Status Paper

Gender responsive budgeting in agriculture: an overview

RACHNA[1], SARITA[2], ANJU BALA[3] and RAKESH AHUJA[4]

[1]Department of Dairy Business Management, College of Dairy Science and Technology
[2]Directorate of Extension Education
[3]Department of Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Extension Education
College of Veterinary Sciences
Lala Lajpat Rai University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Hisar 125004 Haryana, India
[4]Department of Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Extension Education
Dr GC Negi College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences
CSKHP Krishi Vishvavidyalaya, Palampur 176062 Himachal Pradesh, India
Email for correspondence: rachna@luvas.edu.in

www.IndianJournals.com
Not for Commercial Use
Downloaded From IP - 216.73.216.75 on dated 18-Nov-2026

© Society for Advancement of Human and Nature (SADHNA) *Received: 05.09.2022/Accepted: 06.10.2022*

ABSTRACT

India's economy is primarily dependent on agriculture and its responsibilities fall squarely on Indian women, with 71 per cent of economically active women being employed in the agriculture sector. Women continue to be absorbed and engaged in agriculture in emerging nations like India but they are not recognized as hired or employed labour instead women have continued to be 'invisible labourers'. Women as workers in the sector also experience gender differentials in agricultural wages as well as face discrimination and biases at various levels due to deeply entrenched, patriarchal socio-cultural practices both within the households and at work spheres. Despite increasing feminization of agriculture, women have largely been unseen in terms of agricultural policies, programmes and budgets as well as formal support systems for credit, extension, insurance and marketing services due to the lack of recognition of their role in managing land and livestock. Since the disparity between women's actual economic participation and how the public perceives it has raised concerns, various studies have tried to close this gap. Many gender-based inequities and inequalities now seem to have been more or less ingrained in the fundamentals of public policies and the distribution of public resources. In terms of opportunities and outcomes, gender discrepancies still exist in education, workplace and public life. International organizations have led efforts in recent decades to promote gender mainstreaming with the idea that all public policies should be developed with the goal of promoting gender equality. The implementation of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process is known as gender budgeting. Gender responsive budgeting (GRB) has been a crucial instrument for mainstreaming gender concerns over the years as part of the ongoing fight to make budgets and policies in nations throughout the world more gender-responsive. Beginning from the mid-1980s to date, over 90 nations have so far acknowledged GRB as a useful instrument for developing budgets and policies globally. In India, where majority of rural women are engaged in agriculture, empowerment and mainstreaming of women in agriculture can lead to a paradigm shift in favour of economic growth.

Keywords: Women; agriculture; gender responsive budgeting; workers

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is still the foremost sector in women's employment. Women's employment is regarded as key indicator of how economically empowered women are as well as how they contribute to economic growth. With the introduction of science and technology, the agriculture industry as a whole has greatly evolved and progressed. But even most recent developments cannot erase people's ignorance of the importance of women's labour in this sector. Women are at a disadvantage in the labour market as evidenced by the overcrowding of the workforce in agriculture which consists primarily of wage workers, lower earnings, low literacy rates, widespread informal employment

and the majority of self-employment in the form of unpaid workers.

An established definition of gender budgeting refers to a gender-based assessment of budgets incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality (Quinn 2009). Health disparities manifest as inequalities in life expectancy that deviate from biological norms and excess mortality of female offspring. These inequalities lead to excess mortality of females, a well-documented phenomenon referred to as the 'missing women' (Sen 1989) where the number of missing women is an estimate of how many more females would be alive as predicted by biological models if there was no gender discrimination.

Government regulations can help close gender gaps but changing cultural and societal norms must also take place in order to achieve gender equality. Governments can implement public employment policies to support the hiring and advancement of women, reform government machinery including budget processes and change legislation to improve gender equality and assist end discrimination. However, government intervention alone will not be sufficient to achieve gender equality particularly if a nation has substantial social and cultural barriers that serve to perpetuate inequality. Shifting cultural views and perceptions of women's role in society can be as influential as government actions in either promoting or blocking gender equality (Fabrizio et al 2020, Anon 2020).

