

UNDP Gender and Politics Programme in the South Caucasus

2009

Gender Budget Initiative in Georgia

UNDP In 2006 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched the Component of Gender Responsive Budget Initiative (GRBI) within the frame of SIDA supported Project “Gender and Politics in the South Caucasus”. This document briefly overviews the GRBI activities in Georgia in 2006 - 2009.

Introduction

Gender Responsive Budget (GRB) is one of the main directions of the gender mainstreaming. The involvement of gender aspects in the budgetary process is one of the specific means of implementing the policy of equality. In the platform of actions adopted by the Beijing Conference it is indicated that governments should take all measures to study on a systematic level the impact of the expenditures of the state budget on men and women. The development of a gender budget is of paramount importance to society, because it is a serious base for an economic development and achieving gender equality in the society.

In 2006 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched the Component of Gender Responsive Budget Initiative (GRBI) within the frame of SIDA supported Project "Gender and Politics in the South Caucasus". This is one of the Components of the Project which aims to raise awareness and support initiation of gender responsive budgeting at central and local levels in Georgia this way promoting more open and participatory democratic processes in the country and supporting achievement of development objectives of the Project that was to support the development of gender policies, to build capacity of women in decision-making positions and facilitate a dialogue on gender issues within political structures.

Gender budget initiatives come as one of the effective mechanisms where both men and women are equally targeted and both equally involved at all level of policy making and implementation. The Project Component advocated and raised awareness on GRB initiatives and built capacities of various stakeholders including civil society representatives to strengthen participatory budgeting and planning process.

The focus of the GRB Component was made on elaboration and provision of gender budgeting tools and methodologies to increase stakeholders' capacity to be able to understand and carry out gender budget analysis. The Component also focused on gender budget analysis of 2007, 2008 and 2009 State Budgets and gender analysis of the State Educational and Social programmes along with local municipality budgets. The attention was given to advocate and raise awareness of stakeholders and public at large on the importance of participatory gender budget planning and monitoring to support implementation of gender equality programmes and policies and affect equitable distribution of state and local resources.

The following target groups were identified as the main beneficiaries of the component:

- Members of Parliament of Georgia and respective Committees, given their key roles in policy making;
- Parliamentary Budgeting Office which comes with the mandate of analyzing macro economic issues including the budget;
- Representatives of the Government;
- Planners involved in developing sector strategic plans and budgets (line Ministries/ Statistic department; researchers, academia);
- Members of local governments and Municipalities;
- Civil society representatives, women NGOs involved in gender (gender budget) advocacy.

Main Directions of GRB Component

Five main directions were outlined and respective activities carried out within the frame of GRB Component of the UNDP Gender and Politics Project:

1. Support institutionalisation of gender in the State Budgeting Processes
2. Institutional support to State Gender Statistics
3. Support introduction of Local Gender Budgeting
4. Increased participation of civil society in GRB initiatives
5. Advocacy and Public Awareness

Support institutionalisation of gender in the State Budgeting Processes

At central level, the GRB Component engaged in reviewing and analysing the State budget and number of state programmes in order to reveal the gaps and challenges and issue recommendations on future perspectives to mainstream gender in state policies and programmes, including State budgets. The Component also focused on gender sensitisation of policy makers, planners and researchers to improve the understanding of gender oriented budgeting process.

Activities carried out:

- The main methodological principles for elaborating gender oriented budgetary policy were defined;
- Monitoring of implementation of gender aspects in the State Budget 2007-2008-2009 was implemented; special focus was made on educational and social programmes;
- Gender criteria's and indicators were used in the process of monitoring of state expenses (state budget and state programmes);
- Final report and recommendations were submitted to the various committees of the Parliament and relevant Ministries: 1. The Ministry of Finance; 2. The Finance and Budget Committee of the Parliament; 3. The Health Care and Social Issues Committee of the Parliament; 4. The Education and Science Committee of the Parliament; 5. Parliamentarians. 6. The Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Care; 7. The Ministry of Education and Science; 8. Parliament's advisory council and State Commission for Gender Equity; 9. Civil Society;
- Series of training for representatives of different ministries and Parliament Budgetary Office were provided;
- Cooperation of non-governmental and state structures was stimulated on the national and local levels.

Results achieved:

- Representatives of government and Parliament of Georgia were informed about gender responsive budgeting initiatives to improve the understanding of gender oriented budgeting process;
- Based on analysis of number of State Programmes and state budgets, recommendations were developed on public funds expenditure's effect on fair and equitable distribution of resources in order to achieve gender equality and social justice;
- Recommendations were communicated and respectively awareness raised of decision makers at macroeconomic policy level;
- Awareness about the concept of gender equality was increased among civic servants and civil servants were equipped with methodological principles and recommendations.

Institutional Support to State Gender Statistics

The GRB Component engaged in supporting State Statistics Department of Georgia in order to improve methodological approach to gender statistics, support developing new gender indicators and issue sex disaggregated data in the form of annual publication 'Women and Men'.

