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Gender Responsive Budgeting

Egypt Network for Integrated Development

Policy Brief 017

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Problem Situation

The Government of Egypt (GOE) seeks to address the lack of available resources for the implementation of commitments made to women under the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as well as to address the gender blindness of macroeconomic policies that have seriously impeded implementation of commitments to advance the status of women in Egypt.

This through the utilization of an economic governance framework, particularly gender statistics, monitoring women's economic rights under CEDAW and gender budgeting, engendering economic governance in strategic areas where gender blind macroeconomic, trade and globalization policies are a particularly disadvantage and impact negatively on women, especially poor and rural women and those in the informal sector.

The GOE needs to balance the country's national budget and to ration the use of its limited resources. Accordingly, the GOE should abide by shifting towards a performance-based budget. (The budget Law 53 for 1973 was amended by Ministerial Decree number 668 of 2009 and Article 16 states that necessary procedures need to be taken in order to analyze the budget based on performance based programs). Moreover, civil society is calling for measuring the impact of public spending as a tool to ensure quality services. Also, the GOE has realized that promoting transparency and accountability in governance would not be possible without focusing on budgeting.

A proposed strategy utilizes a framework of economic governance, combining the principles of good governance with good economic theory, and which incorporates the care economy into an integrated analysis. This approach will be coupled with a rights-based perspective to ensure that Government and decision-makers are accountable to the women's constituency for engendering economic governance and that women are able to claim their economic rights effectively. The government itself has been very interested in a performance-based budget

and evaluation since 2005, while NGOs and political parties are very interested in the impact of public spending. The point of entry for gender responsive budgeting (GRB) would be the Policy Process and its stages of identification, policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Prior efforts to solve the problem

Although there are gender budgeting initiatives in Egypt such as those originally championed by the Ministry of Finance (MOF) and the National Council for Women in Egypt, and supported by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNWomen), more efforts are needed to institutionalize the process, especially in the Ministry of Finance (MOF) as it is the place where budgets are designed, to achieve gender equality on a national scale to increase awareness of the existence and benefits of gender and performance based budgets.

In attempt to materialize the above needs, through its Equal Opportunities Unit (EOU), the MOF has implemented a 2006 project entitled “Equal Opportunities for Women in the National Budget of Egypt” (WIB), funded by the Royal Netherlands Embassy and the UN Women. The Project succeeded in introducing the concept of gender budgeting within the MOF. The most important achievement of the project is the production of performance based gender responsive budget books in 95% of Egypt governorates. In addition, an Arabic GRB knowledge package has been produced and transformed to an e-learning system supported by RITSEC, UNWomen and the EOU.

WIB established a milestone in the Egyptian GRB experience over four years, yet more resources are needed to ensure the application of the concept in a way that touches upon the lives of all Egyptians especially the vulnerable and marginalized.

Past performance

- The Budget Circular of 2010/2011 included a provision on Gender Responsive Budgeting according to Law 53 of 1973 in Article 16 and affirms that GRB to be upheld in Egypt’s Budgets. The provision was maintained after the revolution. Moreover, there has been an annual increase in the budget allocations for the National Council

for Women (NCW), which approximately amounted to LE 21 million in the budget of 2011.

- In addition, UNWomen supported the National Council for Women, to document that Gender Responsive Budgeting National Process in the 2007- 2012 and draft a proposed national plan for the next cycle.
- On the local and sectoral levels, gender responsive budget templates have been developed and adopted by the local budget department at MOF. Moreover, program based gender responsive budgets have been formulated in 16 governorates in 5 sectors (Education- Health- Manpower- Social Security- Food Security).
- The local level budget employees at MOF produced a gender responsive expenditure analysis report on the 2010/2011 sectoral services budgets. The report has been published officially by the Ministry of Finance.
- The first set of modules on the GRB e-learning platform has been tested by employees in the budget department of MOF and has been approved to be functioning.
- The GOE expressed ownership and commitment to continue working on GRB and conveyed cooperation to work on a gender responsive social budgeting strategy after the 2011 revolution.
- UNWomen in cooperation with the Equal Opportunities Unit at the Egyptian Ministry of Finance built capacities of a Cadre of Trainers with around 500 Finance Officer on Local and National Levels in 27 Governorates. A budget circular of 2012-2013 contained provisions on Gender-Responsive Budgeting, which ensures the national ownership and institutionalization of the initiative in the government. UNWomen provided technical support to engender the national socio-economic national plan.

The Problem

Egypt has been perceived as a leader in the Arab Region on GRB and has served as a center of excellence, yet these efforts have been stagnating since 2011, with direct impact on society at large should the status of women not improve as a result of poor planning and mainstreaming of gender based on needs.

There is a dearth of a constantly updated and reliable gender desegregated data available, in addition to the absence of a political will to endorse and push for GRB in Egypt, namely after the revolution of the 25th of January of 2011.

Second line leadership within the MOF is particularly important in order to ensure the sustainability of GRB. Other line ministries lack appropriate capacity in terms of staffing and resources in general. This affects the sustainable coordination that is expected to take place between line ministries on GRB.

