United Nations

Introduction

"Acceptable levels of fiscal and budgetary transparency are reached when the product of appropriate disclosure systematically matches the product of appropriate scrutiny." (Folscher 2002: 1)

Government budgets are the source of vital information for gauging governments' commitment to the realisation of rights and the attainment of gender equality. Budgets articulate the policy direction, plans and resources available for development in a specific country. South African budget statements for example may include the details of programmes for service delivery, the benchmarks as well as targets for services, the allocations for services over the medium term as well as information about spending in previous financial years[1]. The budget cycle is comprised of the following stages: formulation (where the executive puts the plan together), enactment (when it is interrogated and approved by for example by parliament), execution (when policies are carried out) and auditing (expenditure is accounted for and assessed for effectiveness) (Streak 2003:2).

Due to the fact that budgets are invaluable sources of information about the development intentions of a country, they are also highly politicised instruments. "…all budgets are inherently political. They are about choices that affect the lives and well-being of citizens, and that is the central concern of politics." (Budlender 1999: 10) However, it is imperative that citizens also have insight into the budgeting practices of their countries as well as the financial decisions executed. "…Citizens, as contributors to the public purse, have a direct interest in transparency as they are entitled to know how their government is using and managing public funds." (Claasens and Van Zyl 2005: 2) In addition, it is also important for citizen's to participate in setting the development agenda and therefore influence the budget process. This is an ideal opportunity to activate citizenship by becoming integrally involved in governance (Nomdo and Cassiem, forthcoming).

Budgets are considered institutional mechanisms for attaining gender equality and the realisation of child rights but citizen's involvement in budget processes can also afford opportunities for empowerment. This paper will firstly provide a brief description of the perspectives of child rights and gender budgeting. Secondly, it will examine the methodologies of each of these budgeting perspectives and present an example of the girl child's right to education to illustrate how each of these methodologies can be applied to improve the quality of life of the girl child. Thirdly, the paper will provide information about a South African project where children are involved in learning budget monitoring and analysis. It will focus specifically on the perspectives and experiences of the girl children in the project as well as on gender issues that came to light through the evolution of the project. In conclusion, the perspectiv

Child rights and gender budgeting perspectives

What is child rights budgeting?

"Most rights only become a reality for boys and girls once they take the form of actual services and benefits. Governments need to allocate resources to delivering such services and benefits – and this allocation takes place through the budget process. …government budgets also show what priority is being given to children's rights compared to other competing needs and demands." (Robinson and Coetzee 2005:11)

Gender responsive budgeting is not necessarily advocating for more expenditure for programmes targeted at women or girls nor the separation of budgets for women and girls. Rather the rationale behind applying gender analysis to budgeting is to understand how gender relations permeate all spheres of life and therefore affect opportunities for men and women, boys and girls. For example, girl children are often responsible for household chores, explicitly prohibiting or limiting their interaction in community governance. In addition, gender budgeting can also demonstrate how policy, programmes and institutions construed as neutral are in fact gender biased. It is also a means to ensure that there is consistency between economic goals and social development commitments (Budlender; Elson; Hewitt and Mukhopadhyay 2002: 53).

There are many techniques or methodologies for executing gender budgeting. These include: analysis of gender specific expenditure (for example, how much of the allocated money for a female adolescent health programme was spent); the promotion of gender equity within the public service or the differential impact of mainstream spending on men, women, boys and girls (for example, education spending should be analysed to determine how many girl children benefited in comparison to any of the other target groups). The outputs that can be attained are: gender aware policy appraisal (for instance, an education policy that specifically speaks to the vulnerabilities that girl children face in attaining access to education); beneficiary assessments (for example, how many girls in relation to other targeted groups have been fed through a school feeding programme); public expenditure incidence analysis; gender disaggregated analysis of the budget in time use, gender aware medium term economic policy frameworks (for example, a medium term policy direction that ensures the needs of girl children are prioritised) and gender responsive budget statements(for instance, where data is disaggregated for girls and boys that facilitates monitoring of outcomes with specific relevance to girl children) (Budlender; Elson; Hewitt and Mukhopadhyay 2002: 53-54).

