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Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Public Finance: Evaluating Economic Outcomes and Policy Effectiveness

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Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) has emerged as a critical approach in public finance aimed at addressing gender inequalities by integrating gender perspectives into the allocation of public resources. This paper employs a qualitative methodology, specifically a literature review and library research, to evaluate the economic outcomes and policy effectiveness of GRB across various countries. The study synthesizes existing literature to understand how GRB initiatives have impacted fiscal policies and gender equity. Through an examination of global case studies, the research highlights the successes and challenges of implementing GRB, noting that while some countries have made significant progress in closing gender gaps, others face structural barriers that limit the effectiveness of GRB policies. The findings reveal that successful GRB requires not only political will and institutional support but also a deep integration of gender analysis into budget planning processes. Furthermore, the research identifies key factors contributing to policy effectiveness, such as transparency, stakeholder engagement, and continuous monitoring and evaluation. Despite its potential, the study concludes that GRB is still underutilized in many parts of the world, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, where resources and capacities for gender-based analysis in public finance are often limited. The paper underscores the need for stronger international collaboration and capacity-building efforts to ensure that GRB fulfills its promise of promoting both gender equity and economic development. practices, benefiting both the elderly and their caregivers. These insights contribute to the broader discourse on how societies can adapt to the growing demands of an aging population.

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1. Introduction

Gender inequality remains a persistent challenge across the globe, affecting both developed and developing countries. Public finance, as a key tool for policy implementation, holds significant potential to address this issue by ensuring that budget allocations and fiscal policies promote gender equity. Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) has emerged as an innovative approach to integrate gender perspectives into the budgeting process, aiming to close the gender gaps in economic and social outcomes. Despite the growing recognition of GRB's importance, the actual implementation and effectiveness of such policies vary widely across different contexts.

Previous studies have explored GRB's role in promoting gender equality, focusing on its application in different countries and sectors. However, there is a research gap in evaluating the comprehensive economic outcomes and overall policy effectiveness of GRB across multiple contexts, particularly in terms of its long-term impacts on public finance and gender equity. Many studies focus on either the technical aspects of GRB implementation or its short-term results, but few offer a holistic assessment of its broader economic effects.

In recent years, several studies have explored gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) and its impact on public finance, gender equity, and economic outcomes. Budlender (2019) analyzed the implementation of GRB in South Africa and found that while GRB initiatives successfully improved gender-sensitive allocations in sectors like education and health, a lack of institutional monitoring reduced its long-term impact. Similarly, Elson and Sharp (2020) examined GRB practices in Australia, revealing that while these initiatives improved transparency in budget processes, the economic outcomes for women remained minimal due to insufficient integration of gender-disaggregated data into policy formulation. Stotsky and Zaman (2021) focused on low-income countries, identifying that GRB could enhance public resource allocation efficiency, but its effectiveness was hindered by weak governance and insufficient capacity for gender-based fiscal analysis. Quinn and O'Hagan (2022) assessed GRB in European Union member states, noting that political will and budget transparency were critical to successful GRB implementation, but they also highlighted significant disparities in GRB outcomes between countries with varying levels of institutional capacity. Lastly, Chakraborty (2023) evaluated GRB in India, finding that while there were notable gains in gender-sensitive budget

allocations, systemic issues like patriarchal norms and bureaucratic inefficiencies limited GRB's potential to foster long-term economic development.

Despite these valuable contributions, a clear research gap remains. Previous studies have largely focused on short-term GRB outcomes in specific regions, without a comprehensive evaluation of long-term economic impacts or a cross-regional comparison of policy effectiveness. Furthermore, institutional factors that sustain GRB success over time are underexplored. The novelty of my research lies in addressing these gaps by offering a comparative, global assessment of GRB's economic outcomes and policy effectiveness, with a particular focus on the institutional frameworks needed to sustain GRB success. This research aims to provide a holistic understanding of how GRB can contribute to both gender equity and economic development in diverse socio-economic contexts.

This research is urgent given the increasing international focus on achieving gender equality as part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Effective GRB can support economic development while promoting social justice, making it a crucial tool for governments worldwide. Yet, its underutilization and inconsistent application highlight the need for deeper analysis and stronger policy frameworks.

This study aims to fill the research gap by evaluating both the economic outcomes and the policy effectiveness of GRB through a qualitative review of existing literature and global case studies. The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive approach, integrating multiple dimensions of GRB evaluation. The study's findings are expected to provide insights for policymakers and contribute to more effective GRB implementation, ultimately benefiting gender equity and economic development efforts.

The purpose of this research is to critically assess how GRB influences economic outcomes and policy effectiveness across different regions, offering recommendations to enhance its future application. The expected benefit is the development of a more robust understanding of GRB's role in public finance, which can guide policymakers in crafting more gender-inclusive fiscal policies.

2. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the economic outcomes and policy effectiveness of Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in public finance. Qualitative research is chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of GRB's impacts, allowing for a detailed exploration of various cases and contexts. This method is suitable for examining complex policy processes and outcomes, which often require a nuanced and interpretive analysis.

The research follows a library research and literature review design, gathering data from secondary sources such as peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, international organization publications, and case studies related to GRB. The selection of literature spans the last ten years to ensure the inclusion of both contemporary and relevant findings. The sources of data include academic databases (e.g., JSTOR, Google Scholar), policy documents from governmental and non-governmental organizations, and reports from international bodies such as the United Nations and the World Bank.

The data collection technique involves systematically reviewing and analyzing existing literature on GRB, focusing on studies that evaluate its economic outcomes, policy effectiveness, and implementation across various countries and regions. Key search terms include "gender-responsive budgeting," "public finance," "gender equity," and "economic outcomes." Literature that directly examines the variables of interest, such as fiscal policies, gender equality, and public resource allocation, will be prioritized.

For the data analysis method, this study applies content analysis to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights related to GRB's impacts on economic outcomes and policy effectiveness. The analysis involves synthesizing data from multiple sources, comparing findings across different contexts, and evaluating how GRB has been implemented and its outcomes. Themes such as institutional support, transparency, and long-term sustainability of GRB will be emphasized in the analysis. The results will provide a comprehensive understanding of GRB's potential and limitations in achieving gender equity through public finance.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Increased Budget Transparency and Accountability

Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) has been shown to improve transparency in public finance. By integrating gender considerations into the budgeting process, GRB holds governments accountable for the equitable distribution of resources. Countries that have institutionalized GRB, such as Sweden and Finland, demonstrate that public funds are more effectively allocated to gender-focused sectors like healthcare and education. This transparency is key in ensuring that gender equality objectives are met and monitored within national budgets.

Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) plays a crucial role in enhancing transparency and accountability in the allocation and management of public finances. The core principle of GRB is to ensure that public budgets reflect the different needs and priorities of men and women, making it an essential tool for addressing gender disparities in public spending. By integrating gender considerations into every stage of the budget cycle—planning, allocation, execution, and evaluation—GRB promotes a more transparent process where budget decisions are explicitly linked to gender equality objectives.

Transparency is improved because GRB requires governments to identify and disclose how public resources are distributed across different groups, particularly with regard to gender. This makes it clear whether certain policies or programs disproportionately benefit or disadvantage one gender over another. For instance, sectors like healthcare, education, and social services often have different impacts on men and women due to varying roles, responsibilities, and access to resources. GRB mandates that these differences be accounted for, ensuring that funding decisions promote more equitable outcomes.

Furthermore, GRB enhances accountability by requiring governments to track and report on the gendered impacts of their spending. This process involves using gender-disaggregated data to evaluate how budget allocations affect men and women differently, thus holding policymakers accountable for any disparities. Countries like Sweden and Finland have successfully institutionalized GRB, which has led to more gender-sensitive public investments. In these cases, public scrutiny of budgets has increased, as civil society organizations and other stakeholders have more information and tools to monitor government spending and advocate for fairer resource distribution.

By making budget processes more transparent and holding policymakers accountable for their spending decisions, GRB strengthens democratic governance and ensures that gender equality is a key consideration in public finance. This not only improves public trust in government institutions but also leads to more equitable social and economic outcomes for all genders.

3.2. Variations in GRB Implementation Across Regions

The success of GRB largely depends on the strength of a country's institutional framework and political will. In high-income countries with robust governance structures, such as members of the European Union, GRB has led to tangible improvements in gender equality outcomes, including increased female labor force participation and targeted welfare spending. However, in low- and middle-income countries, particularly in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, GRB implementation faces significant challenges, including insufficient gender-disaggregated data, weak fiscal capacity, and limited expertise in gender-based analysis.

The implementation of Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) varies significantly across different regions, primarily due to differences in institutional capacity, political will, economic contexts, and governance structures. These variations highlight how the effectiveness of GRB is influenced by local conditions, leading to diverse outcomes in terms of gender equity and economic development.

In high-income countries, such as those in the European Union, GRB tends to be more systematically integrated into national budgeting processes. Countries like Sweden, Finland, and Austria have demonstrated success in embedding gender analysis into public finance frameworks, supported by strong institutional structures, advanced public finance management systems, and a commitment to gender equality at the highest levels of government. These countries often have robust gender-disaggregated data, which allows for more precise targeting of resources to meet the specific needs of men and women. For example, Sweden's GRB initiatives have resulted in better funding for social services and programs that support women's employment and welfare. The political commitment to gender equality in these countries is a key driver of successful GRB outcomes, leading to improvements in both social and economic indicators related to gender equity.

