occupied positions of importance in the past. However, women's status has been undermined by the decline of traditional culture. Hence, in many areas of contemporary life, women continue to lag behind men.

Nevertheless the willingness of the RMI government to explore the relevance and application of this GRB pilot project, combined with its current promotion of transparency and accountability, indicates that change on the gender front is possible.

EVOLUTION OF THE RMI PILOT PROJECT METHODOLOGY

In the past ten years particularly, GRB initiatives have caught the attention of the gender and development community. Today there are over fifty countries in the world where there have been gender budget initiatives of some kind (Budlender and Hewitt 2002: 8). Many of these have stemmed from the Commonwealth Secretariat initiative, which has aimed to challenge the gender neutrality of macro-economic policy and pilot the integration of gender into the budgetary policy of Commonwealth countries since 1996. The consultancy team developed a conceptual framework that sought to extend the Commonwealth Secretariat pilot initiative (as undertaken in its member developing countries), as well as draw on the lessons of a number of other countries' experiences in the design and implementation of gender budget initiatives. The extensive knowledge bank of GRB initiatives stemmed largely from the international experiences and practice of the team leader, Rhonda Sharp, who has worked in numerous countries including Sri Lanka, South Africa, Barbados and Australia.⁶ Core elements of her work in these countries fed into the development of the methodological framework for this project.

A key lesson derived from the experiences drawn upon was the importance of developing core goals for the RMI pilot initiative and clear strategies to achieve these goals. Where past GRB initiatives focused on the broad area of raising awareness about the integration of gender into budgets and policies (ie gender budget analysis), a primary lesson from these experiences was that the goals or objectives of GRBs should ultimately focus on *changing* budgets and policies. Thus a significant component of the evolution of the pilot project in the RMI was using the core lessons of past experiences to establish an approach that targeted the budget formulation process instead of focusing on gender analysis as an end in itself.

⁶ In Australia, Professor Sharp led some significant work in developing a methodology for one state government, which was subsequently adopted by other states. Under the federal Liberal government that took power in 1996, Australia's highly regarded record for its gender budgets has been eroded. However there are still various state initiatives such as the Northern Territory budget, which is continuing with ongoing gender budget analysis but is mainly confined to women-specific projects.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The methodology of the gender-responsive budget pilot project was developed in two stages. Because it was an externally funded technical assistance project, the first stage of the pilot project was developed by the UniSA team (as opposed to being developed organically within the RMI) using the knowledge and experience of team members and drawing on international best practice. This framework, outlined in the original tender document, established the possible overall parameters of the pilot project and provided the basis for the training workshops – the primary strategy adopted – and the evaluation. The second stage of developing the pilot methodology focused on establishing a gender-responsive model tailored for the RMI’s particular country circumstances, within the overall conceptual framework. This involved the establishment of a Marshallese steering committee comprising

- two joint Ministry of Finance project coordinators
- the Women’s Desk Officer from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and
- a representative of the NGO umbrella group Women United in the Marshall Islands (WUTMI).

This steering committee developed a proposal to take the pilot project forward in the RMI context, specifying the outcomes that they were seeking to achieve and the specific strategies that would be implemented to achieve these outcomes. This will be further discussed in the following section.

Before reviewing each of these stages, we note here that this two-stage methodology was underpinned by the paradigm of action research. Action research is a family of research methodologies that allows the practitioner to develop knowledge or understanding as part of practice. In other words, it grounds research in experience. In essence, action research alternates between action and critical reflection. This was a central element in the development of the pilot methodology. Reflection occurred by analysing what had already occurred during previous stages, and then planning what steps to take next. Consistent with the action research methodology, the UniSA team members took on the role of facilitators, and thereby worked collaboratively to involve the stakeholders in researching, developing and assessing various aspects of the pilot project. A key attraction of the action research framework for the UniSA consultancy team was its emphasis on building the basis for participation and developing relationships between stakeholders through negotiating roles and responsibilities.

The conceptual framework: strategically linking goals, tasks and strategies

In discussing the formulation of the conceptual framework, we should mention at the outset that the institutional location of the project and its scope were two given

and integral parameters of the pilot project. An ‘inside-government’ gender-responsive budget model was adopted, with the Ministry of Finance agreeing to be the project coordinator, as the basic institutional arrangement. However, in the light of lessons learnt about the importance of civil society in the success of these models, technical assistance was also provided to relevant civil society organisations to foster their participation in the pilot project. The scope of the project was limited to the expenditure side of the budget and a one-year pilot project.

