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The Paradox of Gender Responsive Budgeting

BHUMIKA JHAMB, YAMINI MISHRA, NAVANITA SINHA

Despite the steps towards gender responsive budgeting, the budgetary allocations for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment show a decline. The gender budget statement in proportion to the total expenditure of the union budget as well as the projected Gross Budgetary Support for Women and Child Development in the Twelfth Five-Year Plan has decreased. Will this affect its ambitious gender agenda?

I make a promise...We have a collective responsibility to ensure the dignity and safety of women...We stand in solidarity with our girl children and women. And we pledge to do everything possible to empower them and to keep them safe and secure... I have made sufficient allocations to programmes relating to women and children. Hon'ble Members will find from the budget documents that the gender budget has Rs 97,134 crore.

– P Chidambaram, Budget Speech, 2013-14

The brutal attack and gang rape of a young girl in Delhi on 16 December 2012 fuelled widespread agitations and foregrounded the issue of increasing violence against women in the country. It also provided the much-needed impetus to the issue in the policy domain, with the government taking several noteworthy steps in this direction. This included the passage of a stringent anti rape law, i.e., the Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2013 and a law on sexual harassment at the workplace. Even the Union Budget 2013-14 (as reflected in the finance minister's budget speech) put women's security and safety centre stage.

While these policy pronouncements remain extremely significant, they alone will not suffice. It is difficult to conceive of any public policy that can be carried out without financial resources; it is equally difficult to conceive of any state action designed to create and facilitate an economic, social and political environment conducive to the enjoyment, exercise and realisation of women's rights that can be undertaken without funds from the national coffer. Therefore all promises on gender equality and women's empowerment will remain elusive until and unless emboldened by financial commitments.

This article focuses on two important policy documents recently put out in the public domain – the Union Budget 2013-14

and the Twelfth Five-Year Plan which was approved by the National Development Council on 27 December 2012 – to scrutinise the budget side of the story. The projected Gross Budgetary Support for the Twelfth Five-Year Plan forms the basis of our assessment. We argue that the financial resources committed in the union budget as well as in the Twelfth Five-Year Plan document itself are grossly inadequate for implementing the interventions (both existing and new) meant for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

The first part of the article focuses on assessing the financial commitments made in the gender budget (with an increased pool of Rs 97,134 crore) as well as the resources made available to the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), the nodal agency for the advancement of women in India. The latter part examines the projected Gross Budgetary Support for Women and Child Development (WCD) for the Twelfth Five-Year Plan, since it is this resource pool which will determine the fate of existing interventions and several others promised in the Twelfth Plan document.

Assessing the Gender Budget

One of the key highlights of the finance minister's speech was the reference made to the burgeoning Gender Budget Statement (henceforth GBS). For several commentators this was a testament of how "gender sensitive" this year's budget was. In fact, a leading newspaper article went so far as to state that allocation of funds for programmes related to women as captured in the Gender Budget Statement was next only to the budgetary allocations for the Ministry of Finance (MOF) and Ministry of Defence (MOD) – two ministries which have boasted of the highest levels of allocations in the past (Kably 2013). How meticulous is this assessment and how significant are the gains made in this year's GBS?

The GBS performs the arduous yet important task of trying to assess what percentage of the total expenditure of the budget flows to women, by listing out various programmes/schemes across

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ministries/departments with their corresponding outlays for women/girls. Simply put, the GBS captures the total quantum of funds meant for women and girls in a particular financial year. Comparing it to the budgets of individual ministries such as finance or defence is therefore inherently problematic. It is like comparing apples with oranges wherein the allocation for one particular ministry (the MOD in this case) is being compared with estimates from 34 departments/ministries on what they spend on women/girls.

There is a more important point which merits attention here. While there has definitely been an increase in the GBS in absolute terms, i.e., from Rs 88,143 crore (2012-13) to Rs 97,134 crore (2013-14); the magnitude of the GBS has declined as a percentage of the total expenditure of the union budget from 5.9% (2012-13 Budget Estimate – BE) to 5.8% (2013-14 BE). An assessment of the union budgets since 2008-09 reveals that barring the 2011-12 BE, when it registered a marginal jump (6.2%), the magnitude of the GBS has hovered around 5.5% all these years. Focusing on “absolute numbers” in isolation therefore does not reveal the entire picture – reviewing the magnitude of the GBS is extremely significant as it allows us to adjust the figure for inflation; and with inflation rates being as high as they have been in recent years, nominal increases without factoring inflation rates present a distorted picture.

Furthermore, while we recognise the importance of the GBS as an accountability tool, it continues to be riddled with several methodological and accounting flaws (Mishra and Sinha 2012). For instance, Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan (RGPSA) reports its entire allocations in Part B of the GBS. This again points to the chronic problem of inaccurate reporting, thereby raising significant questions over the cogency of the total gender budget figure of Rs 97,134 crore.

