

Rwanda: Translating government commitments into action

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Table 10: Selected Indicators for Rwanda

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>
Population	2001	7,979,930
% of population which is female	2001	54
% of population which is urban		
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita (US\$)	2001	885
Human Development Index (HDI)	2001	0.395
Gender Development Index (GDI)	2001	0.391
% of total budget funded by donors	2001	65%
% of national parliamentarians who are women	2002	17

Introduction

This chapter aims at sharing the experience of Rwanda in engendering the budget. As the initiative is ongoing, the chapter focuses mainly on what has been done so far, the strategies used, the strengths and weaknesses and the challenges. However, the chapter also briefly outlines future plans.

Table 10 highlights the main features of Rwanda's socio-economic and political context. Like many African countries, Rwanda's society is patriarchal and characterised by marked gender inequalities. Traditional gender imbalances were exacerbated by the 1994 genocide.

The population of Rwanda is estimated at 7,979,930 people, of whom 54 per cent are female. Women also head 34 per cent of households. Yet the 2000 Households Living Conditions and Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire Survey found that women have limited access to social and economic services compared to men. For example, women's literacy rate is estimated at 47.8 per cent compared to 58.1 per cent for men. Women constitute more than 80 per cent of farmers, but have limited access to, and control over, assets including land,

pesticides, seeds, markets and credit. Poverty in Rwanda thus has a female face. The country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) highlights that 62 per cent of female-headed households are under the poverty line compared to 54 per cent of male-headed households.

It is within this context that the Government of National Unity and Reconciliation has committed itself to tackle gender imbalances in all areas of life. In 1999, the President, Paul Kagame, expressed the commitment in these words at a seminar on gender and development:

... the abrupt shift to monetary economy, formal education and modern technology played a key role in restructuring gender relations to the disadvantage of women. These imbalances are not only an obstacle to the country's development but constitute a form of social injustice. It is therefore imperative to our lawmakers, policy makers and implementers to have an objective and correct analysis of the gender question in order to design appropriate corrective policies and programmes. The question of gender equality in our society needs a clear and critical evaluation in order to come up with concrete strategies to map the future development in which men and women are true partners and beneficiaries. My understanding of gender is that it is an issue of good governance, good economic management and respect of human rights.

The government's political will was illustrated, among others, by the establishment in 1999 of the Ministry of Gender and Women in Development (MIGEPROFE, henceforward referred to as the gender ministry) a clear mission to promote gender equality and equity throughout the development policies of the country.

Objectives and Location of the Gender Budget Initiative

The Rwanda Gender Budget Initiative (GBI) takes forward the Government's political commitment to tackle gender imbalances. It starts from the standpoint that gender analysis is essential to the elaboration of budgets that enhance rather than hinder gender equality and human development in Rwanda. Its overarching objective is to translate into effective actions the government's commitment to promote gender equality and equality throughout the development process. The specific objectives of the GBI are:

- ◆ to inform the national debate about policy and the appropriate allocation of public resources;
- ◆ to ensure that the policies and programmes of ministries and provinces take into consideration the specific constraints, options, incentives and needs (COINs) of women and girls, men and boys; and
- ◆ to ensure that resources are allocated accordingly.

The GBI is consistent with the comprehensive system reforms that are being introduced to rebuild the country. The reforms and priorities are articulated around the following policy frameworks:

- ◆ Vision 2020, which indicates the national aspirations for the year 2020;
- ◆ the PRSP, which guides the national strategy and interventions for the reduction of poverty from 60% to 30%, by 2015;
- ◆ the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), a coherent approach to budget management involving integrated, performance-related expenditure programmes formulated within a realistic three year resource framework;
- ◆ the National Gender Policy and Gender Plan of Action, which provide the strategic guideline for actions to promote gender equality and equity in all sectors;
- ◆ the decentralisation policy whose objective is to put the population at the heart of the decision-making and actions that shape their lives; and
- ◆ the elaboration of a new constitution and, more specifically, Rwanda's process of "engendering the new constitution" to promote a judiciary and legal system favourable to gender equality and equity.