The development of the conceptual framework of the pilot project began with the identification of its core goals. Drawing on research by Sharp (2002; 2003), there are three interrelated central purposes of assessments of the gender impacts of budgets. One is to raise awareness and promote transparency of gender issues in budgets and policies. The second is to foster the accountability of governments for the gender equality impacts of their policies. A third goal is ultimately to change budgets and policies in the light of the gender assessments and accountability. These goals are represented in diagram 1 below.

To elaborate, in the past gender-responsive budget initiatives have focused on the first goal, thereby limiting their scope to analysis only. Their strategies have included developing an understanding of the category ‘gender’, collecting sex-disaggregated data, and training budgetary officials or developing gender-sensitive analyses of programs and policies. At the same time that we recognise the significance of this first goal, we must not lose sight of the fact that good information and analysis of the impacts of policies and budgets on gender are not in themselves sufficient to change budgets *unless* public officials can be called to task for their actions in the area of gender. Therefore, the goal of raising gender awareness needs to be augmented by a goal of accountability. Finally the goal of actually changing budgets and policies to promote gender equality requires strategies that go beyond raising awareness or even promoting accountability, although these are important building blocks.

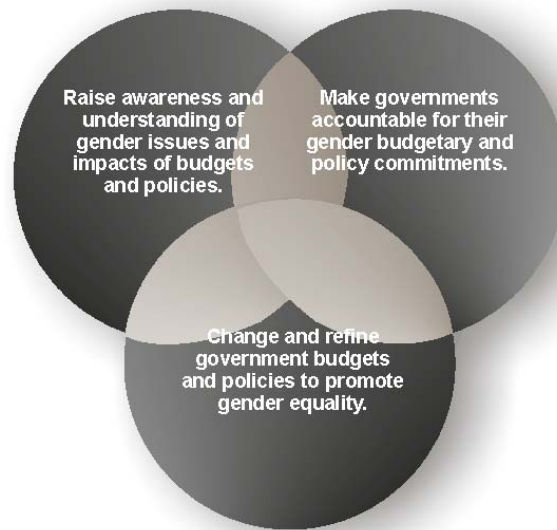


Diagram 1: Three core goals of gender-responsive budgets

In this pilot project, the technical assistance tasks were ordered according to which goals they would most likely promote (assuming appropriate strategies for implementing each task were chosen). This process facilitated a strategic approach, as we chose tasks that were directly related to the pilot project's goals. The result of this process was the conceptual framework and operations model outlined in diagram 2 (see appendix 1).

The overall conceptual framework distinguished the pilot project in several ways. First, adopting a range of clearly explicated goals provided criteria against which to evaluate the progress of the pilot project from its inception. Second, linking goals with tasks and strategies meant that strategies were explicitly developed and adopted on the basis of their capacity to promote the project's goals. Thirdly, the framework made visible the potential gap between undertaking a gender-sensitive budget analysis and producing a gender-sensitive budget, with the latter requiring additional strategies. It was the emphasis placed on this third goal that determined the nature of this project.

The question of what could be done with the budget process in the space of one year was a crucial one. In working directly with the budget process, we had to carefully select the entry points and actors we needed to work with. This was important because we wanted to transfer the project to the political sphere.

METHODOLOGY IMPLEMENTED

This section will concentrate on relaying stories of the various strategies employed to forward each of the pilot project's core goals.

Raising awareness and understanding of gender issues in policies, programs and budgets

Raising awareness involves unpacking budgetary information, analysing budgetary allocations and making assessments of performance and progress with respect to gender equality. Awareness-raising tools also cover issues related to the transparency of data and capacity building. To this end, the first workshop for government officials in the RMI included various activities that sought to develop:

- an understanding of gender issues in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, past and current;
- a statistical overview of the socioeconomic situation of men and women in the RMI using national census and other relevant data; and
- an awareness of potential direct and indirect gender impacts of ministry programs and activities.

As an illustration, this first objective was pursued through an exercise that involved women and men working in separate groups to examine the socially constructed and dynamic nature of gender. This entailed identifying the 'should' and 'should not' messages given to women and girls and men and boys in the RMI. This exercise was enthusiastically conducted with much laughter, particularly among the women. It was recognised that gender norms and behaviour changed over the generations and these norms and behaviour differed according to education, location (Majuro versus the outer islands), socioeconomic status and ethnicity. A brief activity in which ministries brainstormed what they thought were relevant gender issues in the RMI concluded this section. This workshop provided tools and preliminary knowledge as the basis for a gender budget analysis.

