
Government budgets and financing gender equality and women's empowerment

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Government budgets

Matter a great dealin financing gender equality and women's empowerment.

But..... budgets and resources and their gender impacts are not restricted to government purses.

Gender responsive budgeting

Involves unlocking the positive capacities of budgets to foster equality between men and women and different groups of men and women.

Evidence that GRB's have contributed to improvements:

on the expenditure side of the budget

on the revenue side

In budget decision making processes

In aid related processes

Improved statistics and indicators

Other GRB 'results'

Expands 'gender mainstreaming' to economic policy

Brings the 'care' economy and women's time burdens into focus

Highlights the importance of macro, meso and micro levels of budget processes and impacts for gender equality

Fosters participation and political empowerment

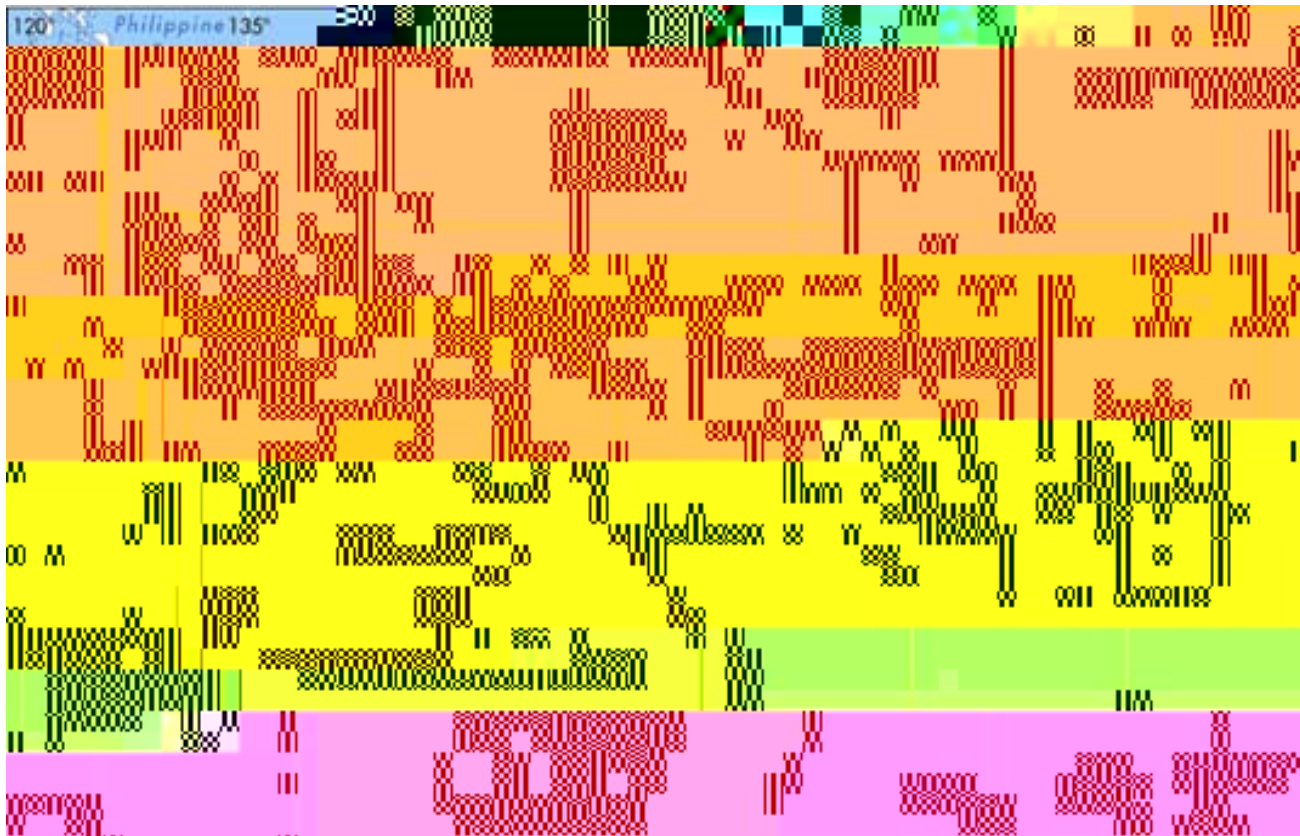
Need to know more

What can we expect from GRB's?

How can we assess a government's achievements in GRB's?

How can GRB's be made sustainable in the face of change?

Australasia and the Pacific Island Countries and Territories



Australian GRB story illustrates:

the economic and political context is critical in how gender budgeting operates and what can be achieved

Nothing stays the same and GRB have to respond strategically to new contexts

A 'strong' women's machinery of government that forms contingent alliances is important shouldn't be made accountable for GRB.

Phase 1: Neo-Keynesian policy context

Strong equality/reducing inequality policy role of government

Organised women's movement

Well resourced women's machinery of government

Institutional power of women's policy machinery and the building of contingent alliances

Phase 2: Restructuring and Neo-liberal policy reform

Unravelling of the 'femocrat' GRB

Restructuring of the public sector along new public management principles

Cutbacks in the women's policy machinery

Formal elimination of 'women's budget' processes

Discourse of 'governing for the mainstream' with women re-positioned as special interest groups

Defunding NGO's critical of the government

Phase 3: Maturing neoliberalism

Holding operations and the emergence of new forms of engagement

Women's machinery kept on informing the public about gender and the budget (but not called gender budgeting)

Refunding, but shifting the women's policy machinery to the Families and Community Services departments

Finding ways to engage- stopping the worst; costs of inequality; performance indicators; whole of government consultations; other spaces?

But.....

New Zealand

Engaging with the budget from a gender perspective but not naming it as a GRB
Politics of naming (or not naming) GRB's

Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs)

What can we expect from developing country,
donor assisted GRB pilots?

Republic of the Marshall Island (RMI)

Samoa (youth/gender sensitive model)

Fiji (gender mainstreaming with some direct
budgetary engagement)

Awareness raising was the main achievement

Small investments in gender budget work does raise awareness and understanding in government and NGOs of gender issues in budgets and programs

Can open the door for changes if there is high level political commitment

Fostering accountability mechanisms limited in pilots

Participants often recognised the need for changes but often don't have the authority to press for greater budgetary accountability in relation to gender

Can highlight what will be required to change resource allocations

This is valuable but the momentum for budgetary changes can quickly dissipate when the donor assistance ceases

GRB's and financing gender equality and women's empowerment?

Engagement with government finances is essential but GRB's are not a panacea- one component of a multi pronged package

A political and economic context which gives priority to equality nurtures GRB's

Need to find more spaces and ways to effectively engage with budgets from a gender perspective in neo-liberal political and economic contexts

A strong women's policy machinery, civil society voices and high level political commitment are ingredients for success

Donor funded initiatives need to invest in the potential that exists but also need to have a strategy for assisting in sustaining the process beyond a year or so.

Assessing progress?

Assessing a government achievements in GRB is difficult for many reasons including that resource allocations and policies reflect a variety of influences and gender is a cross cutting issue

However we do need to sharpen our thinking about what we can expect of GRB's and know what ensures their effectiveness (or not) for any given the policy context.

Sustaining the engagement with budgets in a gender responsive way in the face of policy reforms and international agendas is part of assessing effectiveness.
