

Safe Cities and Gender Budgeting

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Introduction

Urbanisation often goes hand in hand with a rise in urban violence and crime that manifests in terms of street harassment of women and girls, stalking, sexual violence, blackmailing and extortion rackets. Children and women are seen as soft spots who can be victimized by predators. One such incident in the city is enough and the feeling of insecurity is spread like wild fire. It not only frightens girls and women, it controls every act they consider doing then onwards.

Smart cities have to be safe cities:

Town planners, policy makers and budget experts need to do gender budgeting incorporating facets such as women-friendly civic infrastructure- water, sanitation, health care, safe transport, public toilets, helplines, skill development for crisis management and, safety at work place. While making budgets for social defense services, consideration must be given to safety of girls and women in schools and colleges in terms of prevention of child sexual abuse through public education and counselling facilities, separate toilets for girls and boys in schools, legal literacy on POCSO Act, 2012 and Prevention of Sexual Harassment Workplace Act, 2013, special cells in the police department to take action against display of pornographic images, SMS messages, cybercrimes that victimize young girls at public places, in public transport- buses, local trains, rickshaws and taxis. Installation of panic buttons for customers in rickshaws and taxis need to be made mandatory in all cities. Women vendors and child workers, women employees working in the night shifts are highly exposed to unwanted sexual advances and petty harassment. Hence, budgetary allocation for referral centres /information desks should be provided in markets and public places. This will also reduce trafficking of children and women separated from their family members and sleeping at night at railway stations, bus stations and footpaths.

Law and Order Situation and Street Harassment:

Conflicts in the city make women unsafe. Hostility between rival groups is played on bodies of women and girls in the form of rape, sexual harassment, provocation for physical assaults. Insular existence harms community spirit. Fear psychosis about safety of girls also increases incidences of child marriages. More budget allocation is needed for efficient running of Police Helplines -103, 1091 with the help of professional counsellors. To run One-stop crisis centres with in public hospitals for women survivors of violence, there needs to make financial provision for salaries for doctors, counselling, emergency shelter and legal aid. Along with financial allocation, transparent guidelines for post trauma care, counseling, rehabilitation, compensation need to be provided so that funds can be used judiciously.

Urban Infrastructure and Safety of Women

From the point of view of macroeconomic policy, gender friendly infrastructure plays pivotal role in creating gender friendly cities. City planners need to make budgetary provision for safe

housing and night shelter for homeless women, half way homes for elderly women, information desk for women and children at railway stations/buses.

Road widening for 4 wheelers and heavy vehicles have taken toll of pavements. Mass of women who have to walk on the streets get harassed by men in moving two-wheelers, three wheelers, four wheelers and trucks. Proper foot paths for pedestrians, vendors, hawkers whose presence ensures safety must be given as much importance as construction of bridges and flyovers. Budgetary allocation for installation of CCTV cameras must be made at all public places, highways and streets in the business hubs. Proper street lighting in the peripheral areas of the city is vital for safety of citizens, especially women, children and senior citizens. Regular safety audit by citizen's forum is important to identify unsafe areas. Safe, clean and free toilets for women at railway stations, bus stops, markets, public places are urgently required in the cities. Budgetary allocation for gender sensitization workshops for police personnel is important to change the mindset of 'victim-blaming' among them.

Advantages of safety for women

Feeling safe is to feel protected. It is a feeling of well-being which can envelop a family, a community, a neighbourhood and a city. Its composition is hard to decipher, but it is an all-encompassing feeling of calm which is often as invisible as clean unpolluted air and, inversely, when fear and anxiety take its place, that feeling is as palpable as though it was a physical reality. Safe cities ensure more freedom, less confinement & control and enhance women's opportunities to travel, to attain education-job-career.

Gender Budgeting in Urban Local Self-Government Bodies (ULBs)

With this perspective in mind, Urban Local Self Government Bodies have to work for gender budgeting. Striving for 'Gender friendly' cities have become a strategic objective of the urban planners, policy makers and practitioners. Citizens' fora, community based organizers and NGOs are publicly debating the issues concerning revenue generation and public expenditure of the urban bodies with gender lens. Right to information has proved to be an important tool in the hands of civil society for transparency in public expenditure.

Municipal Budgets

In municipality, the Accounts Superintendent tables statement for income and expenditure in December. Also he/she gives estimates of income and expenditure for the financial year end and seeks responses from Municipal commissioner, president of Municipality, and standing committee. Portion for committed fund can't be changed by councillors at the time of final approval. Revision of property tax takes place once in 4 years. We need to integrate safety of women as a major concern in flagship centrally sponsored schemes such as JNNURM, PMSSY, NUHM are supposed to have 30% of funds as Women's Component.

There are three Sources of Income for Municipal councils/corporations:

1. State & Central government's Allocation, State and Centrally sponsored schemes

2. Revenues obtained through' local taxes-water, electricity, road, etc.
3. Funds obtained from the Finance Commissions

Gender Concerns

For past 15 years, gender economists and women's groups are making efforts to answer the following questions:

- How to enable women to direct economy through designing and constructing fiscal policy?
- How to link economic governance to political governance?
- How to enable EWRs to participate in the budget-making efforts?