Promoting government accountability in relation to the gender impacts of its policies and budgets

Ensuring accountability is a demanding task; it requires shifts in power and usually involves some institutional changes to the budgetary decision-making processes. Strategies adopted in this pilot project to promote accountability included

- establishing administrative mechanisms within government that ensured responsibility for implementing the pilot project; and
- capacity building of NGOs to advocate for a gender-related issue and to link budgeting to planning processes that reflect gender concerns.

A positive story to come out of this pilot project stems from the second strategy. As mentioned previously, the main civil society organisation to participate in the pilot project was the RMI women's umbrella NGO, WUTMI. After several years of being de-funded by the RMI government, WUTMI was undergoing a strong revival in 2002 when the pilot project began. In the early stages of the project, the organisation indicated that it was very interested in participating and it was agreed that the UniSA team would run a NGO workshop (following the first government workshop) in collaboration with WUTMI. The workshop was designed to inform NGO participants about the project, increase their understanding of gender and budgetary issues and provide a forum for the participants to identify their role in the project.

Around thirty women attended the workshop, representing a variety of NGOs and a range of locations within the RMI.⁷ A central workshop activity was a budget role-play exercise or game in which NGO delegates acted as government officials and were assigned to different ministry 'teams'. These teams represented the pilot ministries for the project (finance, resources and development, internal affairs, health and education). This game was developed by the UniSA consultancy team to illustrate the importance of the budget in gender outcomes and hence enhance the capacity of NGOs to advocate for gender. It also highlighted the key political and economic elements of the development of program and budget proposals as well as the significance of cross-ministry gender issues. The role-play was preceded by one of the consultants presenting an outline of the RMI 2002/03 revenues and outlays. These 'real world' budget allocations were used to determine how much was allocated to the various ministries in the role-play. Each ministry team was given an allocation of lollies⁸ and was assigned a sheet of tasks and rules (which the other ministries did not see). In the role-play each ministry had to work out a program proposal and a budget allocation to deal with the problem of teenage pregnancy.

As the game unfolded the teams began negotiating with each other to provide programs on a cross-ministry basis to overcome some resource constraints. The Ministry of Internal Affairs took on a coordinating rather than a service provision role as its main resource allocation was staff (it did not have many lollies!). Finance was approached for funding and instructed the ministries to rewrite their proposals. Resources and Development, which had the smallest allocation, ate their lollies – thus providing an opportunity during the debriefing to discuss misappropriation of funds. At the end of the workshop the delegates identified the following key issues for NGOs in promoting a gender-responsive budget:

⁷ The UniSA team funded 5 outer island participants to attend the workshop to ensure a more representative range of Majuro and outer island participation in the project.

⁸ One lolly was equivalent to \$USD 1000.

- NGOs have an important role in raising gender issues and providing evidence of these issues;
- NGOs can look at, and understand, government budgets and their impacts on women but this requires training in order to understand the budget and budgetary processes;
- NGOs need to work with ministries to identify gaps and new programs.

In the closing round of the workshop, delegates indicated firstly that they had acquired a better understanding of gender, secondly that the budget was important for gender outcomes, thirdly that they had a better idea about how the budget process worked, and finally that they had enjoyed the workshop and would like more opportunities to participate. In extending these capability strengthening exercises to Marshallese NGOs, the pilot project succeeded in providing them with preliminary knowledge of how government budgets work and some basic tools for holding the government to task for their record on implementing their commitments to gender equality.

Changing policies, programs and budgets

It was the development of a core project team and the decision to focus on one gender-related issue that transformed the pilot project from a GRB initiative that concentrated on analysis to one that attempted to change the government budget. The formation of the Marshallese steering committee comprised the second stage of the methodology and was vital to this transformation.

To advance this third goal the RMI steering committee decided to develop a program focusing on one gender issue, which would serve as a focal point for budget analysis and changing the budget. The rationale for this approach was that an understanding of both gender analysis and budgeting would be best developed among government and NGOs through targeting a gender issue for which there was some community concern – thus the choice of teenage pregnancy. The steering committee decided that research and gender analysis of teenage pregnancy were to be combined with strategies to develop a cross-ministry budgetary proposal around this issue. A key objective was to sensitise as broad a range of government and civil society stakeholders as possible on the issue of teenage pregnancy, in order to develop programs and budgets responding to the issue.

