

Gender Budgeting Workshop Report

1. Background / Context of Activity:

Inadequate attention to gender analysis has meant that women's contributions and concerns remain too often disregarded in economic structures. Despite commitments of governments all over the world to gender equality, unequal gender relations prevail. There are numerous examples of rhetorical commitments that fall short because they are not backed up by policies. Furthermore, if money is not attached specifically and in a sufficient manner to these policies, they will fail to address in a serious way the differentiated needs of women, men, girls, and boys.

Gender relations have a clear effect on the distribution of wealth, access to services and resources, and the opportunities needed to fully develop human potential. In turn, budgets - which reflect the choices that government has to make, and the tool it uses to achieve its economic and development goals - have largely inherited this failure to acknowledge the different conditions women and men face. While budgets have been instrumental in transmitting and reproducing gender biases, they also offer the possibility for transforming existing inequalities, provided it is gender responsive.

In addressing the economic potential of both women and men, the government and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes, so that before decisions are taken an analysis is made of these effects on men and women respectively.

It is against this background that the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (Henceforth, FES) organized a training workshop on Gender Budgeting for Elected Women's Forum, organised jointly by the Namibia Elected Women's Forum and the FES from 8 - 11 May 2008 Out of Africa Lodge, Otjiwarongo. This training workshop on Gender Budgeting forms part of a series of workshop conducted in some of the other regions of Namibia - in Oshakati and Mariental in July and September 2006 respectively as well as Swakopmund 2007. Michael Conteh, a Gender Consultant was contracted by FES to design and execute the training programme on Gender concepts and Gender Budgeting for the Namibia Elected Women's Forum. A number of 24 Elected Women and 1 man from the Omaheke and Otjozondjupa region participated in the workshop. Amongst the participants were members of Parliament, staff member of the National Council, Village counsellors and Municipality staff members.

2. Objectives of Activity:

The aim of the workshop was to sensitise the participants on gender concepts and equip them with skills on gender budgeting.

3. Concept / Methodology of Activity:

The workshop was outcome based and involved participatory learning methodology. Oral presentation was accompanied by the use of visual aids, i.e. power point presentation and flip chart. Discussion, comments and questions followed the presentation of each item on the agenda, which made the workshop a dynamic exchange of experiences on gender budgeting nationally and in the household. All participants, being elected women, demonstrated considerable practical knowledge of the theme and raised a number of concerns and problems that they encounter in their daily activities when executing their duties in their respective constituencies.

The Workshop lasted for two days - approximately 16 hours of effective work. The first day focused on introducing the participants to each other through an exercise requesting participants to identify themselves with an item/object and to explain why and how they relate with their choice of object. It was mainly to build trust and confidence amongst participants, get an understanding of the different cultural background of the participants and to cultivate respect for one another. It also served as an ice breaker to set the right mood for the workshop. Participants were given the opportunity to share their experiences on gender concepts and on gender issues. As part of their expectations, participants wanted a clear understanding on gender concepts, differences between gender and sex and gender budgeting and how it can be done. The following topics were covered:

- Social Construction of Gender
- Difference between sex and gender
- Gender relations
- Gender equality
- Gender equity
- Gender awareness
- Gender discrimination
- Gender awareness
- Gender mainstreaming
- Affirmative Action

The afternoon was dedicated to practical exercise on the gender concepts to ensure a clear understanding of the concepts. Furthermore, Budget terminologies were introduced in addition to the following topics which were covered:

- Discussing and sharing experience on budgeting
- What is a government budget?
- Understanding budget terminology
- The roles and function of a budget

This was followed by a group work on budgeting and a presentation from the respective groups.

The next day was devoted to gender budgeting and covered the following topics:

- Understanding Budgets
- Benefits of Gender Budgeting
- Tools for gender Responsive Budgeting
- Categories and Goals of Gender Responsive Budgeting
- 5 Steps for Gender Responsive Budgeting
- Developing an Action Plan
- Open Window

This was followed by an exercise on gender responsive budgeting and group presentation by the groups.

4. Target Group / Participants of Activity:

This series of workshops targets the Namibian Elected Women's Forum and the Parliamentary Women's Caucus. Participants are mostly MPs, Regional Counsellors, Village Counsellors, Municipality Personnel and local authorities personnel.

5. Results / Outcomes of Activity:

At the end of the workshop, participants were equipped with skills that would enable them to:

- Conduct gender needs assessment
- Apply gender analytical frameworks and tools of analysis to mainstream gender within their respective constituencies
- Develop policies and programmes that are gender sensitive and further government's commitment to women's empowerment and gender equality
- Link policy objectives with programme design and implementation
- Perform a gender analysis of national and other government budgets
- Design a gender budget using the different gender budgeting tools

6. Evaluation / Assessment of Activity:

The participants of the workshop expressed their satisfaction with the overall presentation of the workshop. They endorsed the fact that the workshop was very lively and the facilitator competently presented the topics in a very clear and simple manner. The facilitator also created an enabling environment for full participation from all the participants. The participants also noted with confidence that they are now equipped with the skills to analyze budgets to ensure that it is responsive to both the needs of women and men. After two days of successful learning and sharing of experiences on gender budgeting and general knowledge on a host of issues, Ms. Silvia Mundjindi, project officer, FES, gave the closing remarks and officially closed the workshop.

7. Additional remarks with regard to organizational matters :

Some participants, especially the village counselor expressed concern that they were being sideline by the regional office on some workshops. They suggested that invitations be sent directly to their offices.

The need to involved more men in workshops of this nature was emphasized and a plea was made to FES to get more men involved.

A request was made to FES to look into the possibility of creating a platform for Local Authorities and Regional Council to meet to deliberate and sort out their operational issues.