

Introduction

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This book builds on a previous publication, *Gender Budgets Makes Cents*. The earlier work provided an overview of gender-responsive budget (GRB) initiatives.¹ It described the conceptual framework, evolution of the work and lessons learned. It also provided brief summaries of country initiatives. This book is a response to the need to document 'good practice' in gender budget work from across the globe. For the first time, it provides easy access to detailed country information and analysis on the why, where and how of gender-responsive budgets.

We choose to talk about 'good practice' rather than 'best practice' for two reasons. Firstly, at this point in time no country in the world has achieved a completely gender-responsive budget. Some countries are further along the road to reaching that goal than others, but none has reached it yet. Secondly, the term 'best practice' might suggest that there is a single, 'best' way in which gender budget work should be done. One of the strongest messages of this book, however, is that how one tackles gender budget work must be strongly influenced by the political, economic, social and cultural situation in a country. There is no single blueprint, or recipe, for successful gender budget work. The chapter on the Andean region, for example, which gives examples of initiatives in three countries, reveals some of the differences that can emerge both between and within countries even when initiatives form part of a single project.

The book contains ten stories of engagement in gender budget work. Most of the chapters tell the story of work in a single country. The exceptions are the Andean chapter mentioned above and the chapter on the Commonwealth Secretariat, which looks at how this international agency has attempted to promote gender budget work among its members.

All but one of the chapters focus on work which is ongoing. At

¹ The term 'gender-responsive budget' is increasingly being adopted as the standard name for a variety of processes which have been hitherto referred to as 'applied gender budget analysis', 'gender-sensitive budgets', 'gender budgets' and 'women's budgets'.

present there are over 50 countries in the world where there have been gender budget initiatives of some kind. However, some of these initiatives involve one-off activities. Others are relatively dormant at present. For this reason, we chose to focus on countries where there is currently significant activity. The exception is the chapter on Australia which is included because, although it looks primarily at developments from the mid-1990s, this was the first country to engage in gender budget work.

We also, for the most part, chose countries whose stories are not well known. These choices mean, firstly, that we have omitted several countries where significant activity has occurred, but whose stories have been told several times. These include Tanzania and Uganda. Secondly, the South African chapter, rather than retelling the story of the first years of that country's initiative, describes the latest activities, while the Philippines chapter focuses on recent non-governmental organisation (NGO) activity at local government level rather than the government's institutionalised gender and development (GAD) budget.

While it was not a conscious consideration in choosing case studies, a reading of the chapters reveals that many occurred at a time when the country concerned was undergoing, or had recently undergone, significant change. For example, South Africa's initiative started after the first democratic elections of 1994; Scotland's initiative responded to devolution – the partial political separation from the United Kingdom (UK); the UK's own initiative only truly came of age after Labour's election victory; and Rwanda's initiative is occurring as a new post-genocide government attempts to reconstruct the country.

All the chapters are written by practitioners – by people who are, or have been, actively involved in the activities they describe. This approach has clear benefits in that the writers have first-hand experience and in-depth knowledge. It could, of course, also have disadvantages in that practitioners might be unwilling to describe weaknesses openly, or might simply not see them. We did, however, encourage authors to reflect on both the challenges and successes of their initiatives, and most chapters include a discussion of these aspects. By asking practitioners rather than outside observers to comment, we were also acknowledging that in an ongoing political endeavour such as gender budgets, there are sometimes things that are better left unsaid.

The book provides a relatively wide geographical spread. The experiences described include examples from Africa, Latin America,

East and South-east Asia, Europe and the Pacific. Every chapter except the one on the Commonwealth Secretariat contains a box of indicators that give the overall population of the country, the percentage of the population that is female and that is urban, the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in US dollars, the human and gender development indices (HDI and GDI), the percentage of the total government budget funded by donors, and the percentage of national parliamentarians who are women. Unfortunately, several of the indicators for Scotland were not available as the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report* includes the country in a composite measure for the UK. This lack of separate statistics is particularly interesting given that the Scottish chapter focuses on the way in which devolution provided the impetus for their gender budget initiative.

Table 1 below shows the lowest and highest values for each of these indicators across the countries involved. In terms of size of population alone, the range is from 5.1 million for Scotland to 79.5 million for Philippines. In terms of GDP per capita, the range is even larger. Australia's GDP per capita is more than 32 times that of Rwanda's. Australia and Rwanda also have the highest and lowest scores respectively for the HDI and GDI. This is, at least in part, because GDP per capita is one of the key constituents of these two measures. Because of its relative poverty, Rwanda is also the country with the largest proportion of its budget funded by external donors. Korea is the only country covered in this book which ranks lower for the GDI than for the HDI. It is also the country with the lowest representation of women in its national parliament. Further, it is the most rural of the sample of countries. All these factors, and others, affect the shape of gender budget initiatives in each country.