To ensure that women and men equally benefit from development, gender budgeting is a potent instrument for achieving gender mainstreaming. It is a continuous process to keep a gender perspective in mind while formulating policies and programmes putting them into action and reviewing them. It is not an accounting exercise. An overall gender budget does not include a separate budget for women. Instead, the gender budgets aim to assess how the government's policies are reflected in the budget and how they affect both men and women. Gender budgeting comprises analysing government spending plans to determine how gender differences affect them and to make sure that gender commitments are reflected in spending plans. Mentioned as women's budgets, gender budgets, gender-sensitive budgets and gender responsive budgets, are all terms that are used to describe initiatives that have used gender as lens from which to analyse budgets at national, regional and civic levels. It involves budgeting that properly accounts for the positive externalities that are derived from improving women's opportunities for healthcare, education and employment.

Studies show that programmes and policies designed to improve women's economic opportunities lead to higher rates of economic growth (Stotsky 1996). Gender budgeting has gained prominence in recent years and was given additional impetus by the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 (Anon 1996) which called for ensuring the integration of a gender perspective in budgetary policies and programmes (Sarraf 2003).

Women in Indian agriculture

There is now enough data from a variety of micro-studies and nationally representative surveys to conclusively show that in rural India, the vast majority of cultivators and agricultural labourers are women. More men are migrating to cities as a result of the agrarian crisis giving up their farm jobs. This indicates that women are increasingly more engaged on farms in India. The Economic Survey 2017-18 calls this the 'feminisation' of the agriculture sector (Anon 2018). As compared to 49.8 per cent of male workers, 65.1 per cent of women work in agriculture according to Census 2011 data on cultivators and agricultural labourers (Seethalakshami 2017).

The country-wide process of agrarian transition which involves the transfer of labour from agriculture to other sectors has been gradual, frequently uneven and largely incomplete. As per Pingali et al (2019), the proportion of women to men employed in the agricultural sector has risen through time and has contributed more to per capita GDP. The results of numerous studies and nationwide enumerative surveys indicate that the majority of women in India's employment are employed in agriculture and that each acre of land is farmed using more woman-days than men do on average across all crops and areas. Woman farmers, however, do not even receive recognition from society or the government for the huge contribution they provide in their own right as farmers. Evidence also suggests that a complex network of social, legal and customary patriarchal practices mediates women's access to and ownership of land which is a crucial resource for farming. One of the biggest barriers preventing woman farmers from receiving financing

www.IndianJournals.com
Not for Commercial Use
Downloaded From IP - 216.73.216.75 on dated 18-Nov-2026

is their lack of land ownership and management, inputs, seeds, extension services and a variety of other programmes and assistance systems are essential for sustaining agriculture.

Need of a gender budget

Gender budgeting entails methodically utilizing the tools, strategies and processes of the budget cycle to advance equality given that the budgeting process is a major determining factor and the entry point for resource allocation. Elson (2006) asserts that because fiscal policies may have distinct effects on women and men, they are not gender-neutral and that the appearance of gender neutrality is more correctly described as gender blindness. In addition to encouraging greater accountability for governments' commitment to gender equality and mainstreaming gender analysis of issues within government policy, gender budgeting seeks to have an impact on budgets and policies (Sharp and Broomhill 2002). Gender budgeting is meant to study the gender implications of all government programmes and policies, their effects on resource allocation and results and how to improve them rather than to assess only programmes that are especially targeted to females or to create a separate women's budget. In an effort to enhance resource distribution within the government budget to eliminate those inequities which would have positive effects on economic and social well-being, it draws on the literature on the measuring of inequality.

Gender budgeting can be carried out by the government as a special task distinct from its regular budgeting procedure; it can be fully integrated in a centralized manner perhaps by a budget department in a ministry of finance or it can be gradually incorporated into the discussions of spending ministries and the ministry of finance for revenue issues. For the purpose of conducting a gender budgeting exercise, several governments have ministries dedicated to the development of women and children such as in India. However these ministries typically lack the clout of the ministry of finance. Gender budgeting adds to existing duties and must avoid being perceived as just another programme created to appease a particular interest group so it may be challenging to win support for the idea within a government.

