

Executive Summary



Background

Gender budgets have slowly gained currency as a tool of governments to breathe life into the relatively uncharted territory of gender mainstreaming, and to bring gender equality to poor female and male constituents of local governments, in growing numbers.

Drawing inspiration from Australia's gender budget, the Philippines has taken the route of a 5% quota of local and national government budgets, called the gender and development (GAD) budget, allocated for programs and projects that not only seek to benefit women but also directly target the transformation of gender and social relations.

In the past decade since the GAD budget's introduction, results have been uneven. On the one hand, it has become a rallying point for organized women who have addressed the challenge of gender and governance, gaining allies and champions within the bureaucracy and local governments, and winning allocations for worthwhile initiatives such as women's centers, livelihood projects and gender-consciousness raising activities. Thus, it has become a "useful negotiation tool for gender advocates in lobbying for much needed programs and services".¹

On the other hand, the GAD budget has languished as one of the many "unfunded mandates" of government, subjected to pro-forma "reporting for compliance" or "reporting by attribution",² and subverted as catch-all fund for such dubiously gender-related undertakings as ballroom dancing, aerobics, shuttle service and purchase of national costumes for female office staff.³

A UNIFEM-funded assessment of the GAD budget policy undertaken by the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW)⁴ reveals low policy compliance among national government agencies, and an even poorer record among local government units (LGUs) and other government entities.⁵ NCRFW GAD budget monitoring reports as well as other research studies (Monsod, 1998) reveal the 5% GAD budget to be a promise largely unredeemed, running aground on the shoals of lack of information, confusion on the precise coverage of the 5%, bureaucratic malaise, weak women's organizing, political partisanship and marginalization from mainstream budgeting, among others. In short, the GAD budget had become a mantra with limited substance.

Among the policy appraisal report's major findings were: the dichotomy between agency and gender budgets, disjunction between GAD and performance-based indicators, unfunded mandates from the national government, and inadequate participation of civil society organizations in mainstream and gender budgeting.

Thus, UNIFEM's choice of the Philippines as one of four countries covered by its local-level Gender Budget Initiative (GBI) project is timely.⁶ Moreover, the Philippines meets the criteria

set by UNIFEM for potential project sites such as: presence of strong civil society leadership committed to gender and poverty alleviation, pertaining to WAND; an open institutional environment that allows women NGOs to engage government in the budgetary process; and the availability of sufficient and accessible information.

The process of working directly with budget players is fostered by both the 1991 Local Government Code (LGC) and the NCRFW, which have sought the establishment of local development councils (LDCs) and gender and development councils (GADCs), respectively.

Rationale

The stalled Philippine GAD budget initiative compels a fresh approach to gender budgets in the country, building on the solid and diverse experiences of both government and civil society organizations (CSOs), particularly women's groups and networks, in making the GAD budget work. It addresses the need "to shift from the 5% to the 95%, towards a gender analysis of the budget, necessitating adoption of a framework where the whole plan is transformed into a gender-sensitive plan". (Umali, 2004)

The new approach, also known as Gender Responsive and Results Based Budgeting (GRRB), combines gender analysis of budgets and gender planning with a focus not only on inputs, but more so on outputs and outcomes. In a phrase, it marries gender and results:

A gender analysis is done on the plan [executive agenda or local development plan] and on existing mainstream policies. A results-oriented plan, policy and budget focus on outputs and outcomes, instead of inputs, i.e., it is performance-based. Gender concerns should be integrated in the definition of program outputs and performance indicators. (Monsod, 2004)

Interface

Two developments must be highlighted as helping to provide space for local level application of the GAD budget in the 1990s, and the impetus for this local level gender budget initiative, well into the millennium.

The 1991 passage of the LGC was a watershed in terms of decentralizing authority and devolving functions from national to local governments, thus providing opportunities for local level application of the 5% GAD budget policy. However, local government units (LGUs) complained that the devolution of basic services such as health, social welfare, agricultural extension and education came with minimal devolution of resources. The same complaint was aired with regard to national policies, including the GAD budget policy, evoking LGU resistance to the aforementioned unfunded mandates laid down by the national government.

On the other hand, an added imperative for gender budgeting may be found in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Jointly prepared by the Philippine government and the United Nations Country Team in the Philippines, the January 2003 MDG Report indicated a high probability of the country's meeting MDG targets, except for those on reducing poverty and hunger, and in improving women's reproductive health.

Apart from improving the sectoral programs on health and agriculture, meeting the MDG targets on maternal health and hunger would require two things: generating needed revenues and resources; and improving efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditures.