Applying budgeting principles to the girl child's right to education

The Children's Budget Unit of the Institute for Democracy in South Africa has developed methodologies to undertake child right's budgeting. One such methodology is captured in the three steps outlined below (Coetzee and Streak 2004):

Step One: Investigating the meaning and scope of the right;
Step Two: Identifying government's programmes that deliver on the right – focussing on services and roll-out schedule; and
Step Three: Analysing the sufficiency of these programmes - by researching whether the programmes reached all intended beneficiaries, interrogating medium term budgets, spending patterns, expedient programme roll-out, and finally government's capacity to identify and solve implementation challenges.

Within the South African context, a gender analysis of budgets follows a five step process (Budlender 1998), namely:

Step One: Define the situation for girls, boys, women and men (as well as other subgroups e.g. rural, disabled);
Step Two:

rural areas, children with disabilities, across racial groups?

What type of challenges prevents each of these subcategories of girls from attending school?

How many girls drop out of school? At which stage in the education phase and why?

Step Three: Check whether educational policies speak to the situation of the girl child

What education policies exist?

Do these policies refer to the challenges facing girl children e.g. drop out rates, access, safety?

Do policies speak to a specific strategy to ensure increased intake of girls into schools to achieve gender parity?

Step Four: Examine whether there are government programmes, capacity to implement the programmes and whether there are any challenges to the beneficiaries in accessing these programmes

Are there fee-free schools? For which period of schooling is education free?

Are there specific support services to prevent girls from dropping out of school?

Is safe, efficient transport being provi

Children participating in governance project (CPG)

       Step seven in the example above speaks to participation in the budget. The following case study presents a concrete example of how children's capacities are being built to participate in the budget process in So

15 year old Audrey talks of how the training built her facilitation skills:

…we work well with the children and they had a good understanding of what we were trying to bring over (Audrey, 11/08/2005)

Learning about rights and gender budgeting as well increasing the knowledge base of how government works was integral to the training, 15 year old Audrey and 14 year old Primrose comment on the value of this information:

We learnt a lot about steps we should take in order for our rights and needs to be me. (Primrose, 10/07/2005)I learnt so much about government and how it spends its money (Audrey, 11/08/2005)

The project also involved the children in project governance, including them as full members of the reference group that provided strategic direction. Lorraine explains how affirming this was:

I learnt that children do have a voice and that there are people willing to listen to us….I learnt to use my power I have as a child and I've become confident around a lot of people. (Lorraine, 17/02/2006)

Gender perspectives in development initiatives

The CPG project also highlighted certain gendered realities the children had to face to engage in development initiatives as well as highlighting gendered roles and responsibilities of girl and boy children through the process of planning for, participating in and executing workshops. In addition, it provided insight that there was a normative code of behaviour that was deemed acceptable for young girls. The experiences and words of some of the girls in the project will be used to illustrate these points.

Khanya's story illustrates the obstacles she had to overcome to participate in a youth development initiative:

Khanya is a 17 year old Zulu girl, completing her final year of secondary education in 2005. She lives with her father, mother, siblings, cousins, aunts and grandmother in a house that her father has built. They have electricity in the house but also use paraffin stoves for cooking. Water is only accessible from a tap outside the house. She i7 Tc-letingbisiJ5trm a td(t)3.5rut

Primrose is a Zulu girl - beautiful, tall and fifteen years old when we first met her in February 2005. From the beginning it was apparent that Primrose was a bit marginalised from her own group. Especially the females in the group, disapproved of her. They had a problem with the way she dressed, the way she spoke and more specifically the way she behaved around boys and men. They said her clothes were too skimpy, too short and too tight. They felt her behaviour with males was inappropriate. Moreover, they made no secret of their opinions and constantly chastised her in private and public. The other girls explained that their views were grounded in cultural and religious beliefs that dictated appropriate behaviour of especially young women.

Each of these stories is very instructive in terms of how this development initiative - meant to be an empowering process - may interface with gendered realities that can sometimes be disempowering. Development initiatives do not occur in a vacuum, they are a different terrain for negotiating gender norms. It is interesting to note how peers, even when they are still teens, need to negotiate gender roles amongst themselves. They too, like adult women, add development work on as part of their triple burden –

Conclusion

Implicit in government budgets are the development priorities that the country has committed its resources to. Even though this budget information may be hard to access in some countries, the transparency of govern

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