A key strategy in advancing budget analysis was the second workshop for government officials. Having developed knowledge around the area of gender, its relevance in the RMI and its application to their work in the first workshop, the second workshop aimed to:

- outline the project proposal about teenage pregnancy established by the steering committee;

- highlight a case study of teenage pregnancy using a statistical analysis from the Ministry of Health and a qualitative presentation from a key Marshallese NGO;
- develop an understanding of gender impact assessments using teenage pregnancy as a focal point; and
- promote an understanding of cross-ministry gender and budgetary issues.

With regard to these latter two objectives, a key goal within the training workshops was for participants to understand that their ministry budgets had significant direct and indirect impacts in the area of gender. An exercise was conducted in which the consultants asked different government ministries for their outputs and policies on teenage pregnancy. This campaign to raise awareness was accompanied by a significant amount of training in gender analysis. The resulting budget analysis revealed only two existing programs to address teenage pregnancy. Subsequent discussion within the training workshop also revealed however that, although most ministries' budgets did not directly focus on teenage pregnancy, the work of almost all ministries indirectly impacted on teenage pregnancy. For example, the Ministry of Education led a program to train school nurses; whilst the Ministry of Health conducted various reproductive health and family planning programs and dealt with treatment of rape victims. This latter work was particularly significant given data from the Ministry of Health revealing that in many cases of teenage pregnancy the fathers were far older than the mothers. Teenage pregnancy emerged within the workshop as a cross-cutting issue that had diverse impacts across all sectors of RMI society. Once this was established all ministries were interested in doing more work on the issue.

In the process of establishing the cross-ministry nature of teenage pregnancy, the budget analysis generated a lively discussion amongst participants in which a multiplicity of issues emerged, such as lack of funding and the complexity of trying to develop a coordinated policy approach. The discussion concluded with the decision to develop a coordinated cross-budget bid about teenage pregnancy. The development of this bid, then, was to be the strategy through which the participating ministry teams could forward the third goal of changing budgets, whether it be through new funding, a reallocation of funding or a coordination of resources with another ministry.

Following the workshop two meetings were held between these ministries and the Chief Secretary's Office. During these meetings each ministry had the opportunity to map out their funding allocations for programs and outputs directly or indirectly impacting on teenage pregnancy. The process of sharing information about the programs being conducted enabled the ministries to identify some duplications and gaps in programs on teenage pregnancy. At the same time factors such as the bureaucratic politics around ownership of the teenage pregnancy program, a lack of commitment to the project by the Ministry of Finance who was coordinating the

project and consequently a breakdown of communication amongst those involved in the budget project proved a significant obstacle to any further achievement. Any progress achieved in this environment of competition, however, was completely hindered by a breakdown in the budgetary process that year, resulting from a renegotiation of the Compact grant funds with the US. This exogenous factor thus impacted directly on the third goal of the pilot project, illustrating again that gender budgets can be highly political.

At the same time that we recognise the minimal outcomes that were achieved in changing the budget, the progress that was achieved should not be understated. This is because a deep-set atomistic mentality exists amongst government officials in the RMI, which in turn is entrenched by the lack of formal cross-ministry mechanisms available to deal with cross-cutting issues. In addition, it should be mentioned that the development of awareness raising about teenage pregnancy issues did actually result in some budgetary change. Although a cross-ministry bid was not developed, some significant changes in the budget did take place as a direct result of the capacity-building exercises. For example, the Ministry of Internal Affairs achieved a reallocation of funds which it planned to spend on a teenage pregnancy program. Unfortunately this program did not succeed because the Women's Desk Officer – a key member of the project's steering committee – was removed from her position due to some political circumstances toward the end of the pilot project, a key time in the budget changing process. A more inexperienced officer took over and failed to spend the funds on time, thereby losing the opportunity to direct this reallocation of money toward a gender budget. In a more successful example, the Ministry of Education decided to spend a Federal US grant received for health education amongst adolescents on the issue of teenage pregnancy. This is an example of changing budgets through redirecting resources to change the type and quality of goods and services delivered by government.