The GBI is taking place within government. It is driven by the gender ministry in close collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN), henceforward referred to as the finance ministry). It is entirely funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) through the Gender Mainstreaming and Development Programme housed at the gender ministry.

Approach and Strategies

The GBI focuses on expenditures and on the recurrent budget. At present 90 per cent of the development budget is donor-funded, compared to 40 per cent of the recurrent budget. Stakeholders thus felt that it was more appropriate to look only at the recurrent budget at this stage because government has far more control over this part than over the development budget. Further, the MTEF and other reforms are, for the moment, focusing on the recurrent budget. Work on the development budget and on revenue will be done later.

The activities of the Initiative were planned in line with the annual budget timetable. In particular, the first round of workshops was held before June 2002, which was when the finance ministry would set the framework for the 2003 budget.

The background document that sets out the plans for the GBI was informed by the analysis undertaken on different sectors by the gender ministry in 2000 and 2001 when drawing up the National Gender Policy and the National Gender Plan of Action. It was also informed by discussions between the gender ministry and actors such as the finance ministry, line ministries, provinces, women's organisations, other civil society organisations and development partners. The approach used was participatory and gradual, involving the finance ministry and line ministries right from the beginning of the GBI. The idea was to make line ministries commit themselves to and own the Initiative.

The GBI is based on strong collaboration between the ministries of gender and finance. This strategy was adopted on account of the important role assigned to the finance ministry in coordinating government's reforms and development priorities. The policy frameworks referred to above, such as Vision 2020, PRSP and MTEF, are all housed in and coordinated by that ministry and, consequently, unless its work is engendered, the engendering of government's budgets cannot be successful.

To build the collaboration, meetings and discussions were held between the ministries of gender and finance prior to the elaboration of the project and have continued throughout its implementation. These meetings have, at different times, involved a range of different parts of the finance ministry, namely the Directorate of Statistics, Directorate of Budgets, MTEF Unit, PRSP Unit and CEPEX, the national institution responsible for managing the development budget.

The GBI is being implemented through a pilot approach. It will be developed over a three-year period, from 2002 to 2004. By the last year, the budgets of all ministries and provinces should be engendered. In the first year, five ministries were selected to be pilots. In each subsequent year, the budgets of further ministries will be examined. The selection criteria for each year are informed by the PRSP priority actions and the relevance of gender issues in each sector.

The following pilot ministries were selected for participation in 2002 so as to be able to influence their 2003 budget:

- ◆ Ministry of Education
- ◆ Ministry of Agriculture
- ◆ Ministry of Health
- ◆ Ministry of Water and Energy
- ◆ Ministry of Local Government

Within each pilot ministry, the analysis focuses on those sub-programmes that have the biggest allocations.

The strategy of having pilot ministries is based on the realisation that engendering budgets requires a certain technical expertise. Given the limited capacity in this respect in ministries, it is essential to provide their officers with regular assistance throughout the process of elaboration of their budgets. Therefore, it is reasonable and efficient to select a limited number of ministries, at least for the first phase. Further, the experience during this pilot phase will inform future phases. We will learn from the strengths and weaknesses of the previous phases in order to improve future plans.

The Process

The Initiative consists of different steps which reinforce each other.

Preparing the ground

The first step was the organisation in January 2002 of a workshop on Engendering Budgets. The objective of the workshop was to prepare the ground for the Rwanda GBI. The event brought together senior officers working on budget elaboration and execution in line ministries and national institutions. Finance ministry staff from the Directorate

of Budget, the Directorate of Statistics, CEPEX and the MTEF Unit attended the workshop and provided insights where necessary.

At this workshop, officers were informed about the relevance of integrating gender into their ministries' budgets and how to undertake such an exercise. They read case studies from Australia, Mexico, the Philippines, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda, and discussed how these could be useful to the Rwandan case. Further, they made recommendations as to the pilot ministries to be selected for the first phase. Participants also emphasised the necessity of a close and continuous collaboration between the ministries of gender and finance.