However, it must be mentioned here that there are some significant gains in this year's GBS. The Ministry of External Affairs has started reporting in the GBS from this year onwards. Also worth mentioning are the constant efforts of

the department of police to introduce women-specific interventions.

Reviewing Allocations: Another level at which the commitment of the government towards gender equality can be assessed is at the level of allocations for the MWCD. The Beijing Platform for Action stated the importance of creating and strengthening a national women's machinery (a coordinating unit in the government) as a central policy for the advancement of women in all countries. Among others, sufficient resources in terms of budgets and professional capacities were mentioned as important prerequisites for the effective functioning of the national women's machinery (United Nations 1995).

Interestingly, the “Women's Agency and Child Rights” chapter of the Twelfth Five-Year Plan acknowledges the importance of strengthening the women's ministry. It promises a comprehensive human resource plan as well as a comprehensive evaluation of the entire gender architecture – two much-needed steps towards strengthening the gender architecture and making it more effective.

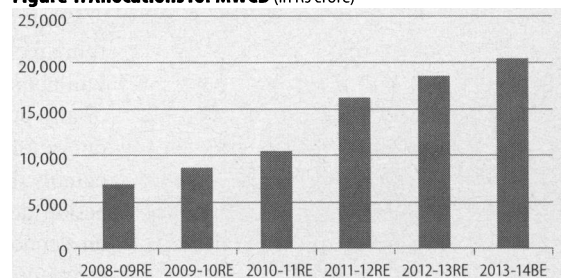
It is important to highlight that there are several critical gains in the “Women's Agency and Child Rights” chapter. From documenting the gender dimensions of violations under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) to promising enumeration of transgender persons in India, mapping their socio-economic status in order to improve their living conditions, the chapter shows a rare courage in identifying critical (at times controversial) issues to advance gender equality that policy documents often shy away from. Other commitments in the Twelfth Plan, to list a few, include strengthening existing schemes like the Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP), for skill development and income generation and Priyadarshini, for improving sustainable livelihood opportunities and working women's hostels. It also mentions that the Swayamsiddha phase II will act as

an important instrument in empowering women. Further, it mentions that new initiatives such as one stop crisis centres for providing shelter, police desk, legal, medical and counselling services and women's helpline will be considered. Certain other chapters of the Twelfth Plan have also shown a heightened sensitivity and commitment to address gender concerns in those specific sectors.

While we acknowledge the gains made in the Twelfth Plan, it is important to analyse whether the resources promised in the Union Budget 2013-14 are sufficient to push these interventions. Here, we review the resources for the MWCD, both at the aggregate level as well as specific allocations for individual schemes of the ministry. As mentioned earlier, the projected Gross Budgetary Support for Women and Child Development sector in the Twelfth Five-Year Plan forms the basis of this assessment.¹

A trend analysis from 2008-09 till date reveals that the allocations for the MWCD at the aggregate level have seen a small yet steady increase over the years from Rs 6,919 crore (2008-09 RE) to Rs 20,440 crore (2013-14 BE). However, if we isolate the allocations for “women's welfare” (minus child development), it appears that the allocations did not increase much. It went up from Rs 237.47 crore (2008-09 RE) to Rs 687.48 crore (2011-12 RE) and declined to Rs 250.84 crore (a decline of 63%) in 2012-13 BE.

Figure 1: Allocations for MWCD (in Rs crore)



RE: Revised Estimates; BE: Budget Estimates.

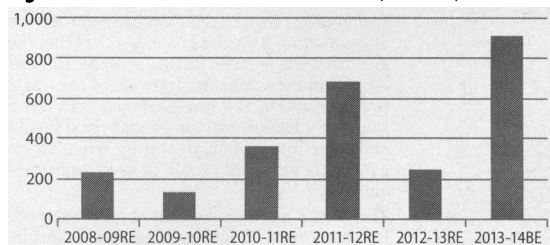
Source: Government of India, several years, union budget, *Expenditure Budget*, Volume II, MWCD.

In the Union Budget 2013-14 however, allocations for “women's welfare” are at Rs 914.68 crore. This is mainly on account of the substantial increase for Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahayog Yojana (IGMSY) and the introduction of some new initiatives last year such as women's helpline, one stop crisis centre, scheme

for implementation of the Domestic Violence Act, etc.

The obvious question here is whether the current allocations are adequate for implementing the range of existing interventions as well as those launched recently. To assess this, we look at the Gross Budgetary Support for WCD for the Twelfth Five Year Plan in the next part.