Table 1: Lowest and highest indicators across countries included in this book

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Lowest</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Highest</i>	<i>Country</i>
Population	5.1m	Scotland	79.5m	Philippines
% of population which is female	49.8%	Korea	54%	Rwanda
% of population which is urban	9%	Korea	91%	Scotland
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (US\$)	885	Rwanda	28,433	Australia
Human development index (HDI)	0.395	Rwanda	0.936	Australia
Gender development index (GDI)	0.391	Rwanda	0.935	Australia
% of total budget funded by donors	0%	Several	65%	Rwanda
% of national parliamentarians who are women	6%	Korea	30%	South Africa

Gender budget work can be undertaken by government, by parliament or by civil society. International organisations can also engage, preferably in an enabling or supportive role. The book contains examples of initiatives which involve each of these actors. In some cases these actors are working together. In all cases there is, as one would expect when looking at government budgets, some engagement with government. However, in many cases, for reasons explained by the authors, the main actors are from civil society.

The Australian and Rwandan chapters provide examples of cases where government is the primary actor. The Philippines also has an institutionalised government initiative, but the chapter in this book tells the story of an NGO initiative in that country. Many of the chapters suggest that, while a change in the government budget is the ultimate objective of most initiatives, there are many other gains to be made along the way. In particular, gender budget work is a way of enhancing democracy, civil society participation and accountability.

In briefing authors, we told them that we were looking for the 'story' of what had happened in their initiative, but also some analysis of why a particular strategy and approach were chosen, and what the strengths and weaknesses were. We asked authors to concentrate on what has happened already rather than plans for the future. But we said they could discuss, briefly, what their future plans were, as well as how what actually happened differed from their original plans. We asked them to discuss money issues – where they got funds from for the work, and whether and how participants were paid. We felt that all these aspects were important if others were to learn from what they had done.

Some of the chapters provide brief summaries of results of the research-oriented aspects of the work. For example, the Korean chapter looks at results in one of the local governments studied, the Philippines authors describe their findings in respect of Bacolod City's budget, while the Mexican chapter highlights findings of their research into health and poverty-related funding. The UK and Australian chapters raise some of the theoretical and ideological underpinnings of their approaches, while the Rwandan chapter provides the reporting framework which government is using in its gender budget initiative.

We asked authors to write simply in describing their initiatives. Firstly, the hope is that the book will be read by a wide range of people, including those for whom English is not a first language as well as

those who do not have tertiary education. Secondly, successful gender budget work requires an engagement and understanding of technical detail, but also requires, if one is to engage civil society, the ability to explain in simple terms what is being done. Thirdly, while those working on gender budget work must engage with a level of country-specific detail which is important for success in their own work, it should not be confusing to readers unfamiliar with that country's situation.

The variations in style of the chapters as well as the types of activities included reveal the differences in objectives, strategies and audiences of the groups involved. The South African chapter describes a conscious attempt to broaden the audience through the development of workshop materials. The Mexican chapter discusses the challenge of an initiative that brings together technical researchers with women members of a more mass-based organisation. The Australian chapter points to the dangers of paying insufficient attention to a civil society audience.

Most of the chapters focus on expenditure. This reflects the overall bias in gender budget initiatives worldwide. The UK chapter and initiative are an exception in this respect. The chapter explains the reason for this as being the way the budget is presented and understood in the British context. The South African chapter describes work done on customs and excise, but points to the problems experienced in generating interest in advocacy around revenue issues.

Virtually all the chapters describe some activities related to sensitisation of government officials, members of civil society or others as to the importance of looking at budgets from a gender perspective. Sensitisation is clearly important. However, sensitisation alone will have limited impact. The South African chapter records the realisation on the part of an NGO, which is involved in training staff dealing with rape survivors, that changing attitudes is not enough. Changed attitudes need to be accompanied by adequate resources as well as the skills to use them. The Rwandan chapter describes the process through which government officials in that country were both made aware of the need for gender-sensitive budgets and trained to take the approach forward in their daily work.

All the authors work from an understanding that the ultimate aim in gender budget work is to ensure that gender is mainstreamed – that it is taken into account in all parts of the government budget. The

chapters reveal, however, that most initiatives do not try to tackle the entire budget at once. In many cases there is a decision to focus on particular sectors or portfolios. In the case of Korea and the Philippines, the focus was largely on gender-targeted expenditure. In Korea this focus was chosen in response to the new Framework Act on Women's Development which led to the establishment of women's focal points, a Women's Fund and women-related policies. In the Philippines, the initiative examined what the local government unit had done to comply with the mandated 5 per cent allocation for gender and development, but also went beyond this to explore what had happened in relation to the remaining 95 per cent of the budget.

We know that each of the case studies could have been expanded far beyond its current length. However, the authors were given limits within which they had to document their initiatives because we wanted to keep the chapters short to make them more accessible. Some of the chapters only tell part of the story of what has happened in a particular country. We hope that this smorgasbord of ideas will inspire you to take forward gender budget work in your own country and organisation.