They have used methods of Participatory Appraisal (PA) and Focus Group discussion (FGD) to identify gender concerns.

Macro-economic Policies and Gender Audit of Municipal Budgets

Trend analysis of allocation to social sector in the pre (before 1991) and post (after 1991) structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) phase has revealed that poor women have suffered the most due to drastic budgetary cuts in PDS and public health, safe public transport & child care facilities, food security, drinking water and sanitation. There is no gender mainstreaming with respect to safety of women in the budgets of ULBs.

Gender sensitive budget demands re-prioratisation of financial allocations by municipal bodies in favour of

- Working women's hostels, crèches, cheap eating facilities, public toilets
- Women friendly and SAFE public transport- local trains, Metro, buses
- Housing- subsidized for single/ deserted/ divorced/ widowed women
- Nutrition- strengthening PDS, mid-day meals
- Health- Abolition of user fees for BPL population, one stop crisis centre in public hospital for women/girls survivors of violence linked with shelter homes
- Skill training centres for women and tailor made courses
- Safe, efficient and cheap public Transport-bus, train, metro
- Water- Safe drinking water in the community centres
- Waste Management- Technological upgradation- Occupational health & safety of recycling workers/rag pickers
- Proper electrification in the communities
- Multipurpose Community centres, half way homes for elderly and mentally disturbed women

Method of Revenue Generation: Several state governments have sent GR regarding allocation of 5% of total revenues for women and children. This should be increased to 10%. Kerala has done this. Moreover, urban local self-government (LSGs) bodies can raise revenues by heavy taxes on Tobacco, alcohol, private vehicles and entertainment industry. Portion of fine collected for causing damage to environment (introduction of Green Tax), high speed driving, wrong parking and breaking rules can be used for welfare of women and children.

Surcharge, earmarked charge for specific purpose such as Education Cess-2 % of salary, income tax for disaster management has raised revenues for urban LSG. In Maharashtra, transport cess at the time of Bangladesh war in 1971, later on was diverted to EGS kitty.

Meetings with the stake holders

Urban LSGs should organize discussion on needs identified by EWRs with GOs, NGOs and SHGs. They should be made aware of Socio-economic Profile of the Municipality. The ward officers should ensure scrutiny of needs and perceived problems by impartial experts who can also suggest methods to fulfil needs (Labour, land, services). Financial aspects of programmes and projects should be discussed in a transparent manner.

Tasks of Citizens Association

Civil society groups must be allowed to give their opinions on suitable budgetary allocations and generation of revenues from local sources. They can verify/cross check collected data and results of the surveys/interactive workshops and prepare a vision document. Sub-committees can work out details of different budget heads and it must have all stake groups of the ward. Presentation of reports of these sub-committees should be made through EWRs to the municipal authorities. Currently women's groups are lobbying for reprioritization of allocation to reflect women's interests. E.g. Financial allocation for implementation of DV act, PCPNDT Act, utilisation of funds earmarked for Swadhar scheme for women in difficult circumstances and working women's hostels in urban centres.

Activity Mapping:

Women's groups are discussing of micro economics involved in dealing with problems faced by women at ward levels such as drinking water, health centers, garbage-disposal and are moving beyond grievance redressal. Women's groups such as Anandi (Ahmedabad), Alochana (Pune), Stree Mukti Sangathana (Mumbai), National alliance of women's Organisations (Bhubaneshwar), Sagamma Srinivas Foundation (Bangalore), Action India (Delhi) are organizing workshops for awareness about technicalities of budget, building knowledge about programmes, schemes, projects under different departments, gathering procedural information about critical issues/felt needs, skills of proposal writing. Stack groups in support of EWRs are Self Help Groups, gender sensitive administrators, corporators /councilors, individuals within political parties, NGOs and Women in the communities. They make efforts to seek allocation under appropriate budget heads to identify streams of revenue, available revenue and the required expenditure.

Some unresolved Issues:

Decision-makers in the urban LSG bodies need to address the following issues demanding urgent attention:

- How to bridge the gap between notional allocation and actual allocation?
- Accounting, auditing and record keeping of gender disaggregated data & allocation
- How to achieve physical and performance/ achievement targets?
- Implementation of maternity benefits, Tribal Sub Plan, Scheduled Caste Plan for the urban poor
- Major departments claiming indivisibilities of allocation of resources
- Notional allocation projected as real allocation
- Absence of uniform guidelines & procedures

Gender budgeting in Urban LSG Bodies

Process of gender budgeting demands **special programmes targeting women based on** enumeration of differential impact of expenditures across all sectors and services-gender disaggregated impact on literacy, school drop outs, mortality, morbidity, malnutrition, illnesses, safety & security. Hence, they need to ensure the review of equal opportunity policies and opportunities in the public sector-jobs, school education, wages, health care, skills, technical training, and computer education.

Allocation and expenses of resources for women in Panchayat Budgets:

NIPFP has recommended the following classification of financial allocation on schemes and programmes for gender audit as well as gender budgeting.