Figure 2: Allocations for 'Women's Welfare' (in Rs crore)



Source: Government of India, several years, union budget, *Expenditure Budget*, Volume II, MWCD.

Projected Gross Budgetary Support

The projected Gross Budgetary Support for WCD for the Twelfth Five-Year Plan is Rs 1,17,707 crore, out of which the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) accounts for Rs 1,08,503 crore. In effect thus, the total funds available for the period 2012-17 for implementation of all other schemes/interventions (minus ICDS) related to women's empowerment and child development, including schemes such as National Nutrition Mission is Rs 9,204 crore.

If one were to compare this with the Eleventh Plan, the figure has seen a steep decline. Table 1 shows the projected GBS for the WCD sector for the Twelfth Five-Year Plan period has registered a 25% drop from the Eleventh Five-Year Plan. This is a substantial decline if we factor in the high rate of inflation witnessed in recent years. It is also important to note that this smaller pot of money is meant for funding a larger number of schemes – both new and old. Interestingly, none of the schemes from the previous years have been discontinued this year.

Another aspect that merits attention is the magnitude of the projected Gross Budgetary Support for schemes pertaining to women's development (within MWCD) vis-à-vis other sectors such as health, education, transport and energy, urban development, rural development

and panchayati raj and scientific departments. As seen in Table 2, the share of women's development (excluding child development, in MWCD) in the total Gender Budgetary Support is a meagre 0.2% as opposed to 18.8% for rural development and panchayati raj and 12.5% for the transport and energy sectors.

Furthermore, what constitutes this available pool of Rs 9,204 crore for the five year period (which comes down to Rs 1,840.8 crore per year²)? As Figure 3 illustrates, only three interventions – the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), the Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls – SABLA and the IGMSY account for approximately 70% of this.

Notwithstanding the criticality of these three interventions for women and girls, the fact remains that only 30% (which adds up to a meagre Rs 536.8

Table 1: Projected Gross Budgetary Support for the WCD Sector

Projected Gross Budgetary Support (Rs Crore)	Total GBS for Women and Child Development (A)	ICDS (B)	A-B
11th Five-Year Plan	54,765	42,400	12,365
12th Five-Year Plan	1,17,707	1,08,503	9,204

Source: Government of India (2012-17), Draft Twelfth Five-Year Plan.

Table 2: Projected GBS for Women Development vis-à-vis Select Social and Economic Sectors

Departments	Projected GBS for Twelfth Five-Year Plan (in Rs Crore)	Share of Total GBS (%)
Health (Excluding Child Development)	3,00,018	8.4
Education	4,53,728	12.7
Rural Development and Panchayati Raj	6,73,034	18.8
Transport and Energy	4,48,736	12.5
Urban Development	1,64,078	4.6
Scientific Departments	142,167	3.98
Women's Development	9,204	0.2

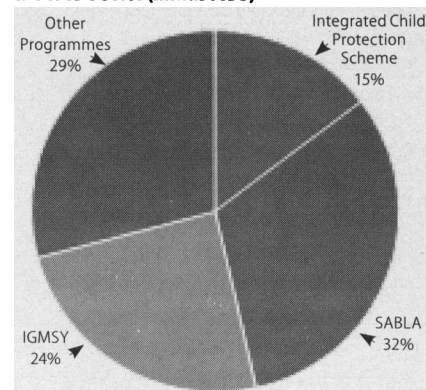
Source: Government of India (2012-17), Draft Twelfth Five-Year Plan.

crore³) is left to implement the remaining bunch of interventions of the MWCD.

Table 3 lists existing interventions for children and women and gives the corresponding RE figures for 2012-13 and BE figures for 2013-14. If we add BE figures of 2013-14 of existing interventions for children and women (part i and ii of Table 3), the total comes to around Rs 696.06 crore which is clearly more than the average of Rs 536.8 crore available from the projected GBS. Therefore, the important question that arises here is:

given the fact that the average amount (calculated from the projected GBS for WCD for the Twelfth Five-Year Plan) is

Figure 3: Constitution of Total Allocations for the WCD Sector (minus ICDS)



Source: Government of India, union budget (2013-14); *Expenditure Budget*, Volume II, MWCD.

less than the total outlays for existing interventions for women and children, where is the money to implement these interventions? Moreover, the required amount will be much more than Rs 696.06 crore since this amount has been

calculated based on the BE figures for 2013-14. As explained below, lot more resources will be required to strengthen the existing interventions and also effectively implement the recently launched new ones.

