

Gender and the budget

While budgets have been instrumental in transmitting and reproducing gender biases, they also offer the possibility for transforming existing gender inequalities. It is important to note that a gender budget is not a separate budget for gender activities and issues; rather, it is the normal budget from a gender perspective or analysed through a gender lens. In other words, at the municipal level a gender budget is an analysis of the municipality's main budget that specifically disaggregates certain information that is pertinent to gender, such as expenditure earmarked for gender-based programmes and projects including safe facilities for women and local economic development strategies that target women entrepreneurs.

Gender responsive budgets

The question is often asked: What is a gender-responsive approach to municipal expenditure and revenue? Answering this question requires an understanding of how gender issues arise in a budgetary context and how gender disaggregated data are used in the budget formulation. It also requires a gender analysis to assess the impact on

women of government policies, resources and revenue measures. This understanding should be brought to bear when the budget is analysed to see whether it is gender sensitive.

Through gender-responsive budgeting we can determine the effect of government revenue and expenditure policies on women and men. Furthermore, it creates a direct link between social and economic policies.

Importantly, a gender analysis can also demonstrate the way in which municipalities or government structures that are seemingly gender neutral do, in fact, bear and transmit gender biases. It also creates greater consistency between economic goals and social commitments and leads to a more efficient use of resources.

One of the great advantages of this approach is that it not only evaluates the nature and extent of the paid economy but also evaluates unpaid work, in particular the provision of care, with which women are usually involved.

From an administration perspective, gender budgets also deal with issues such as expenditure towards equal employment opportunities within municipalities, for example, expenditure on training to help the mobility of women at different job categories and levels. The main criterion is, however, that each budget allocation or vote is subject to the question: does it advance gender equality or not?

Municipalities should work in close consultation with gender NGOs, women's CBOs and developmental organisations to fully maximise the information they gain from a gender analysis. At this stage Gauteng and the Western Cape have launched gender budget initiatives at the provincial level and there is a growing interest in the concept among municipalities.

Impact of unfunded mandates

Unfunded mandates and delegations of functions from national and provincial government without

key points

- A gender budget is a normal budget analysed through a gender lens.
- Gender-responsive budgeting creates a direct link between social and economic policies.
- It requires budgeting of intergovernmental fiscal resources.

the necessary resources and fiscal allocations restricts the availability of resources and the ability of local government to be responsive to the needs of their communities.

The poor and women are often at the receiving end of expenditure cuts due to unfunded mandates. The need to raise extra revenue to fund these delegated functions often disadvantages them.

One needs to understand the effectiveness of the various forms of intergovernmental fiscal arrangements in addressing poverty alleviation and gender equality.

Gender-responsive budgeting thus also requires planning of intergovernmental fiscal resources to ensure gender equality.

A more holistic approach to financial planning and gender-responsive budgeting is required to successfully address the needs of communities.

Each budget allocation or vote is subject to the question: does it advance gender equality or not?

Geraldine Mettler
Transformation Manager
Drakenstein Municipality