This project is essentially an advocacy-oriented project based on an analysis of budgets from a gender perspective. It seeks to advocate increased resources for basic gender priorities relating to hunger reduction (and agriculture) and maternal and women's health, by generating information that can feed into the planning and budgeting process of the LGUs. It also hopes to help transform local government budgeting processes to be gender-responsive and performance-oriented.

Thus, linking gender (responsiveness) and the demand for results ensured that all bases would be covered, from conceptualization and planning to implementation, monitoring, evaluation and resource mobilization, in meeting the country's MDG commitments to improve maternal health and reduce hunger through government health and agriculture programs, respectively.

Project objectives

The project sought to:

- Assess the gender impacts of local government policies, budgets and expenditures, as well as those of the devolved line agency programs on maternal health and agriculture;
- Identify entry points and strategies for strengthening results-oriented gender-responsive budgeting at the local level; and
- Develop indicators to measure gender-responsiveness of budgets of the two sectoral programs (health and agriculture).

In the main, the project targeted the increased allocation of local government resources to priority gender-responsive programs and services as a poverty reduction strategy.

Pilot areas and project implementers

The choice of Hilongos municipality in Leyte province, central Philippines and Sorsogon City in the Bicol region, south of Metro Manila as pilot areas was based on the aforementioned criteria: vibrant civil society organizations committed to gender, the possibility of local budgetary engagement by women NGOs, and accessible information.⁷

The task of translating the foregoing objectives into a concrete and coherent project in the two pilot areas was vested at the national level in the Women's Action Network for Development (WAND) as project implementer and a national project team composed of Florencia Casanova Dorotan as Project Manager, Evangeline Lopez as Project Technical Officer and Rosario Manasan as Project Consultant.⁸

WAND is a national women's network constituting some 100 affiliated groups with advocacy and action thrusts in gender and general concerns such as women's health and reproductive rights, micro-finance, combating gender-based violence, and governance, among others. Some WAND affiliates have also undertaken pioneering research and advocacy on gender planning and budgeting at both local and national levels. (Budlender, 2001)

In turn, WAND was guided by a project steering committee (PSC) composed of representatives from both government and civil society organizations (CSOs) including WAND and various national government agencies. The PSC met four times in the course of the project year, providing critical advice during the various stages of conceptualization, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Project Steering Committee members

Teresa Fernandez, WAND National Council
Jurgette Honculada, WAND National Council
Marie June Castro, WAND National Council
Lorenza Umali, NCRFW Deputy Director
Lorraine Sarmiento, *Sikapbuhay*, Quezon City
Jindra Linda Demeterio, Chief of Staff, DA Office of the Secretary
Ruby Alvarez, Director, DBM Legal and Legislative Services
Austere Panadero, Assistant Secretary, DILG
Ma. Teresa Diokno, Medical Officer V, DOH

Project site implementers are WAND affiliates: Western Leyte Foundation for Agro-Rural Entities, Inc. (WELFARE) and *Lingap Para sa Kalusugan ng Sambayan* (LIKAS or Care for the Health of the People). WELFARE, headed by its Executive Director, Laureen Dumaguing, is a social development NGO in Leyte province that has pioneered training, organizing and advocacy programs among marginalized farmers and fisherfolk, as well as gender programs among rural women. Assisting Dumaguing in the project was Alexander Abungan, WELFARE Program Officer.

LIKAS, headed by its Executive Director, Marian Ferreras, is a health NGO that has broken new ground in the Bicol region through community health development, environment development, gender and development, local governance; and training, consultancy and enterprise development programs. Myra Baliatan, LIKAS GAD Program Officer, assisted Ferreras. At the project sites, technical working groups (TWGs) and local PSC guided project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Activities and concomitant results

Over the ten month-long project period⁹ various activities were undertaken in both project sites with positive results that may be summarized thus:

First, ***orientation meetings and partnership building activities*** were held with LGUs, CSOs and women's groups; and a project implementation plan for both project sites was formulated. Thus, project partners developed a better understanding of the project which strengthened their commitment. Partnerships were forged between and among stakeholders; and project work plans were improved and streamlined.

Second, ***research on and analyses of local budgets and expenditures*** of the health and agriculture programs followed, including LGU-NGO dialogues on research findings. Thus, gender and budget appraisal reports were done on the Sorsogon health and Hilongos agriculture programs. Gender gaps in program implementation and allocation of resources were highlighted, and recommendations were made addressing the gaps and improving efficiency in resource allocations.

