

## Promotion of Good Governance through Gender Budgeting Bottom-up — Ukrainian experience

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*“Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance”.*

*Kofi Annan, the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations*

Gender equality is the bedrock for good governance. Formation and implementation of policies on all levels are less effective, if gender aspect is omitted. And this, in turn, hampers the development in political, social and, especially important in the crisis times, economic spheres. This is a widely accepted axiom nowadays.

Still, when talking about achieving gender equality, let's not talk in general terms. Usually, when it comes to practical steps, they become limited to recommendations on the need to promote gender policy, adoption of appropriate legal frameworks, rising awareness etc. All those lay the foundation and create necessary preconditions, but equality will always remain declarative, if not supported in financial terms. Only if you pay your money, you take your choice.

Thus, fair distribution and equal access to resources will always be crucial for ensuring gender equality. In Ukraine, we do not mean essential commodities, but services and opportunities provided due to the formulation and realization of programs and budgets.

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2012 issued by the World Economic Forum Ukraine ranks 64<sup>th</sup> out of 135 countries under the Global Gender

Gap Index<sup>1</sup>. “Gender gaps are pervasive in all walks of economic life and imply large losses in terms of foregone productivity and living standards to the individuals concerned and the economy... Gender equality is indeed an imperative, not an option. Closing the gender gap not only makes sense in economic terms, but it also should be a critical ingredient of any strategy for more inclusive growth.”<sup>2</sup>

If gender wage gap and political empowerment of women are obvious issues and have been widely discussed on the state level with no tangible results, there exist many other hidden discriminatory practices that influence everyday life of average Ukrainians. And here, gender budgeting as a tool for disclosing disparities in spreading taxpayers' money and restructuring of available resources for more efficient use that would comprehensively reflect interests and needs of different groups comes in hand. “If properly and systematic implemented including participatory elements, gender budgeting can enhance the quality of democracy.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2012>

<sup>2</sup> Remarks by Angel Gurría, Secretary-General, OECD Paris, 17 December 2012

<sup>3</sup> Gender Budgeting and Democratic Governance: Experience from Africa and Europe. – The VENRO project from the Africa-EU Partnership, 2010



A wider explanation can be found in the Handbook "Gender budgeting: practical implementation" by Sheila Quinn, who writes that gender budgeting involves opening up the process of budget-making to a wider group of stakeholders; it calls for a reprioritization of equality issues; it necessitates the matching of policy commitments with resource allocation; it insists on the acknowledgement of the care economy and a transformation in the way in which national budgets are formulated and implemented.

She also states: "Gender budgeting is an ambitious project. It requires a major shift in thinking and in practice." Thus, doing gender budgeting on the state level requires strong political will and understanding, which given the Ukrainian realities, made us concentrate on the local level. Budgetary process leaves municipalities a certain degree of independence in allocation of their funds, which has opened a window for approving this approach with the focus on elaboration of very concrete and applicable gender budget initiatives rather than general statement on budgets and programs being gender-blind.

"Gender responsive budget initiatives are a gender mainstreaming strategy that directs attention to economic policy by focusing on...budgets. These exercises have taken on, and been influenced by, the discourse of good governance that has characterized the public sectors reforms of the past decade...This form of performance oriented budgeting is deemed as promoting attributes of good governance such as transparent and accountable ways of making decisions and exercising power in relation to policies and budgets."<sup>4</sup>

Let's have a closer look at the overall conditions for gender budgeting implementation in Ukraine. As a result of the undertaken international obligations to ensure gender equality the Law "On Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men" has been adopted becoming a cornerstone for gender policy. Recently, the country has joined the Open Government Partnership Initiative, which "facilitates the governments and civil society to move in the direction of transparency that helps broaden the rights and possibilities of citizens, fight corruption, use new technologies to improve the work of the government making governments more

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4 Sharp, Rhonda; Budgeting for equity: Gender budget initiatives within a framework of performance oriented budgeting

transparent, efficient, and accountable before the citizens."<sup>5</sup>

Currently Ukraine has been undergoing major reformation in many sectors, including the administrative reform. Some of the objectives are restructuring of powers in favor of local communities and decentralization of the budgetary processes. Such initiatives are a significant contribution to the promotion of good governance on both national and local levels.