Sen (2000) noted the challenges in getting finance ministries to take part in gender budgeting exercises. Thus a more decentralized approach can be preferable if there is clear guidance from the ministry of finance or budget department. However this decentralization might make the overarching point less clear. Thus there are trade-offs when deciding how to incorporate it into government. The analysis and suggestions from a gender budgeting exercise might potentially be made without the involvement of the government but doing so runs the risk of the exercise not receiving the backing necessary to implement its findings.

The need for gender budgeting stems from the realisation that the allocation of resources in national budgets has varied effects on men and women. In India, women make up 48 per cent of the population but they fall short of men on several social indices including economic possibilities, health and education. As a result of their vulnerability and lack of resources, they demand special attention. These gender disparities could be changed by the way government budgets allocate money. In light of this, gender budgeting has been promoted as a method for attaining gender mainstreaming. The gender budgeting exercise would potentially support the following empowering measures:

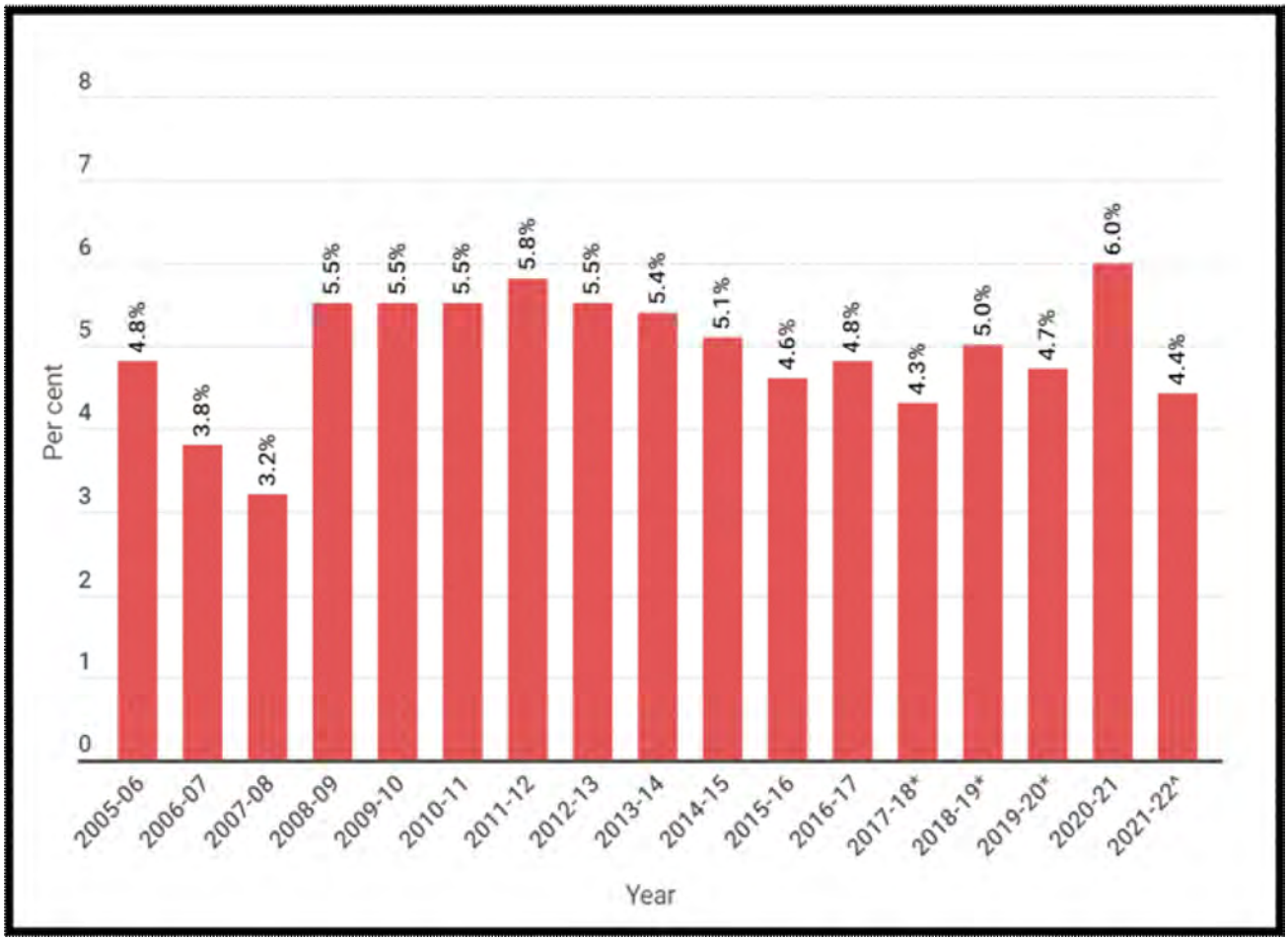
- Addressing gap between policy commitment and allocation for women by emphasizing on adequate resource allocation
- Putting pressure and focus on gender sensitive programme formulation and implementation
- Mainstreaming gender concerns in public expenditure and policy
- By being a tool for effective policy implementation where one can check if the allocations are in line with slated gender sensitive policy commitments and are having the desired impact