Activities carried out:

- Methodological approach to gender statistics of Georgia was introduced to stakeholders;
- New gender indicators were developed;
- Trainings and round tables for representative of Statistic Departments and appropriate ministries were provided;
- Materials for Statistical publication "Women and Men" were prepared and analyzed during three years;
- Draft Law on Statistics with the new clause that obligates the Statistics Department to disaggregate data by sex was lobbied vis-à-vis the Parliament of Georgia.

Results achieved:

- New indicators for gender-disaggregated data were developed and shared with the Statistics Department of Ministry of Economic Development;
- Statistics Department of Ministry of Economic Development was sensitized about the importance of sex disaggregated data;
- Law on Statistics submitted to the Parliament with the new clause that obligates the Statistics Department to disaggregate data by sex;
- Statistical publication "Women and Men" (2005, 2006, 2008) were published and distributed among stakeholders.

Support Introduction of Local Gender Budgeting

At local level, the GRB Component engaged in reviewing and analysing local municipality budgets and programmes and supporting capacity building and effective participation of local women councillors in local budgeting processes. The Component also involved in assessment of local needs and gender analysis of the needs of local population. The recommendations were issued for local government and municipality representatives and awareness raised on gender budget analysis to respond local needs and ensure that resource collection and allocation is carried out adequately towards local women's priorities.

Activities carried out:

- The gender analysis of municipal budgets of the seaport Poti and cities of Rustavi and Kutaisi were performed to find different impacts of district budgets on women and men, the role of Local Councils in defining the budget and priority directions, determining social feedback, training of local staff, creation of promotional conditions on the spot;
- In the seaport Poti and cities of Rustavi and Kutaisi needs assessment of local population was performed to identify different needs and requirements of men and women at local levels in order to underline the effectiveness of public funds expenditure from gender point of view;
- Discussions and roundtables were held with local authorities in order to increase awareness of their staff on gender approaches in the municipality financial - budget plans;

- Cycles of Trainings for Local Women Councilors' Forum on gender analysis and monitoring of local budget and were performed;
- Trainings and round-tables were organized with local self-government representatives of west Georgia introducing results of local budget monitoring and methodologies.

Results achieved:

- High level authorities of local Councils were sensitized about gender responsive budgeting and equipped with the methodologies of gender budget analysis;
- Special needs assessments of local population were performed and results analysed and communicated with the authority and wider public of Imereti Region and city of Rustavi;
- Gender revisions of local budgets were provided in two main cities of west Georgia - in Poti and Kutaisi, also in Rustavi - industrial city of Georgia;
- Monitoring of municipal programmes' spending was performed with particular focus on adequate allocation and use of public funds for women and men respectively, the final reports of which have been communicated to the local stakeholders.

Increased Participation of Civil Society in GRB Initiatives

The Component engaged in raising awareness and building capacity of women's NGOs in gender sensitive budgeting processes to support women's participation in policy making in order to achieve more responsive and participatory governance.

Activates carried out:

- Number of training sessions, debates, round-table were organised for raising awareness on the concept of social security and Gender Budgeting for various NGOs working on gender issues, financial issues, macroeconomics;
- Gender Budgeting Group was established consisting of NGOs and academia, representatives from Ministry of Economics and Parliament Budgetary Department to perform gender analysis of budgets and state and local programmes, issues recommendations and communicate them with respective bodies;
- Gender Budgeting women's NGO Network was set up after the international Conference in order to further involve women NGOs in gender responsive budgeting issues –a special training was provided to the network members and post-conference roundtable meeting was organised to set future plans for the network;
- Gender Budgeting Women's NGO Network was got additional GRB trainings and was equipped with necessary skills and knowledge to monitor state budget and programmes and local budgets of various regions and districts.

Results achieved:

- Gender Budgeting Group was established and capacity built to perform regular gender analysis of budgets and state and local programmes;
- Gender Budgeting Women's NGO Network was set up and equipped with essential knowledge on GRB to involve in the monitoring of different government programmes and budgets at both central and local levels;
- Civic society awareness of the process of gender budgeting and monitoring was increased.

The Component facilitated raising awareness on GRB initiatives among wider public to support understanding of gender sensitive policy making including gender budgeting process in order to achieve more equitable resource allocation and spending for better gender equality society.