- Women specific schemes where 100 % of the allocation is required to be spent on women targeted 100% to women by Ministry of women and Child Development (MWCD).
- Pro-women schemes where at least 30% of allocation and benefits flow to women. E.g. all anti-poverty programmes.
- Gender Neutral Schemes meant for community as a whole (Employment generation programmes, Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM))
- Residual schemes for disaster management

All India Institute of Local Self Government, AIILSG gives details of all schemes under these 4 categories through its publications, workshops and training programmes. Moreover, it also teaches the elected representatives the efficient ways of programme implementation through budgeting from below:

Enhanced budgetary allocation for Protective and Welfare Services

These are the schemes directly benefiting women for crisis management of situations arising out of economic and socio-cultural subordination and dehumanisation of women such as shelter homes, short stay homes and rehabilitation schemes for women survivors of violence, pensions for widows and destitute women, help lines for women survivors of violence.

Increase in budgetary allocation for Social Services Expenditure for capacity building, reduction of domestic drudgery and better quality of life for girls and women

primary, secondary and higher education and vocational training for school/college dropout girls, overall health needs of girls and women from womb to tomb, Crèche, Working women's hostels, Housing, Nutrition, Water supply, Sanitation-toilets, drainage, fuel, waste management and safe public transport.

Quantum leap in budgetary allocation for Economic Services to provide economic opportunities to women

- SHGs-credit, loans to self-employed women
- Training programmes-Vocational training in Sunrise sectors. E.g. Biotechnology, IT, etc.
- Physical infrastructure-transport, energy
- Urban housing-10 % reserved flats/tenements for single women

- Marketing facilities for women entrepreneurs & self-employed women- 10% of shops reserved for businesswomen, women vendors/traders in municipal markets, women's *haats* /*bazars*
- Public Toilets for women without user fees
- Safe and efficient transport for working women and women vendors

Budgetary allocation for Regulatory Services to put in place institutional structures and mechanisms

- State Commission for Women/ Municipal Commission for Women
- Women Development Cell in municipal bodies
- Budgetary allocation and space for ward-wise WDC for prevention of sexual harassment of women in the organised and unorganised sectors
- Women's cell at the police stations, LSG bodies' offices, municipal hospital & schools
- Awareness generation programmes on women's legal rights and gender sensitization of government employees, officers, law and order machinery and citizens
- Implementation of Pre Conception and Pre Natal Diagnostic (Regulation) Act (2002), Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (2005), Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (2012), Prevention of sexual harassment of women at Workplaces Act (2013)

Need of an Hour

State governments must devolve substantive powers, funds, functions and functionaries upon urban LSG bodies. The central government should strive for simplifications of programme guidelines by central ministries and departments regarding women specific schemes- Swadhar, working women's hostels, maternity benefits for BPL, etc. Moreover, centrally sponsored Schemes must be recast to empower municipal bodies. PRIs must get untied funds to formulate plans according to their needs and priorities. Structures and mechanisms for RTI Act must be put in place to sort out problems concerning utilisation of funds allocated for area development. To avoid urban unrest and guarantee socio-economic justice, at least 100 days of employment at minimum wages must be provided under EGS in all urban centres.

Financial Matters and PRIs:

Elected representatives, ward officials and NGOs working in the area should act as facilitators in preparation of the plan for area development and social justice. The UN system has supported allocation of resources for women in PRIs, right from the beginning. "The evidence on gender and decentralisation in India thus suggests that while women have played a positive role in addressing, or attempting to address, a range of practical gender needs, their impact on strategic gender needs is not remarkable." Hence, WERs deserve to be empowered to address the strategic gender needs.

There is a need for provisions in the composite programmes under education, health and skill development to target them specifically at girls/women as the principal beneficiaries and disaggregated within the total allocation. It may also be necessary to place restrictions on their re-appropriation for other purposes.

Conclusion:

Budgets garner resources through the taxation policies and allocate resources to different sections of the economy. Budget is an important tool in the hands of state for affirmative action for improvement of gender relations through reduction of gender gap in the development process. It can help to reduce economic inequalities, between men and women as well as between the rich and the poor. Hence, the budgetary policies need to keep into considerations the gender dynamics operating in the economy and in the civil society. There is a need to highlight participatory approaches to pro-poor budgeting, bottom up budget, child budget, SC budget, ST budget, green budgeting, budgeting for differently abled people, local and global implications of pro-poor and pro-women budgeting, alternative macro scenarios emerging out of alternative budgets and inter-linkages between gender-sensitive budgeting and women's empowerment. Serious examining of budgets calls for greater transparency at the level of international economics to local processes of empowerment. There is a need to provide training and capacity building workshops for decision-makers in the government structures, municipal bodies, parliamentarians and audio-visual.

Gender Commitments concerning safety of women and girls must be translated into Budgetary Commitment. By using our Right to Information, transparency /accountability for revenue generation & public expenditure can be ensured. For Reprioritisation in public spending we must prepare our 'bottom up budgets' and lobby for its realisation in collaboration with the elected representatives. Gender economists must lift the veil of statistical invisibility of the unpaid 'care economy' managed by poor women and highlight its equality & efficiency dimension and transform macro-policies so that they become women friendly.