DISCUSSION OF METHODOLOGY

In discussing the approach adopted in the pilot project, several key points should be made. First, as discussed above, this project did not focus on gender analysis alone but sought to engage with the actual budgetary decision-making process. Second, GRB initiatives are diverse in terms of the institutional location and actors involved. Some initiatives start from within governments and others emerge from civil society organisations (Budlender and Sharp 1998). As already noted, for this pilot project an inside-government 'model' was chosen as a part of the overall methodological framework, with the Ministry of Finance agreeing to be the project coordinator. However, concerted efforts were made to include NGOs. A central lesson from inside-government models of GRBs is that strategies to strengthen the role of civil society are vital (Sharp and Broomhill 1990). Experience suggests that, to ensure effective implementation and sustainability of GRBs, there needs to be

leadership by the government and where possible the involvement of NGOs in the design and implementation of the program (Hewitt and Mukhopadhyay 2002: 75). The terms of reference between the ADB and the government of the RMI specified that the pilot project would include the participation of NGOs by providing training in gender-responsive budgets. But as the project progressed NGO representation widened to include a representative on the project's four-person steering committee which had responsibility for design and implementation of the project. NGOs also provided valuable data and gender analyses.

Third, a key component was the scope of the project. This was a pilot project for one year. There was no guarantee of funding by the donor beyond one year, nor is the government compelled to extend the project beyond the pilot stage. An obvious limitation of this approach is that gender analysis takes time to develop and budgets do not change very much within a year. However, the point of a pilot project was to take some risks and see what emerged so as to learn the lessons. The project focused on the expenditure side of the budget and involved several ministries. As well as the Ministry of Finance, which coordinated the project, six other key ministries were selected to choose two to three representatives to participate in the project.⁹

Finally, a key aspect of the approach adopted in this pilot project was the emphasis placed on 'country ownership', given that it was initiated externally by a donor (ADB) as part of a regional technical assistance project in the Pacific. Several strategies were adopted as part of the project's methodology to deal with the critical issue of promoting local ownership, the most important being the responsibility of the RMI steering committee to develop a proposal to take the project forward in a way that was tailored to the RMI context. Other strategies included the use of 'local voices' in training, whereby local presenters were used as much as possible, and conducting training in the Marshallese language in some cases.

Lessons from the RMI initiative

As discussed throughout this paper, the pilot project was unique in a number of ways. Despite its distinction, however, a number of lessons can be drawn from the RMI experience that have applicability elsewhere:

1. A one-year initiative is valuable for raising awareness and understandings of gender issues in policies, programs and budgets (goal 1) but is too short a time frame in which to make significant progress towards enforcing

⁹ These were the Office of the Chief Secretary and the Ministries of Health, Education, Internal Affairs, and Resources and Development. The Office of Planning and Statistics and the Public Service Commission were asked to provide data for the project.

accountability and changing budgets. In order for gender budgets to fulfil their potential they need to be developed over several budget cycles.

2. There is a difference between a gender-sensitive budget analysis and achieving a gender-sensitive budget. The first is an essential but insufficient requirement for the latter. Changing budgets requires a deep understanding of the budgetary decision-making process and its politics. The RMI initiative was undermined in its goal of developing a cross-ministry budget on teenage pregnancy by politics, in particular the bureaucratic politics of competition between ministries as to who would own the program on teenage pregnancy. Ultimately, however, it was the bigger politics of the RMI–US Compact negotiations that contributed to the collapse of the normal budgetary processes in the year of the pilot project, making a budget bid largely impossible.
3. Maintaining momentum for a GRB initiative involves considerable effort, coordination and leadership. Events such as the ADB cancelling a major regional workshop on the pilot project and changes in the jobs of the steering committee members undermined momentum for the pilot project at critical times of its development. The coordination by the Ministry of Finance was problematic, as was its leadership. The role played by finance ministries is crucial in the success of GRB but they usually lack the culture, incentive and expertise to support these initiatives. Creative ways have to be developed to change this.
4. Donor-funded GRB initiatives need to facilitate genuine ownership of the initiative. The resources of donor-funded initiatives should be used sensitively to foster local ownership. The two-part methodology discussed above was an important strategy for handing over power and ownership.
5. NGOs are critical in the success of a gender budget initiative. Without the active support of WUTMI, the RMI initiative would have made considerably less progress. Involving a WUTMI representative on the steering committee and providing her with a mentor contributed to the effectiveness of the NGOs and the pilot project. Also important was the broader capacity building of NGOs through training workshops on GRB. As a result of activities such as the budget role-play participants better understood their potential role. One NGO representative commented after the NGO workshop: ‘Now that I’ve got a good understanding of gender-responsive budgets, I, as a member of an NGO, can put pressure on the government to be more sensitive and more aware of the issues that affect women.’