The recommendations of participants were presented to the Minister of Gender and the Minister of Finance when the latter closed the workshop. The Minister of Finance seized this opportunity to reiterate his own commitment to the GBI. Meanwhile, he promised to ensure that his staff collaborated closely with staff at the gender ministry throughout the implementation of the Initiative.

The commitment of the Minister was important because it encouraged senior officers of the finance ministry to view working with staff at the gender ministry on engendering the government's budgets as part of their duties rather than as extra work. After the closing ceremony staff from both ministries met to evaluate the event and to plan the forthcoming activities of the Initiative.

Planning with the finance ministry

The second step was the organisation of a workshop for finance ministry officers. Participants came from the Directorate of Statistics, the Directorate of Budget, the MTEF Unit, the PRSP Unit and CEPEX. The objective of the workshop was threefold. Firstly, we wanted to provide the ministry's officers with refined tools and information on engendering budgets. Secondly, we wanted to discuss what gender issues mean for the ministry's work. Finally, we wanted to discuss the opportunities and challenges and plan the next steps.

During the workshop, the MTEF coordinator presented the objectives and progress of the framework. He highlighted the fact that it is a three-year budgetary framework through which ministries are provided with reliable ceilings within which to develop sector strategies and agreed outputs. It aims at:

- ◆ linking policies, plans and budgets;
- ◆ allowing informed choices amongst policies and objectives;
- ◆ increasing levels of efficiency and effectiveness; and
- ◆ increasing transparency of resource use against an agreed set of outputs.

Most of these points fit in well with gender budget work. Like the MTEF, the gender budget looks at prioritising, efficiency, transparency and linking policy with budgets. However, it adds consideration of equity of the budget allocations to these elements and thus brings an added value to the MTEF. As such, the MTEF and the gender budgets' objectives are consistent and reinforce each other.

The workshop enabled the finance ministry's officers to understand better the linkages between the gender budget approach and their work. However, there were two concerns. Officers feared that integrating gender into ministry budgets would entail a lot of new work which would not fit in with existing framework and reforms. They also feared that the budget document would become very long.

In response to these concerns, the strategy we used was to develop a concise format articulated around only the biggest sub-programmes of the respective ministries, using the MTEF and lessons learnt from the case studies of Australia, Malaysia and South Africa. Participants realised that the combination of focusing on only the largest sub-programmes and utilising such a format would not involve too much additional work and would only add six extra pages to their budget documents. This dampened their apprehension. It was agreed that the MTEF coordinator would present the following proposed format to the finance ministry's committee:

Table 11: Proposed format for the Rwanda gender budget

Programme (from the budget document)

Sub-programme and amount (from the budget document)

Gender issues: To describe the current situation. Use disaggregated statistics as much as possible.

Output 1 (from the budget document)

- Activity 1 (from the budget document)
- Activity 2 (from the budget document)
- Activity 3 (from the budget document)

Output 1 indicators: (what will be measured in coming year)

Output 2 (from the budget document)

- Activity 1 (from the budget document)
- Activity 2 (from the budget document)
- Activity 3 (from the budget document)

Output 2 indicators

Etc

The launch

The Prime Minister officially launched the GBI in March 2002. Twelve out of sixteen Ministers, together with Secretaries General, Members of Parliament, development partners, and members of civil society attended the gathering. The event was given widespread publicity by the national radio and television. In his remarks, the Prime Minister emphasised the importance that the government attached to the Initiative, which it saw as adding value to government's efforts toward poverty reduction. In so doing, the Prime Minister enshrined the government's willingness and commitment. Furthermore, he gave legitimacy and strong support to the GBI and reinforced the commitment of ministries' officers.

After the official launch, the guests left and Debbie Budlender, the South African consultant, and I co-facilitated a process which assisted officers from the pilot ministries in portfolio analysis and integration of gender concerns into their budgets. During the plenary sessions, participants were given the tools and logical process of engendering budgets, followed by practical exercises. The MTEF coordinator also presented the progress of the framework. In going through the exercises, we referred to the results of the participatory assessment of poverty and public expenditure carried out within the PRSP. We thus again pointed to the close links between the GBI and other reform processes.

