



GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

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Gender Responsive Budgeting entails the process of adoption of public budgets for its securitization, allocation, and execution in a gender-sensitive fashion. The intent is not necessarily to allocate public budgets specially based on a person's gender, but to specify, audit, allocate and execute budgets to democratize the process, create equal opportunities and respond to gender-based inequalities in the society. Prioritizing gender responsive budgeting is concomitant to prioritizing budget allocations in key social and public policy areas where gender-based inequalities are rampant in Pakistan.

Speaking especially of Pakistan, the country ranked 142 out of 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index Report 2024. When disaggregated for educational attainment, economic participation, health and political empowerment, the situation becomes more dismal with Pakistan ranking 145th with respect to economic participation and economic opportunities for women, 135th in educational attainment for women, 143rd when it comes to healthcare and access, and 95th in political empowerment and participation. With statistics as grim as stated in the preceding text, the need for

gender responsive budgeting is not just a normative concern, but also an incremental one, especially when half of the country's population is women.

The need for gender responsive budgeting was realized and hence been empirically operationalized by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in collaboration with the Omar Asghar Khan Foundation. The methodology adopted for targeting the areas where gender responsive budgeting can be made functional is the Gender Budget Tagging. The tagging methodology focuses on an array of areas ranging from social domains such as education health and employment to the systems and structures enabling ecosystem for gender inclusion and diversity. The targeting methodology was phased, including following three phases:

Phase 1: identifying the areas in the budget that have gender relevance.

Phase 2: specification of areas in the budget that have gender-relevant themes. Six such themes were identified: economic empowerment, economic services, climate change, gender-based violence,

social protection and institutions ensuring women's rights.

Phase 3: assigning relevant weights to the themes to amplify the need for targeted budgeting for women's rights.

For the fiscal year 2023-2024, out of the total federal budget of PKR 14,454,563 million, PKR 949,778 million was included in the PSDP and PKR 13,504,778 million was allocated under the current budget. Of the total budget, only 3.38% was calculated to be of high relevance which could be of some use for women's practical needs, largely¹. The lack of targeted investments, impact assessments of funds allocated to high-relevance themes, and gender assessments are also lacking.

One of the issues in the targeting methodology is that the definition of gender is confined to binaries only and hence doesn't categorically include the transgender persons. Secondly, the mere focus of federal and provincial budgets on women's practical needs is contriving, as for Pakistan, strategic needs are equally and at times more important such as body autonomy, legal, legislative and constitutional rights of women in Pakistan. Nevertheless, the gender targeting methodologies need to be applied widespread across federal and provincial government to reach at policy-level decision-making based on evidence, empirics and rigor. For evidence to inform pro-gender social and public policy, sex-disaggregated data will help specify the areas where more targeted allocation and auditing of budgets are needed for gender equality. For efficaciousness of investments in the projects of gender equality, integrating gender assessments in planning cycles is also critical. Investing in awareness, campaigning, dialogue and debate is also a key for behavioral change for women empowerment and inclusion.



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1. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/pakistan/21283.pdf>