A comparison of 2012-13 RE figures and 2013-14 BE figures (refer Table 3) reveals that barring a few schemes such as hostels for working women and STEP, a majority of the schemes for women have not registered any significant increase over the last year's budget. In

fact, allocation for Swadhar Greh, an ambitious scheme launched in 2011 after merging the Swadhar and short stay homes schemes, has actually gone down from Rs 90 crore (2012-13 BE) to Rs 67.5 crore (2013-14 BE). This is quite surprising since the guidelines of the revised Swadhar Greh scheme promised better unit costs for various components such as salary of staff (resident superintendent, counsellor, etc), putting in place additional staff such as multipurpose workers, better food and medical

Table 3: Allocations for Interventions Targeted at Women and Children: Is the Projected GBS for the Twelfth Plan Adequate? (in Rs crore)

Existing Interventions for Children (i)			Existing Interventions for Women (ii)		
Scheme	2012-13 RE	2013-14 BE	Scheme	2012-13 RE	2013-14 BE
National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development	26.13	29.45	Condensed Courses for Women Education	3.15	0.9
Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for the children of working mothers	96.75	99	Hostels for Working Women	7.47	18
Scheme for welfare of working children in need of care and protection	7.65	9	STEP	6.75	18
Central Adoption Resource Agency	8.64	10	Central Social Welfare Board	52.19	65.23
Conditional Cash Transfer Scheme for the girl child with insurance cover	5	10	Awareness Generation Programme	6.12	0.9
Girl Child Specific District Plan of Action	0	13	National Commission for Women	15.6	18.45
Scheme for holistic development of adolescent boys	57.99	61.83	Rashtriya Mahila Kosh	0	18
			Swadhar Greh	49.5	67.5
			Comprehensive Scheme for Combating Trafficking	6.66	11.7
			Priyadarshini	14	15
			National Mission for Empowerment of Women	9.9	49.5
			Women's Helpline*	0	18
			One Stop Crisis Centre*	0	9
			Implementation of PWDVA*	0	67.5
			High Level Committee on Status of Women*	2.42	5
			National Institute of Women Affairs*	0	4.5
			Other Programmes (relief and rehabilitation of rape victims)*	0	76.6
Total (i)	202.16	232.28	Total (ii)	173.76	463.78

The schemes marked in asterisk have been launched recently.

Source: Government of India, Union Budget (2012-13): *Expenditure Budget*, Volume II, MWCD. Government of India, Union Budget (2013-14): *Expenditure Budget*, Volume II, MWCD.

expenses, etc. This amount will also be grossly insufficient to set up one shelter home in each district of the country as stated in the scheme's guidelines (Government of India 2011). Thus, the allocations for majority of schemes will require significant alterations if the cost norms and guidelines are to be modified.

As per the Working Group on Women's Agency and Empowerment for the Twelfth Five-Year Plan (Government of India 2012), the effective implementation of existing interventions for women empowerment alone, such as Central Social Welfare Board, Priyadarshini, Swadhar Greh, etc, requires an outlay of Rs 484 crore per year. It is important to mention here that this amount does not take into account allocations required for any of the new interventions launched last year or this year such as setting up one stop crisis centres, women helplines, scheme for implementation of Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, etc.

An analysis of the MWCD's budget for 2013-14 therefore reveals that it falls far

short of what is required to fulfil some of the commitments made in the Twelfth Plan – both in terms of effective implementation of existing programmes/schemes as well as rolling out the new interventions.

Conclusions

India seems to be trapped in a paradox: while on the one hand it has taken several steps towards gender responsive budgeting, on the other budgetary allocations for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment has actually registered a decline. This is illustrated by the declining magnitude of the GBS in proportion to the total expenditure of union budget as well as the decrease in the projected Gross Budgetary Support for WCD in the Twelfth Five-Year Plan. This is bound to have severe implications for the implementation of critical interventions for women and girls.

Given that many of the gender commitments made in the Eleventh Five-Year Plan did not see the light of day, one wonders if the lack of adequate budget

will eventually stifle the ambitious gender agenda set out in the Twelfth Plan as well.

NOTES

- 1 GBS refers to the aggregate of plan budgets (i.e, excluding non-plan budgets) of all Central government ministries in any financial year.) It includes the amount known as "Central Assistance for State and UT Plans" which the finance ministry transfers to state and UT governments every year. The magnitude of GBS in any union budget is determined by the Planning Commission and the finance ministry.
- 2 The figure of Rs 1,804.8 crore has been arrived at by dividing Rs 9,204 crore by 5. Not that the Twelfth Five-Year Plan GBS is to be divided equally in the annual budgets of the five years that fall within the Five-Year Plan; however, since the allocations in the 5-year period should add up to this amount, an average will indicate a ball park figure that could be used for further analysis.
- 3 This figure has been arrived at after subtracting the 2013-14 budget estimate figures for the three schemes (ICPS, IGMSY and SABLEA) from Rs 1,840.8 crore.

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