

Pamphlet



Corporate Evaluation of UNIFEM's Work on Gender-Responsive Budgeting



I. BACKGROUND TO GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING AT UNIFEM

Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) has become an internationally acknowledged tool for supporting implementation of commitments towards achieving gender equality and the realization of women's rights. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) contributes extensively to building interest, capacity and commitment to incorporate a gender equality perspective in budgetary processes and practices. Since 2001, UNIFEM has supported GRB initiatives in over 35 countries and has positioned itself as a leading player in GRB in the UN system.

UNIFEM's global programme "Strengthening Economic Governance: Applied Gender Analysis to Government Budgets", launched in 2001, provided technical and financial support to gender budget initiatives in Latin America, Africa and Asia-Pacific. The first four years of the programme focused on making gender budgeting tools and methodologies available; increasing stakeholders' capacity to advocate and carry out gender budget analysis; improving budgeting and planning processes to enhance gender equality; and increasing resource allocations to support gender equality.

The second phase of the programme, implemented in 2005 - 2008, aimed to ensure that poor women's priorities were adequately reflected in national budgeting processes. Initiatives were put into action in Morocco, Senegal, Mozambique and Ecuador. In these four countries, the programme sought to achieve three outcomes:

- ▶ National budget processes and policies reflect gender equality principles

- ▶ Priorities of poor women reflected in sectoral budget allocations for national programmes addressing poverty

- ▶ Knowledge and learning on gender-responsive budgeting facilitates replication of good practices and the exchange of lessons learned



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United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)
304 East 45th Street, New York, NY. 10017, USA.

Corporate Evaluation of UNIFEM's Work on Gender-Responsive Budgeting,
New York, 2010

Design: Soho Design, S.A.

Printer: Phoenix Design Aid A/S

Production: Evaluation Unit, UNIFEM

Website: www.unifem.org



The global programme inspired numerous GRB initiatives, which took shape differently and stretched beyond the scope of the original programme. Currently, UNIFEM's GRB programming consists of a portfolio of cross-regional, thematic, regional and country level programmes that span across different countries and local communities all over the world.

II. THE EVALUATION

From November 2008 to November 2009, UNIFEM's Evaluation Unit commissioned an external corporate evaluation of UNIFEM's work on Gender-Responsive Budgets. The evaluation was undertaken based on the commitment to donors (the government of Belgium) and its potential for generating knowledge on the role of GRB for greater accountability to women and advancement of the gender equality agenda. This evaluation was particularly significant because UNIFEM's Strategic Plan (SP) had placed a specific focus on increasing the number of budget processes that fully incorporate gender equality. Furthermore, the SP defined it as one of the eight key outcomes to which the organization aimed to contribute by advancing the goal of implementation of national commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment.

The evaluation aimed to assess critically what conditions and mechanisms enable and hinder UNIFEM's work in increasing gender equality in budget processes and practices as well as evaluate UNIFEM's overall approach to GRB programming. Specifically, it aimed to analyse the theory of change that underpins UNIFEM's GRB work, assess gender-responsive budgeting initiatives based on the criteria of relevance, effectiveness and sustainability as well as analyse programmatic strategies and management of the programme. It focused on GRB initiatives implemented during 2004-2008, paying particular attention to the cross-regional Gender-Responsive Budgeting Programme.

The corporate evaluation was conducted in three different stages. **Stage 1** constituted a preliminary rapid assessment of GRB initiatives. **Stage 2** focused on the Belgium funded cross-regional GRB Programme, as a case study to assess the programme's results at the country level. It assessed progress towards GRB programming outcomes and outputs, and provided a comparative analysis of

results achieved in four countries. **Stage 3** building on the findings of the first two stages, aimed to assess the overall appropriateness of UNIFEM's approach to GRB programming, develop a typology of GRB initiatives and provide monitoring and evaluation tools.

The evaluation methodology included a variety of methods and data-collection techniques: literature and document reviews; interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders; field visits in four countries (Morocco, Mozambique, Ecuador and Senegal); and an on-line questionnaire which was distributed to UNIFEM's offices with ongoing GRB initiatives. The evaluation team reached out to 130 informants such as UNIFEM staff, government officials and non-governmental organizations.