Gender budgeting in India

Gender inequality poses a significant developmental challenge in India. Recently, the World Economic Forum (WEF) ranked India at 135 out of 146 countries in its global gender gap (GGG) index for 2022. The ranking is based on a country's ability to reduce gender disparities in four areas viz economic participation and opportunity, education, political empowerment and health and survival (Anon 2022b).

The Indian constitution explicitly states the importance of gender equality. It grants gender equality and empowers the state to adopt positive discrimination measures in favour of women. The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) has a goal to bring about the advancement, development and

www.IndianJournals.com
Not for Commercial Use
Downloaded From IP - 216.73.216.75 on dated 18-Nov-2026



All figures are revised estimates and are rounded off; *Actual, ^Budget estimates

Source: Anon (2022a)

Fig 1. Gender budget as a proportion of union budget (India)

empowerment of women. Specifically, the objectives of this policy include enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedom by women on equal basis, elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girls, giving equitable access to participation and women's empowerment, mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process and fostering a climate for women's full development through supportive economic and social policies.

It is crucial to look at budget allocations first before taking the gender budgeting exercise into account. The allocation to gender budgets in India as a proportion of the total union budget has remained constant since its inception ranging from around 3 to 6 per cent of the union budget (Anon 2022a).

The idea of gender budgeting was first mentioned in the budget speech for 2000-01. Lahiri et al (2003) reported on gender budgeting initiatives in India in a report of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, commissioned by the government. This study builds an econometric model to link expenditure on public health and education to the GDI showing the beneficial influence of such spending on this indicator of gender inequality. This model provides the analytical foundation for its suggestions. Gender-responsive budgeting is a method of planning, programming and budgeting that helps advance gender equality and women's rights. So far 57 government ministries/departments in India have set up Gender Budgeting Cell, a major step that could potentially impact the lives of crores of women. Given the impact on women, it will also be crucial to ensure increased spending on other social sectors including sanitation, health and education. The pre-budget consultations, the ministry of finance has held in recent years to ensure that women's perspectives are also heard in the budget-making process, have been a beneficial trend. Despite

www.IndianJournals.com
Not for Commercial Use
Downloaded From IP - 216.73.216.75 on dated 18-Nov-2026

the accomplishment, improved planning and implementation are required to make sure that these policies reach every woman in the most rural areas of the nation. The minister of finance in the 2019 budget speech highlighted the importance of empowering women especially in rural areas (Pandit 2019). An inter-governmental committee is to be established to encourage and facilitate women's participation in the country's development.

In a study on gender responsive budgeting: a focus on agriculture sector, UN women, suggests that allocation for agriculture budget should be at least 25 per cent of the total budget allocations. Allocations for women across all schemes must be at least 50 per cent or in proportion to the percentage of women's involvement in agriculture in various agro-geological contexts across the country. At least two-third of loans given should be subsidies/grants. Financial institutions should provide customised terms and conditions for loans to woman farmers including SC, ST, single women and differently-abled women. All woman farmers including tenants and share croppers should have access to bank accounts (Jan Dhan Yojana) and credit irrespective of land title deeds and Kisan Credit Cards (Seethalakshmi 2017).