6. NGOs can also make important contributions to GRBs by setting agendas. The NGO Youth to Youth presented its research on teenage pregnancy at the government training workshops, successfully demonstrating the lack of work being done to deal with the issue and highlighting the need to generate more disaggregated data and undertake further research.
7. The public expenditure management system and procedures are fundamental to the choice of strategies of a GRB initiative and the potential for achieving the various goals of GRBs. The RMI initiative was undermined by the lack of a transparent and accountable public expenditure management system. This included a lack of a public budget document and misappropriation of funds. Even when systems or procedures existed that would support the pilot project it was difficult to use them. For example, the national planning document Vision 2018, which had been passed by parliament, is remarkable for its inclusion of gender equality objectives and for the priority given to the national budget. A central plank of the RMI GRB proposal was to raise awareness of Vision 2018 generally and its implications for the development of a gender-responsive budget in particular. However, this planning document was simply ignored in the budget decision-making process.

In conclusion, this pilot project has proved particularly uncommon in its emphasis on advancing the final core goal of GRB initiatives – a goal that is often neglected or discarded altogether in the planning and development of these projects for reasons including insufficient time, resources and experience. Although such reasons are certainly valid, the result is that gender-responsive budget initiatives are weakened as a strategy for imbedding gender into the mainstream policy and budgetary processes and outcomes. This project thus proved crucial in establishing some knowledge about bridging the gap between the two areas of gender analysis and formulating a gender budget. It is only when gender-sensitive budgets are achieved that men and women, and boys and girls, are able to experience better services and outcomes.

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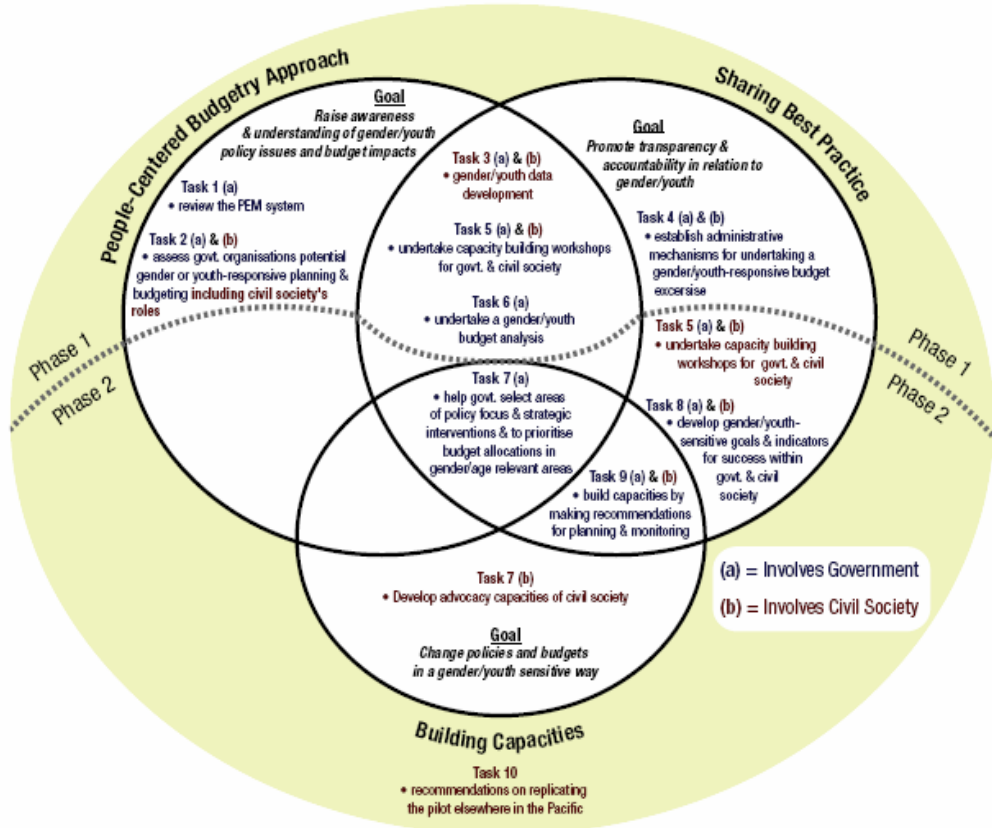
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APPENDIX 1

**Gender / Youth Sensitive PEM – Pacific
Conceptual Framework & Operations Model**
Diagram 1



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