III. OVERALL EVALUATION FINDINGS

Theory of Change

A working definition that UNIFEM deploys in gender-responsive budgeting is summarized in Box 1. According to the evaluation, different GRB initiatives deploy a variety of approaches and conceptual perspectives to achieve the aims of gender-responsive budgeting. The most common elements in the GRB programming include working with governments, particularly the ministries of finance, non-governmental organizations and gender machineries to transform national budgets and to make them gender-responsive. However, the evaluation revealed that there are considerable variations in the theories of change that accompany different understandings of Gender-Responsive Budgeting in the organization. The four examples, examined in detail from the GRB Programme, Latin America, Nigeria and Egypt, demonstrate the importance of exploring the assumptions underlying the approaches used. The evaluators suggested that sustainable effectiveness of the programmes has been greater where UNIFEM focused on influencing policy and developing the capacity of both government and civil society. Overall, the evaluation concluded that UNIFEM needs to clarify the theory of change of GRB initiatives in different contexts.

Box 1. Gender-responsive budgeting aims to raise awareness of the gendered impacts of budgets and to make governments accountable for ensuring their budgets promote the achievement of gender equality and women's rights, especially among the poor.

Relevance, effectiveness and sustainability

The evaluation concluded that UNIFEM's Gender-Responsive Budgeting initiatives, including the cross-regional GRB Programme are generally relevant, effective and show some signs of sustainability, but also identified a number of areas for improvement:

Relevance

- ▶ The evaluation noted that the cross-regional GRB Programme is relevant to the four countries where it operates and that each programme succeeded in positioning itself appropriately in relation to overarching policy frameworks for poverty reduction and national development, and in relation to national gender policies. However, ongoing capacity to be able to carry out detailed political, policy and institutional analyses for each context is needed to help in adapting the overall approach to the local circumstances, to identify opportunities and assess progress. This finding resonates with wider assessment of GRB initiatives, which reported the need to strengthen the link between women's issues and GBIs in UNIFEM's work by involving civil society in identifying policy priorities and holding government to account for budget allocations and the implementation of policy.

Effectiveness

- ▶ The results achieved could be attributed to consistent efforts over time and particularly to considerable capacity-building efforts, as was shown in the GRB Programme. The evaluation found that the GRB Programme has been able to achieve significant results such as the inclusion of gender in Budget Call Circular Letters in all four countries, the development of gender-sensitive indicators and gender-responsive budget allocations in sectoral piloting work. However, while all of the interventions generally produced some form of knowledge products, in all cases the evaluation noted that this is the area where least progress has been recorded and where there is least evidence of success. The need for UNIFEM to focus monitoring and evaluation systems on assessing the contribution made by

its support to achieving results is one of the key findings highlighted in both the evaluation of the GRB Programme and the overall assessment of UNIFEM's GRB portfolio.

Sustainability

- ▶ Given the relative newness of the GRB work and the innovative nature of some of the approaches used, it is too early to say how sustainable the programme interventions have been. There are early signs of sustainability in capacity-building, particularly in Ecuador and to a lesser extent in Mozambique. Also, early signs of potential sustainability through institutional developments were picked up by the evaluation. These include the formalization of a Gender Unit in the finance ministry in Ecuador and the strengthening of gender focal points in the justice ministry in Morocco.

Programme strategies

The evaluation found good evidence of a range of interesting and innovative approaches to capacity-building, suggesting that this was a key area of strength for UNIFEM. Capacity-building has been central to achieving results, starting with awareness-raising on gender-responsive budgeting, moving to developing technical capacity for gender analysis and policy development, and providing ongoing and direct support. Given the lack of evidence of the impact of these approaches, this is an area where lesson learning and the collection of data on impact should be focused. A further key factor in the success of programme strategies has been engaging with planning and finance functions of government. The cross-regional GRB Programme successfully developed partnerships with both these functions, although the changes in the context meant that entry points needed to be reassessed throughout the programme. The most effective institutional option appeared to be where gender and planning/finance remits are combined – illustrated by the Gender Units in finance ministries in Morocco and Ecuador and the gender focal point in a sector level planning and finance department in Senegal. There is, however, much more limited evidence of successes in Evidence-based Advocacy or Sector Piloting. These are all areas where further work is required to understand how these strategies are used and to collect data on their effectiveness.