www.IndianJournals.com
Not for Commercial Use
Downloaded From IP - 216.73.216.75 on dated 18-Nov-2026

CONCLUSION

Gender budgeting alone is insufficient to address ingrained gender disparities. Furthermore, policies should be adaptable enough to evolve in response to feedback from the intended beneficiaries as their absence from the planning and implementation processes is frequently the cause of well-intentioned policies failing. To address gender inequality and close these disparities, gender budgeting is a crucial tool. For the capacity training and input assistance of women farmers, separate financial provisions and targets (at central and state levels) must be developed. Separate budgets must be allocated to provision social security and public healthcare services including maternity entitlements for woman farmers and workers under various schemes of the ministry. To effectively serve the evolving needs and ambitions of various groups of woman farmers in India, the government should take proactive steps to institutionalise gender responsive planning and budgeting systems. Governmental policy choices have the potential to either advance gender equality or uphold current disparities. Even though progress toward gender equality depends on a variety of variables including shifts in cultural views and behaviours, gender budgeting can be crucial in identifying areas where fiscal policies fall short and provide the resources required to close such gaps. In an effort to improve women's empowerment in government plans and programmes, the national government is making an effort by inserting a gender-budgeting statement in each yearly national budget. It suggests that the national government understands the importance of women's empowerment to the advancement of the country. India has made a small progress toward implementing gender-based budgets. Acknowledging and mainstreaming of women in agriculture via GRB to have ensured access to resources, technology, education, health facilities, ownership rights and skill development will improve agriculture productivity and help in building an empowered nation.

REFERENCES

Anonymous 1996. Report of the fourth world conference on women. 4-15 September 1995, Beijing, China, United Nations Publication Sales Number 96.IV.13, United Nations, New York.

Anonymous 2018. Economic survey 2017-18. Vol II, Economic Division, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Government of India.

Anonymous 2020. Tackling social norms: a game changer for gender inequalities. In: Human development perspectives. United Nations Development Programme, New York, USA, 32p.

Anonymous 2022a. Gender budget, union expenditure profile for FY 2005-06 to FY 2021-22. Government of India.

Anonymous 2022b. Global gender gap report 2022: insight report. World Economic Forum, Geneva, Switzerland.

Elson D 2006. Budgeting for women's rights: monitoring government budgets for compliance with CEDAW. United Nations Development Fund for Women, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, Colorado, United States.

Fabrizio S, Fruttero A, Gurara D, Kolovich L, Malta V, Tavares MM and Tchelishvili N 2020. Women in the labor force: the role of fiscal policies. IMF Staff Discussion Note SDN/20/03, Strategy, Policy and Review Department, International Monetary Fund, Washington, DC.

Lahiri AK, Chakraborty LS, Bhattacharyya PN, Mukhopadhyay H and Bhasin A 2003. Gender budgeting in India. National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, New Delhi, India.

Pandit A 2019. Economy without women is like bird without a wing. The Times of India, 6 July 2019.

Pingali P, Aiyar A, Abraham M and Rahman A 2019. Transforming food systems for a rising India. Palgrave Studies in Agricultural Economics and Food Policy, Palgrave Mcmilan Publishing Company, London, United Kingdom.

Quinn S 2009. Gender budgeting: practical implementation handbook. Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France.

Sarraf F 2003. Gender-responsive government budgeting. IMF Working Paper WP/03/83, International Monetary Fund, Washington, DC.

Seethalakshami S 2017. Gender responsive budgeting: a focus on agriculture sector. UN Women, Asia and Pacific, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, New York, United States.

Sen A 1989. Women's survival as a development problem. Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences **43(2):** 14-29.

Sen G 2000. Gender mainstreaming in finance ministries. World Development **28(7):** 1379-1390.

Sharp R and Broomhill R 2002. Budgeting for equality: the Australian experience. Feminist Economics **8(1):** 25-47.

Stotsky JG 1996. Gender bias in tax systems. IMF Working Paper Number 1996/099, International Monetary Fund, Washington, DC, 22p.

www.IndianJournals.com
Not for Commercial Use
Downloaded From IP - 216.73.216.75 on dated 18-Nov-2026