Additionally, there is not a nationally adopted vision on how to mainstream gender, especially after the Arab Spring and the constant change in leadership

Documentation usually contains a *separate* chapter with a situation analysis of gender issues. But it would be more useful and suitable to *include gender in the analysis, findings and proposed policies* in order to ensure equity in the distribution of opportunities, resources and benefits among the beneficiaries of the project activities.

It is important to determine by gender what each does and with what resources, whether they can access and use resources, and whether they can benefit from the available opportunities. The national strategy should reflect the current developmental needs, be *disaggregated* according to gender, aim to meet the differing needs of both women and men, narrow the gender gap, reduce gender disparities and correct imbalances.

Major stakeholders

– *The Ministry of Finance in Egypt*): the MOF's main role should explore the strategic objectives of the ministries and analyze them in the form of gender sensitive program budgets. MOF will also set indicators to measure performance in order to promptly address deviations and arrive at a program and performance-based budget. It will also be responsible for preparing gender responsive performance-based program budgets, in addition to reviewing policies and existing work regulations to be in line with the initiative and its requirements.

– *The Ministry of Planning*: The Ministry of Planning is to ensure that all government institutions undertake their roles and responsibilities from a gender perspective, and that all policies and programs take the needs and priorities of both women and men into account in order to identify gaps and try to minimize and mitigate them, and the equal distribution of the fruits of development process among all citizens.

– *The National Council for Women (NCW)*: the NCW will be responsible for the process of gender mainstreaming in the national plan. It will provide awareness raising and support for decision makers at various levels, gender mainstream legislations and articles in the Constitution to ensure gender equality in State plans. Additionally, it shall coordinate the efforts of institutions working in the field of women besides cooperating with the Central

Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) in the preparation of gender disaggregated data

- *Sectoral Ministries*: Must include gender in their plans and projects to ensure equality and meeting the needs of both women and men
- *Civil Society Organizations*: participation in advocacy, awareness-raising and capacity-building activities
- *UNWomen*: provision of technical and financial assistance

Objectives

Since the goal is to increasingly incorporate the concept of equal opportunities into the budgetary planning, review and execution processes, the objectives include:

- Eliminating gender gaps
- Equal rights for both women and men in the different political, economic, social and cultural spheres.
- Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the performance of both women and men in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres
- Increasing opportunities and choices available to women.
- Achieving gender equity in access to and control of resources.
- Formulation of policies from a gender perspective

Possible scenarios

- An engendered national plan and policies with the Government in the leading role;
- Political parties-supportive even in the transitional period;
- Motivated staff at the Ministry of Finance and other Ministries, possibly through an incentives system;
- Committed development partners/donors;
- Dedicated CSOs, academician & NGOs;
- Institutionalization of GRB across the ministries and local bodies;
- Promotion of GRB as a monitoring tool for impact assessment of national finance policy and practice on gender equality;
- Systematic evaluations of GRB programmes
- Application of GRB system as the monitoring tool in donor supported programmes;
- Capacity enhancement of government staff, trainers of training institutes, and gender advocates on GRB and aid effectiveness;
- Increasing resource allocation

Constraints and political feasibility

The constant change in political leadership during Egypt's transition period is one risk factor among many. Others include a resistance culture within government employees, based on traditional mindsets, or the lack of knowledge on concepts related to gender equality and women's empowerment, (an ignorance also shared by many in civil society). There is also a resistance to move from the well trodden path of line item budgets to a program-based budget as old habits die hard. In addition, very little sex-disaggregated data is available, there is an absence of a "cost unit" for each sector and how to calculate it, plus the absence of a performance criteria.

Conclusions

The Gender Responsive Budgeting initiative will have an important role in the country's future since the revolution called for social justice. In the next phase of the project, developing the GRB national strategy and project document will be crucial to sustain the gains of the GRB experience in Egypt and integrate it within the new system. Increased educational access does not automatically translate into improved outcomes: with the increased participation of girls in primary school, capacities to manage the educational system in order to achieve sustainable and better outcomes are key to consolidating the gains made. The elimination of gender inequalities in all spheres of life including education, as both a human rights issue and as an impetus for poverty reduction and development generally, has gained center stage in the global and national development agendas. Girls' education is particularly acknowledged as being a major catalyst in this endeavor, and has found explicit expression in most developing countries' national development policies, programmes and strategies.

Recommendations

- High-level political leadership and commitment with multi-ministerial commitment and cooperation under a national strategy;
- Creation of able and effective institutional mechanism for gender mainstreaming;
- Use of well-resourced and well-positioned women's national machinery for awareness-raising, policy recommendations and political pressure;

- Assessment of previous plans and programs, to determine whether the gender equality gains that have already been achieved are being sustained and that new gender disparities have not arisen;
- Open communication channels such as the media for women and men to voice their perspectives on GRB and proposed budget reforms;
- Gender-responsive performance indicators in the policy and budget planning documents
- International human rights treaties ratified to reflect commitment to GRB.