Programme Management

According to the GRB Programme evaluation, the programme faces a number of challenges, particularly in ensuring adequate human and technical resources to lead the development of the programme approach and to ensure that it is consistently implemented throughout Phase II. At the same time, the country studies draw attention to what is achieved with very limited resources and often in difficult contexts, highlighting the commitment and expertise that the programme did succeed in bringing to the GRB interventions. The common limitations in UNIFEM's programme management include: lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; staff turnover; and lack of institutional learning systems. UNIFEM's corporate financial decision-making systems are also perceived to have impacted negatively on the programme, in particular in relation to slowing decision-making in some country studies.

IV. KEY LESSONS

Drawing on the evaluation of the cross-regional GRB Programme, the evaluators identified the following key lessons:

- ▶ Achieving systematic change in a complex programme requires a high level of support to staff, to ensure an understanding of changing contexts and to ensure overall coherence and a strategic approach.
- ▶ The approach taken needs to be embedded in a human rights-based approach and needs to retain a focus on the human development and gender equality outcomes of GRB work. The approach needs to be clearly articulated, setting out how each set of gender advocates can contribute to ensuring that women's rights and perspectives are central to GRB work.
- ▶ Skills are needed in identifying changing institutional entry points, based on learning about which institutions are important because of their policy role or effective because of their influence and ability to get things done in practice.
- ▶ Ambition in programmatic aims needs to be tempered with realism about investments required in terms of time, timescales and human resources, balancing an understanding of overall reform processes with pragmatic assessments, and the programme's significance in relation to the overall extent of change.

- ▶ An effective M&E system is key to providing evidence of what works and to validating whether effort invested in changing long, complex national processes is worthwhile. It is also key to assessing real change for poor women.

V. OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall assessment of UNIFEM's work on gender-responsive budgeting and the evaluation of the cross-regional GRB Programme has identified two different sets of recommendations and a number of actions related to the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness and sustainability. The following is the abridged version of 10 key recommendations.

Assessment of UNIFEM's Work on Gender-Responsive Budgeting

Relevance

1. There is a need for UNIFEM to clarify what Gender-Responsive Budgeting means in different contexts and what different approaches to Gender-Responsive Budgeting Initiatives aim to achieve. As an important part of this clarification of what GRB means, there is a need to build on the excellent conceptual work done by UNIFEM and on the range of field experience that has been developed to ensure that a rights-based approach to GRB is consistently implemented in UNIFEM's programme.

Effectiveness

2. There is an important need for UNIFEM to re-clarify its strategic advantage in taking forward Gender-Responsive Budgeting. In particular, there is a need for UNIFEM to set out its strengths and make clear the linkages among three different roles: leading theoretically and conceptually; supporting GBIs in the field; and, collecting, analysing, monitoring, evaluating and disseminating the experience of GBIs.



Sustainability

3. It is recommended that UNIFEM focuses lessons learning and evaluation efforts on partnerships and capacity-building in order to record successes to date and to help in developing future Gender-Responsive Budgeting strategies. This includes mapping key partners and defining working approaches with them, preparing a midterm capacity development strategy and communicating it to partners, institutionalising capacity development courses, UNIFEM acting as quality assurer for GRB training, and developing rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems to track the results in the areas of partnerships and capacity-building.

Evaluation of the Gender-Responsive Budgeting Programme

Relevance

4. The GRB Programme should invest in capacity for the analysis of the context within which it operates and the priorities of its intended beneficiaries, in particular, ensuring that analysis of the policy and institutional environment is documented and communicated to staff and partners.

5. The GRB Programme should be more analytical when assessing sources on analysis of women's priorities. Identification of women's priorities should aim to draw on a range of actors, with different roles to play in ensuring that women's opinions are represented in decision-making fora. The human rights conventions and their reporting mechanisms, CEDAW in particular, could be used more effectively as they provide a means for identifying women's priorities and supporting analysis of the power relationships, both within government and between government and citizens, which enable or prevent women from claiming their rights.

Effectiveness

6. Cross-country learning should be facilitated by UNIFEM as an ongoing monitoring process. Countries' comparative advantages could be identified and communicated in order that others can learn – for example, from Morocco for gender budget analysis, from Mozambique for the gender content of budget call circular letters, and from Ecuador for institutionalising capacity-building. UNIFEM's headquarters staff could facilitate this learning process, at both national and cross-country levels, and emphasise the need for greater attention to opportunities for this sharing as a regular part of the implementation process.