The workshop aimed at producing a concrete product for each ministry, namely a gender budget statement related to the largest sub-

programmes in the current budget. To achieve this, officers were asked to find out more about the sub-programmes which they had identified as the largest, and to search for disaggregated data on what the sub-programmes were doing. They were given an afternoon and morning in the middle of the workshop to go back to their offices to find the requested information. This was productive as officers were able to find and use more disaggregated information than we had known was available. During this time, we visited officers to monitor the progress of their work and give them assistance.

The officers then came together in another plenary session where they made presentations that were followed by inputs from their colleagues. The officers were advised to revise their presentations taking into account the suggestions and comments and submit them to the MTEF.

The strategy of asking officers to undertake an in-depth practical exercise was useful to evaluate:

- ◆ officers' understanding of the engendering budget framework;
- ◆ their capacity to undertake the exercise;
- ◆ their commitment; and
- ◆ the practicability of our proposed gender budget format.

The strategy helped us to refine the plan in collaboration with the MTEF coordinator and the Director of Budget, on the basis of the following observations:

- ◆ officers in all but one of the ministries took the assignment seriously;
- ◆ they were able to find relevant information and disaggregated data on their ministries' activities;
- ◆ they realised that using the gender budget format did not involve significant extra work, and it helped them to be more focused and to make their ministry's budget follow its mission and policy rather than vice versa;
- ◆ they nevertheless needed more assistance in gender analysis of the situation in which their ministries' programmes operate.

The workshop exercise was done on the basis of the 2002 budget. We were all aware that budgets tend to change very little from year to year and therefore hoped that this work would prepare the officers to apply

their new insights in the formulation of their 2003 budgets later in the year. It was agreed that a gender budget document based on the format used at the workshop and focusing on the six largest sub-programmes of each pilot ministry would be presented as an annex to the 2003 budget document.

After the workshop, I provided support to the four ministries who reviewed their gender budget statements and submitted them to the MTEF. The fifth, despite reminders, did not appear to be either committed or interested.

Extending the Initiative to the provinces and non-governmental organisations

The next step was to hold a workshop for provinces on engendering budgets. This was important as the decentralisation policy adopted by Cabinet in 2000 is one of the Government's priorities. In particular, it is considered to be a strategic way to address "the inappropriate highly centralised dictatorial governance of the colonial as well as post independence administration of the country [which] excluded the Rwandese population from participating in the determination of their political, economic and administrative well-being" (Ministry of Local Government and Social Affairs, May 2000: 2). Moreover, the previous highly centralised approach to governance is seen as having contributed to the genocide.

Because of the political imperative, implementation of the decentralisation policy has happened faster in Rwanda than in most other African countries. Twelve provinces have been delineated, each of which encompasses between 15 and 20 districts. The latter are, in turn, divided into sectors and cells.

The provincial workshop on engendering budgets was held in May 2002. Eleven of the 12 provinces were represented by two senior officers each, namely the Executive Secretary and a Director (of planning or gender). The twelfth province could not attend as the President was visiting at that time.

The purpose of the provincial workshop was:

- ◆ to explain what the gender budget approach is about and how to apply it to their provinces' budgets;

- ◆ to share what had been done so far by pilot ministries and obtain their feedback; and
- ◆ to discuss the way forward, including how they could assist the districts.

Debbie Budlender and I again co-facilitated the event. Participants expressed great commitment to the Initiative. While they had limited formal background on gender, the fact that they work on the ground and thus are close to the communities helped them to understand the gender issues. They gave insights on how the budgets should match the populations' needs and provided a critical analysis of the work done by pilot ministries in March, making recommendations for improvement.

As at the previous workshops, the MTEF coordinator presented on the progress of the framework. The facilitators further emphasised the linkages between the MTEF and the gender budget. After this, the participants undertook an exercise on integrating gender issues into their provinces' budgets.

At the end of the workshop, participants made the following resolutions:

- ◆ to organise meetings in order to inform the provincial authorities about what they had learnt;
- ◆ to integrate gender issues into their 2003 budgets; and
- ◆ to assist districts in engendering their budgets.