Consideration of gender factor is one of the key aspects of the effectiveness of such reforms. In his speech Volodymyr Lytvyn, the former Speaker of the Verchovna Rada of Ukraine, stated that there is the need for gender analysis of the state budget of Ukraine, which would detect and eliminate those factors, which polarize gender differences and lead to gender imbalance and discrimination.<sup>6</sup>

However, there is no actual demand from the stakeholders in this matter, as gender is generally connected to any other sphere but finances. "At first glance, the federal budget appears to be a gender-neutral policy instrument. However, government spending and tax cuts impact men and women differently because, in general, they occupy different social and economic positions," says Isabella Bakker, a professor of Political Science, York University, Canada.<sup>7</sup>

Still, as there are no standardized tools for the implementation of gender budgeting due to the extremely different national and local conditions governing budgetary and resource-related decisions, actors participating in the project in 2011 and 2012 had to look for their own approaches to translate gender budgeting into Ukrainian context. That is why the specific domestic base lines for gender budget initiatives required a customized adaptation and harmonization of tools to the relevant needs. Thus, Ukraine needed to gain its own experience – learning by doing. Hence, dealing with the state budget at the stage of gender budgeting methodology introduction, when its advocates are required to provide clear understandable practical examples of its value, is less promising than local budgets and programs,

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5 From the interview with Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, UNDP's Director of Democratic Governance <http://www.day.kiev.ua/en/article/topic-day/success-state-depends-participation-its-citizens-decision-making-process>

<sup>6</sup> Volodymyr Lytvyn «8th of March – about the Holiday and more», «Golos of Ukraine» № 43 (5293) of March 6, 2012

<sup>7</sup> <http://news.yorku.ca/2005/09/23/take-sex-out-of-government-spending-york-prof-says/>



where the elaborated gender budget analyses recommendations can be applied immediately and bring results in the med-term perspective already. "...the complex economic contexts and processes involved in the distribution of resources and their interplay with gender equality between women and men must be analyzed. This alone is a specialized challenge, which can only be dealt with step-by-step in individual subject areas."<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, Ukrainian civil society organizations promoting gender equality on the ground are quite experienced in gender equality promotion. The institution of mayor's advisers on gender issues acting pro bono publico is another factor, which determined the bottom-up strategy of gender budgeting promotion in the framework of the project "Gender budgeting on the local level" implemented by FES Ukraine in 2011-2012. The Resolution of the European Parliament on gender budgeting indicates the need of "developing a bottom-up budgetary process and promoting the involvement and participation of all citizens - men and women – [...] with the aim of identifying different specific needs and appropriate policies and measures to respond to them".

"As a rule, the work of civil society initiatives is crucial for the success of gender budgeting. They use public relations and lobbying to get gender budgeting onto the political agenda. By participating in or political support for administrative activities concerning Gender Budgeting, they are in a position to see whether these are simply paying lip service or are genuine efforts on behalf of ensuring gender equality in the distribution of resources."<sup>9</sup> However, in Ukraine, not only they have become the initiators of the first attempts on the gender budgeting introduction, but, in most cases, main executors of gender budget analyses of local budgets and programs, after having gained support of local administrations and profile experts in the chosen areas.

Of course, the role of administrations and profile departments shall not be underestimated. "As a public budget is the expression of political prioritization on the part of the people responsible who have been elected to lead the respective

political unit, an orientation to gender equality will only be expressed in budget building if it is being pursued as an important goal... Top down is also essential for the practical implementation of the necessary analyses and assessments. These can only success if the management in the competent organizational fields takes this task seriously and allocates the time and money required."<sup>10</sup>

Thus, joint efforts of the representatives of NGOs and local administrations, gender experts, staff of financial departments and statistic services, local deputies and profile specialists allowed to gain Ukrainian experience of elaboration and implementation of gender budget initiatives in the spheres of education, healthcare and sports. "Gender sensitive participation of citizens in building and assessing public budgets is an important element of Gender Budgeting. By means of gender sensible participation processes, the interests and needs of all those affected by the budget can be taken into account without gender-specific distortions in the decision-making process."<sup>11</sup>

In 2011-2012, seven cities - Zhytomyr, Komsomolsk, Lutsk, Khmelnytsky, Kherson, Chernivtsi and Chuguev – dedicated a lot of their time and effort to the approbation of gender budgeting methodology in Ukrainian conditions. Each city has independently chosen the scope for developing gender budget initiatives according to their interests and needs, and set up a working group. Each group prepared a detailed gender analysis of certain articles of local budgets and programs in the selected areas and developed gender budget initiatives designed to improve the delivery of services in the field considered, as well as to optimize expenditures and advance participation, which is a valuable contribution to the promotion of gender equality and good governance. Moreover, such efforts have been supported by the UN Women in Ukraine on the next stage of the initiatives lobbying and implementation in 2013.