7. Flexible and opportunistic programming is critical to effective Gender-Responsive Budgeting implementation and this should be expected and supported. UNIFEM's experience demonstrates that choices about institutional entry points are context specific and are not fixed, even within the life cycle of one programme phase in one country. Support could be given with some indicative guidance drawn from Phase II. For example, work to improve the gender sensitivity of budget allocations can be carried out, even when sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators are not fully in place, or, if the context is favourable, a combination of gender and planning/finance remits seems to be effective for advancing GRB. Log frames and indicators could also be reviewed in order to allow for implementation in often fast moving policy and political contexts.

8. Building and sustaining partnerships requires a conscious and sequenced strategy. To ensure access to all areas of engagement for Gender-Responsive Budgeting, UNIFEM should map the range of government, civil society and donor partnerships that the programme requires and then proceed systematically to develop those partnerships assessing the most strategic relationships and sequencing their development according to opportunities and resources.



9. Approaches to staffing the GRB Programme should be reviewed. High staff turnover meant that programmes often suffered delays in adapting strategies and maximising their effectiveness. Staff changes and vacant posts weaken an already stretched organization of programme administration and in some cases hindered decision-making as there was often short institutional memory both amongst staff and in supporting documentation. UNIFEM should review how such programmes are staffed and supported to reduce staff turnover and to ensure systems are in place to retain the programme memory and to ensure that a decision trail is in place minimizing disruption to the programme.

Sustainability

10. Capacity-building is a route to sustainability and partners need to see a medium-term commitment from UNIFEM. UNIFEM should ensure that partners are aware of a coherent, medium-term approach to capacity-building and that monitoring data provides evidence of the effectiveness of different capacity-building approaches. One approach is to aim for institutionalization of provision of GRB capacity-building. Another, shorter term approach is to ensure that capacity-building efforts include follow up with beneficiaries to assess the effectiveness and utilization of skills and to provide further support where required. UNIFEM could consider adopting a quality assurance role for GRB capacity-building both in terms of resources/materials development and courses. This could draw in regional or international resources, to provide technical inputs to training implemented by other actors, encouraging coordination and systematic prioritization of training and promoting realistic but effective approaches to monitoring and evaluation.

VI. MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE EVALUATION

UNIFEM Management regards the corporate evaluation as a useful effort in assessing UNIFEM's work on Gender-Responsive Budgeting. The evaluation provides analysis and demonstrates the ways in which various country programmes have mainstreamed gender in national planning and budgeting processes, what types of partnerships they forged, what capacities they developed and what type of policy change they generated. It also identifies a number of gaps in the context of implementation, monitoring and evaluation of GRB programmes. Although, UNIFEM's management generally agreed with the majority of evaluation findings and recommendations, it also noted a number of limitations in the evaluation related to the coverage of UNIFEM's work, technical GRB expertise, and understanding of countries' policy contexts.

UNIFEM Management points out that to ensure the implementation of recommendations UNIFEM will undertake actions at the levels of policy (Senior Management), technical guidance (GRB Programme in HQ), implementation (respective country offices, regional offices, geographic sections and programme management units) and programme operations (programme management and operation teams). The management response includes 24 actions to address the key recommendations of evaluation. They range from the improvements in an overall strategic guidance on GRB in the organization to specific actions in programme planning, design and monitoring as well as management. This summary highlights only the most important actions.

First, UNIFEM Management will ensure the development of practical guidance on GRB programming, which articulates clearly a theory of change and is based on refined gender analysis. The guidance will facilitate planning, programming and budgeting that responds to women's rights and gender gaps at sector and local levels.

Second, it will continue to strengthen the links between GRB work and the implications of changes in economic contexts, aid and public sector reform and the broader debates on financing for gender equality.

Third, UNIFEM commits to produce a range of programming tools, including GRB capacity development strategy, monitoring and evaluations framework, and context analysis templates.

Fourth, the lessons learned from evaluation will be extracted and disseminated especially within the context of implementation of the third phase of the cross-regional Gender-Responsive Budgeting Programme.

Fifth, UNIFEM will strengthen its Gender-Responsive Budgeting knowledge management system to facilitate mining of lessons learned and triangular knowledge sharing.

Finally, UNIFEM will ensure adequate human and financial resources to facilitate a successful implementation of its GRB programmes.

The full report and management response to the evaluation are available on the UNIFEM website, www.unifem.org. UNIFEM's Evaluation Unit is interested in your feedback on the use of the evaluation results in supporting improvements to ensure gender-responsive budgeting at the country level in order to address the national priorities of women. Please send your feedback to unifem.eval@unifem.org