The third decision was critical as the implementation of the decentralisation policy is moving quickly and it was not possible to cover all districts from the central level at this stage of the Initiative. Further, the participants suggested that the gender ministry participate in the planned provincial MTEF workshops to give an input on gender budgets. Unfortunately, due to limited capacity, it will not be able to follow up on this latter suggestion.

Immediately following the provinces' workshop, a one-day meeting was held for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to:

- ◆ explain the relevance of integrating gender issues into the government's budget and how to undertake such an exercise;
- ◆ share with them the progress of the Rwanda GBI and work done by ministries and provinces; and

- ◆ discuss their role as civil society.

Attendance was good. There were 21 participants from both women's organisations and mixed NGOs dealing with legal issues, education, widows and women's entrepreneurship. The invitation was sent through PRO-FEMMES Twese Hamwe, which in turn sent individual invitations to its member organisations. PRO-FEMMES Twese Hamwe, which means 'all together' in Kinyarwanda, is the umbrella of national NGOs. It coordinates 41 organisations, of which the majority are women's NGOs.

After we explained to participants what the gender budget is about, they did an exercise on 'causes, consequences, solutions' in order to help them understand the gender analysis and mainstreaming framework. They discussed in groups the case studies of Australia, Mexico, the Philippines, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. They also criticised the work of the ministries and made recommendations for better integration of gender issues into the ministries' budgets for 2003. The case studies illustrated for them the role that NGOs played in initiatives in other countries and gave them an idea of what their role might be. Bolstered by these experiences, they made the following resolutions:

- ◆ to undertake research on the pilot ministries in order to document the impact of their budgets on women and men, girls and boys;
- ◆ to engage in advocacy and lobbying for the gender budget;
- ◆ to monitor and evaluate ministries and provinces' gender budgets; and
- ◆ to mobilise their own resources for such activities.

The establishment of alliances between the government and civil society is essential for the success and sustainability of the Rwanda GBI. Such alliances institutionalise the Initiative and prevent it from coming to a halt when there are changes in government, as was the case in Australia.

After the provinces' workshop and the NGO meeting, we evaluated the events and refined the plans for the future. Given the interest shown by the provinces' officers, we envisaged working more closely with three pilot provinces and assisting them in engendering their 2003 budgets. As the process goes along, further provinces and districts will be involved.

The selection of the three provinces will be informed by donor interventions in the implementation of the decentralisation policy, in that we will prioritise provinces where donors who are more likely to be interested in gender budget work are involved. This will create partnership with other donors in extending the Initiative to provinces and districts.

Fitting the Gender Budget into Other Related Processes

This year, as part of the development of the MTEF, the ministries are for the first time preparing strategic papers that give the background to, and justification for, their budgets. Gender is among several cross-cutting issues to be addressed in these papers. However, most officers do not know how to deal with it.

To address this issue, I prepared a handout explaining to ministries the relevance of integrating gender issues into their strategic papers and guiding them on how to do so. The process of elaboration of the strategic papers was discussed at a joint workshop organised by the MTEF, the PRSP and CEPEX. I attended and made a contribution at this event.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the GBI Process

The main strengths and weaknesses of the process undertaken so far to engender the Government of Rwanda's budgets can be summarised as follows.

Strengths

Political will There is strong political will at the highest level of the Government of Rwanda. This can be seen in concrete strategic actions such as those described above. The budget of a government expresses its priorities and choices. As pointed out by Debbie Budlender in the South African *Second Women's Budget* (1997 : 51), "any budget is intrinsically political. The budget determines from whom the state gets resources, and to whom and what it allocates them. Each decision is a political one, as is the decision on the overall size of the budget". This means that the political will and a decision to ensure that the government's budget meets the specific needs of women and men, girls and boys is the condition *sine qua non* of the success of the Rwanda GBI.

Gender awareness of staff of ministries Prior to the planning of the Rwanda GBI, the gender ministry undertook training on gender awareness for ministries and provinces. By now, officers in almost all ministries and provinces have been trained. This makes them sensitised to gender issues. We encountered little resistance during the workshops, although some clearly remains. This is evident, for example, in the passive resistance of the fifth ministry.