Experts in Lutsk concentrated on iodine deficit issue, as it is the region with high risk of goiter pandemia, while none of the programs include any preventive measures or information campaigns

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.genderkompetenz.info/eng/gender-competence-2003-2010/Gender%20Mainstreaming/Strategy/genderbudgeting/into\\_practice](http://www.genderkompetenz.info/eng/gender-competence-2003-2010/Gender%20Mainstreaming/Strategy/genderbudgeting/into_practice)

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.genderkompetenz.info/eng/gender-competence-2003-2010/Gender%20Mainstreaming/Strategy/genderbudgeting/into\\_practice](http://www.genderkompetenz.info/eng/gender-competence-2003-2010/Gender%20Mainstreaming/Strategy/genderbudgeting/into_practice)

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.genderkompetenz.info/eng/gender-competence-2003-2010/Gender%20Mainstreaming/Strategy/genderbudgeting/into\\_practice](http://www.genderkompetenz.info/eng/gender-competence-2003-2010/Gender%20Mainstreaming/Strategy/genderbudgeting/into_practice)

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.genderkompetenz.info/eng/gender-competence-2003-2010/Gender%20Mainstreaming/Strategy/genderbudgeting/into\\_practice](http://www.genderkompetenz.info/eng/gender-competence-2003-2010/Gender%20Mainstreaming/Strategy/genderbudgeting/into_practice)



among the population. In the course of analysis pregnant women were defined as the most vulnerable group due to the fact that a mother's iodine deficit alone may result in serious deceases and degraded intellect of a child. A series of measures, including campaigns on rising population's awareness, have been offered and supported by local decision-makers. One of the reasons was a low cost (less than 6,000 euro) of changes. Still, it is the first and the hardest step to make on the way to more comprehensive solutions of the issue.

Two other cities have chosen medical sphere for analyses. Komsomolsk studied gender aspect of family doctors' work, while Zhytomyr working group have taken the regional program "Reproductive health of the nation by 2015" for consideration. The latter found out the imbalance of expenditures in favor of women, while the issue of maintaining male reproductive health has not been addressed in the program. State financial aid is provided only in case of female infertility and that is when according to the Ministry of Healthcare of Ukraine the proportion of male infertility has almost reached the rate of female one.

Chuguev and Zhytomyr working groups have been elaborating initiatives in the sphere of education. The first found out that expenditures on Schools of Esthetic Education are divided 69% (female) to 31% (male), as the services available do not meet boys' interests and demands. While the second discovered that in the system of after-school education the interests of girls (especially in the age group 14-18) are not sufficiently represented.

Another analysis of Khmelnytsky region working group discovered that activities planned within the program "Sports-for-all" exclude women from participation. Not only were the elaborated recommendations taken into account by the local authorities, but by a local private entrepreneur sponsoring the construction of a new sport complex in the city of Gorodok.<sup>12</sup>

These examples demonstrate that gender equality is not a "women's issue", but a vital economic and social matter. Introduction of gender mainstreaming into the design of programs and budgets does not only ensure equal rights and opportunities for men and women in practice, but also improve the quality of provided services, which is especially important given that local budgets are

directly related to the interests and needs of local communities and every citizen (man/woman) is directly related here as a taxpayer and consumer of services financed from the budget. Moreover, such work proved that gender budgeting is not strictly formalized system, but a flexible set of various tools, mechanisms, processes and institutions united by one goal - to make the principle of gender equality one of the key ones in the national policies.

This experience not only allowed Ukraine to appropriate new methods for introduction of gender principles into public life, but to practice good governance. The key actors have got a chance to evaluate the usefulness of gender budgeting as an effective tool for solution of community issues and committed to further implementation of the designed initiatives adding to the enhancing of municipal budgets sensitivity to local communities' needs, advancing participation and supporting establishment of gender equality.

<sup>12</sup> For more information, please, see: [library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/ukraine/09511.pdf](http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/ukraine/09511.pdf)



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