Activates carried out:

- Researches, analytical papers, brochures and leaflets, books and other publications were prepared on Gender Responsive budgeting;
- GRB educational materials as well as materials on monitoring and methodologies were prepared and disseminated;
- Radio programmes and newspaper articles were prepared and published and broadcasted through Georgian media sources;
- Cycles of trainings and round-tables were provided to number of target groups including Parliament of Georgia, number of Ministries, local government and self-government representatives, local media and youth introducing results of local budget monitoring and methodologies as well as results of state budget and state programme monitoring;
- International experiences on gender budgeting was shared with target audience and wider public;
- Media coverage provided by TV Companies: Information programs, 1 Channel, Kavkasia, Imedi; Radio Program: Gender Sensitive Budgeting or Social Oriented Budget; Newspapers: Weekly English "Georgia Today", Georgian "Resonance", "Bank and Finance", Akhali Taoba, Rustavi Information; Other: Gender Information Network of South Caucasus, Caucasus Environmental NGO Network, website of the Parliament of Georgia, website of UNDP Georgia;
- GRB section under the project's website was created:
http://www.parliament.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=1099

Results achieved:

- Gender Responsive budgeting concept was advocated at central and local levels;
- Understanding on GRB among stakeholders was increased and experience of different countries was shared among wider public;
- Fundamental concepts and tools of analysis in the gender budget sphere were introduced to number of target groups including civil society representatives.

Important highlights

- The project also engaged in regional advocacy towards GRB. On 1 April, 2008 in cooperation with OSCE and UNECE the international conference was organised on “Challenges of Engendering Economics – Way towards Social Justice and Equal Opportunities”, where GRB initiatives in various countries also were discussed and analysed. The conference was attended by international and local experts, representatives of the government structures, policy-makers, local authorities, women’s NGOs, University academia, national statistics institutions and members of international community. The participants were represented from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan. The international experts from Ireland, Italy and Germany also took part in the conference. The conference reviewed the international and local status qua on engendered economics and called for gender sensitive policies and budgets. The conference was accompanied by two side events: (i) Capacity Building training on gender budgeting for local and national policy makers from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan and Women’s NGO Coalition of Georgia. The training was conducted by international expert from Ireland Sheila Quinn with participation of expert from Germany, Marion Boeker; (ii) Establishing Regional Network on Gender Responsive Budgeting was also the part of the event: The Network linked NGOs and state organisations of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia to support their governments to work for gender mainstreaming of the state budget.
- One of the outcomes of the international conference was a new pilot initiative of twinning the Municipalities of Rustavi (Georgia) and Naples (Italy) to support local gender mainstreaming issues including GRB initiatives. The MoU was prepared and exchanged between the two municipalities, the information on the municipality programmes, plans, budgets and activities also were communicated. The project elaborated a special info-package on gender budgeting and methodology of gender analysis of local budgets and provided to Rustavi Municipality representatives and local NGOs from Rustavi and neighbouring districts through trainings and round-table meetings. The initiative is in progress; it is strongly supported by local governments and is expected to be one of the indicative initiatives among local development programmes.

Conclusions and lessons learned

The GRB Component was one of the seven segments of the larger UNDP Gender and Politics Programme in the South Caucasus and its objective was to support to achieve the development objectives of the Project that was to support the development of gender policies, build capacity of women in decision-making positions and facilitate a dialogue on gender issues within political structures. Number of activities implemented within the frame of the GRB Component respectively revealed strengths and weaknesses of the initiative and opened the way for further intervention in this difficult but very important and necessary field.

The assessment of the state and local programmes and budgets revealed lack of transparent and target-oriented expenditures of public funds, especially with particular focus on gender equity.

Since 2005 the state budget has increased significantly in the country; however the allocation of funds was disproportionate, giving major share to military growth-Ministry of Defence, while diminishing social and health, as well as educational programmes. Especially women suffered from this gender blind programmes and budgets.

The state financing in absolute figures has increased at higher rate during the last 5 years, however it increased considerably in the male employment spheres rather than in the female employment spheres. The expenditures for male employment twice exceeded the expenditures made in female employment spheres. Shifting from the universal system of social protection to poverty oriented assistance has failed to ensure effective protection of the population, especial women.

The Government's response on the recommendations developed by the Project's gender experts and civil society was passive. Despite the intensive advocacy and dialogue with different representatives of government structures, GRB initiatives were not properly recognised by respective official structures at national level. Participatory approaches to budget activities which should reflect a new understanding of governance, democracy and policy-making process were often ignored in the country by central government. When adopting the last version of the National Plan of Action for Gender Equality the recommendations to include gender oriented social and economic aspects in the Plan was rejected given the liberal economic policy the country was pursuing by that time. This way the opportunity for improving equal opportunities in different economic structures was lost along with the possibility to fulfil the commitment of Millennium Goals and other international obligations on gender issues.

Contrary to the central government approach, the local governments turned to be more ready to accept the idea of GRB and acknowledge the role of gender sensitive budgets at local levels. Number of success achieved by the project in Kutaisi, Poti and especially Rustavi could be the best evidence of this. The pilot initiative of twinning the Municipalities of Rustavi (Georgia) and Naples (Italy) to support local gender mainstreaming issues including GRB initiatives is one more example of good practice and lessons learned to further explore the possibility of GRB initiatives at local levels.

To conclude, further support and lobbying of GRB initiatives in Georgia will be possible only through joint efforts of international organisations, the state and the civil society representatives in order to achieve participatory and responsive governance with equal allocation and distribution of resources to be equally enjoyed by women and men population of Georgia.