Strong involvement of the leadership of the gender ministry The Minister and the Secretary General of the gender ministry are very committed to the Initiative. They follow it seriously and give support where needed. For example, they contact ministries and provinces, opened the series of workshops and advocate at Cabinet level.

Existence of other reforms The fact that the Rwanda GBI is taking place alongside a set of reforms whose objectives are consistent with the gender budget creates a synergy that is conducive to the implementation of the Initiative.

Strong collaboration between the ministries of gender and finance The collaboration between the ministries of gender and finance has been built gradually through the process and is a key strength of the Initiative. The gender ministry is small and the fact that it collaborates with the finance ministry, which is considered very powerful, enhances its capacity to influence the government's budget. At the same time, the collaboration enables the gender ministry to sensitise the finance ministry on gender issues so that it can further engender its own work. This is important because, as noted by Gita Sen, "Finance ministry officials who are used to thinking in terms of macro financial variables, are likely to be somewhat at a loss when asked to engender their work" (1999: 31). The practical exercises undertaken with finance ministry officers convinced them of the relevance of integrating gender into their work. This extended beyond the immediate focus of the gender budget, which relates to the recurrent budget. For example, there was recognition on the part of the MTEF staff that their thinking around the public investment programme (PIP) needed to consider issues beyond growth. In particular, it needed to consider redistribution and unpaid labour.

Weaknesses

Limited capacity The limited expertise in general, and in gender analysis and gender mainstreaming in particular, is one of the critical

weaknesses of the Initiative. This is one of the aftermaths of the 1994 genocide that destroyed the country's human resources. Although the officers have been sensitised to gender issues, it appeared during the different activities we undertook that they will need regular assistance on gender mainstreaming. The question of sustainability of the Initiative when I leave is also critical.

Staff turnover Staff turnover in ministries represents a risk as officers who have already been trained and involved in the process of engendering budgets might be lost. This will affect the sustainability of the Initiative.

Future Plans

The lessons learnt during the activities undertaken in the first phase of the initiative inform the future plans.

Collecting disaggregated data

Disaggregated data are critical to undertaking a gender analysis of the budgets of ministries and provinces. They provide a picture of the situation of women and men, girls and boys in each sector and in each province. They enable officers to highlight the gender issues related to their programmes.

Some data are available in surveys carried out between 1999 and 2001. These include the Household Living Conditions, the Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire, the Tracking Expenditure on Education and Health study, the Demographic and Health survey, and the study on Cultural Beliefs, Attitudes and Practices in Relation to Gender in Rwanda.

The gender ministry has worked with the Directorate of Statistics and the Poverty Observatory Unit to ensure that most of the data are disaggregated. However, we realised during the workshops that officers did not necessarily know about the data. Further, they were not aware of all the administrative data available in their own offices. It was only once they went back to the ministries specifically to look for it that they discovered quite a lot of data.

To address this, actions will be taken to disseminate disaggregated statistics widely. I am currently working with the Directorate of Statistics and the Poverty Observatory Unit on a compilation of

disaggregated data on the situation of women and men, girls and boys in each sector. We hope to finish and distribute this booklet by mid-year. The booklet will be an important tool for the officers in ministries and provinces.

Preparing budgets for 2003

It is envisaged that I will assist the ministries throughout the elaboration of their budgets for 2003. After the pilot ministries and provinces have completed their 2003 budgets, a book will be published to document and disseminate what has been done so far. The report will be officially launched by the ministries of gender and finance.

Before or after the official launch, the 2002 (first) phase of the Initiative will be evaluated by the officers from the pilot ministries and provinces who were responsible for preparing their gender budget statements. The evaluation will explore how the process of the Initiative can be improved for the next phases and how the pilot ministries' approach should move forward.

A donors' meeting will be organised to present the progress of the Initiative and get their feedback. The meeting will be an opportunity to discuss the possibility of starting to integrate gender into the development budget. The event will be held around the time of the annual meeting between the Government and development partners in November 2002.

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