In contrast, low- and middle-income countries, particularly in regions like Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, face significant challenges in implementing GRB effectively. These challenges include weak institutional frameworks, a lack of technical capacity, and limited availability of gender-disaggregated data. In these regions, GRB is often introduced as part of donor-supported initiatives, but without the necessary local capacity and governance reforms, its implementation is fragmented and short-lived. For example, while countries like Rwanda and Uganda have made strides in adopting GRB frameworks, they struggle with sustaining these efforts due to resource constraints and limited political commitment. In these contexts, GRB often focuses on immediate needs, such as improving access to healthcare and education for women, but fails to address deeper structural gender inequalities.

Additionally, political will plays a significant role in the variation of GRB implementation. In regions where gender equality is not a political priority or where patriarchal norms dominate, GRB may be resisted or sidelined, limiting its scope and effectiveness. This is particularly evident in parts of South Asia, where cultural and institutional barriers hinder the full integration of GRB into public finance systems. Even where there are efforts to introduce gender-sensitive budgeting, such initiatives often lack sufficient support and face significant bureaucratic resistance.

Moreover, the success of GRB is closely linked to the availability of gender-disaggregated data and the capacity to conduct gender-based fiscal analysis. In regions with advanced data systems, such as many European countries, governments can more easily track the impact of budget allocations on different genders and adjust policies accordingly. In contrast, regions with poor data infrastructure struggle to implement GRB effectively, as they lack the necessary information to make informed budgetary decisions that address gender disparities.

3.3. Short-Term versus Long-Term Effectiveness

In many developing countries, GRB has been applied to address immediate needs, such as increasing women's access to healthcare and education. However, the findings show that these short-term improvements are often not sustained due to a lack of long-term planning and monitoring. Without comprehensive gender analysis integrated into broader fiscal and macroeconomic frameworks, GRB is unlikely to address structural gender inequalities over time, thus limiting its long-term effectiveness.

3.4. Stakeholder Engagement and Participatory Governance

The involvement of civil society organizations and local communities in the GRB process has proven to be a critical factor in its success. Countries such as Rwanda, which engage women's groups and other stakeholders in the budgeting process, show more significant advancements in gender equity outcomes. This participatory approach ensures that the needs of marginalized groups are directly addressed and incorporated into national budgetary decisions, making GRB more responsive and inclusive.

3.5. Institutional Barriers and Capacity Constraints

Many governments still struggle with the institutionalization of GRB due to various barriers, such as inadequate financial and human resources, resistance from traditional power structures, and the lack of gender-disaggregated fiscal data. The findings suggest that these limitations prevent the full potential of GRB from being realized. For GRB to be more effective, it must be embedded in broader fiscal policy frameworks, with a clear mandate and capacity-building efforts directed at public officials and policymakers.

3.6. Need for Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation

Continuous monitoring and evaluation are critical to ensuring that GRB leads to substantive changes in gender equity and economic development. Countries that have integrated gender-sensitive monitoring tools into their public finance systems, such as those in the European Union, demonstrate better results in tracking the impact of GRB initiatives. Conversely, in countries where monitoring is weak or inconsistent, GRB efforts tend to stagnate, highlighting the need for stronger institutional frameworks to support ongoing evaluation efforts.

4. Conclusion

Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) is a powerful tool for promoting gender equity in public finance by ensuring that budgetary decisions account for the different needs of men and women. The analysis highlights that GRB has significantly improved transparency and accountability in budget processes, particularly in high-income countries with strong governance structures, such as Sweden and Finland. These countries demonstrate that political will, institutional capacity, and access to gender-

disaggregated data are critical for the success of GRB in achieving gender-equitable outcomes and fostering economic development.

However, the findings also reveal significant challenges in low- and middle-income countries, where weak institutional frameworks, insufficient resources, and limited political commitment often undermine the effectiveness of GRB. In these regions, GRB is frequently focused on short-term improvements, but without sustained support and integration into broader fiscal policies, its long-term impact remains limited. The importance of stakeholder engagement, particularly involving civil society and women's groups, is emphasized as a key factor in enhancing the responsiveness and inclusiveness of GRB policies.

Ultimately, the success of GRB is highly dependent on a combination of strong institutional support, continuous monitoring, and a commitment to gender equality at the highest political levels. To realize its full potential, GRB must be embedded into national budgeting processes, with sufficient capacity-building and governance reforms to ensure that gender equality objectives are consistently pursued. Moving forward, GRB should be recognized not just as a technical tool, but as a transformative policy approach essential for achieving inclusive and sustainable development.

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