Third, ***capacity building for LGUs and introducing reforms in sectoral programs*** through LGU-NGO dialogues and in general, seminars, meetings and workshops, were conducted. The changes also sought to encompass LGU management systems. Specific activities included strategic assessment and planning workshops, gender sensitivity seminars, gender responsive and results oriented budgeting seminar workshops, and workshops on program planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and resource mobilization.

As a consequence, a set of complementary plans has been formulated to guide LGUs in reorienting sectoral programs towards concrete results and gender responsiveness. The plans include results oriented 2006 sectoral plans and budgets for health and agriculture with gender indicators; an organizational capacity development plan for the Sorsogon LGU focusing on social service delivery, administration, governance and environment development based on an analysis of its strengths and weaknesses and external threats and opportunities; a three-year municipal strategic plan for Hilongos with a "genderized" vision-mission-goals statement; and resource mobilization plans to address resource gaps, correct inefficiencies in resource utilization and harmonize existing mobilization efforts for complementation.

The stakeholders also gained an appreciation of a systems perspective in program delivery; and LGU and CSO core teams had enhanced skills in gender and results-based planning, including the identification of gender issues, appropriate actions and results indicators (albeit still evolving). Finally, two tools were introduced for gender-responsive planning: the GeRL tool, acronym for "Gender-responsive LGU *ka ba?*" or "Are you a gender-responsive LGU (local government unit)?" and the Local Government Poverty Indicators Monitoring System (LGPIMS).

Fourth, corollary **capacity building for CSOs** was undertaken through a seminar on People's Participation in Local Governance. Advocacy plans were formulated and Sorsogon NGOs, in particular, committed to active engagement in planning and budget review.

Fifth, there was **introduction of local budgeting reforms, application of lessons from the gender analyses and preparation of supporting policy documents**. Consequently, through an ordinance and related actions, the two health programs of Sorsogon City were integrated and the City Health Office was reorganized. The budget officer of Sorsogon City issued a budget circular that made gender-responsiveness a requirement. On the other hand, Hilongos resolutions adopted the executive-legislative agenda or ELA, the gender responsive results oriented agricultural plan, and a resource mobilization plan. Adjustments in the 2005 Hilongos plans and budgets included a supplemental gender budget.

Sixth, a **meeting with potential donors and a Partners' Complementation Forum** were held in Hilongos and Sorsogon, respectively, to help address resource gaps in sectoral plan implementation. Areas of complementation in health service delivery were identified among Sorsogon NGOs and projects were conceptualized for possible funding of the Hilongos agricultural plan.

Lastly, an **End-of-Project Conference** was held in early August 2005 to share lessons in adopting GRRB, followed by recommendations to scale up the initiative.

Difficulties encountered

Various difficulties hampered project implementation at each phase: to start with, the lack of sex-disaggregated data. In Sorsogon City, data at the village (*barangay*) level, which distinguished between men and women lost the sex differentiation when collated at the central office. The sparse raw data that remained sex-differentiated gave rise to intriguing questions and inferences. For instance, more women than men suffered from cardiovascular diseases in some Sorsogon City villages, yet men registered higher mortality rates from the same. Did this mean that women, inured to the daily reality of multiple burdens, had developed more effective coping mechanisms than men?

Another problem was the lack of transparency as manifested in the defensive attitude of some LGU officials who deliberately withheld data during the research stage.

A third difficulty was the lack of interest on the part of some local legislators in discussing gender issues during seminars and workshops. At the same time, some staff members of LGUs and CSOs lack basic gender awareness.

In several instances, strained relations between some GAD advocates and LGU officials marked the start of project implementation. Similarly, political issues were a cause of friction, if not disunity.

A problem specific to Hilongos was the relative weakness of community-based organizations.

Lessons learned

The ten-month project period has yielded a treasure trove of insights and lessons learned, several of which merit some emphasis.

The first is that the move from input-based budgeting and mechanical repetition of past budgets to linking plans and budgets with intended results requires a major shift in mindset. Corollary to this, awareness of “results” needs to evolve from “outputs” to “outcomes” and “impacts”. The process requires continuous mentoring and advocacy.

A third lesson is that it takes political savvy to get budgets approved and implemented in the country, in as much as budgeting is a process more political than technical. Thus, gender responsive budgeting must contend with the bias for high-profile and permanent infrastructure projects that ensure name recall during resource allocation.

Fourth, there is no belaboring the importance of sex-disaggregated data without which there can be no gender analysis, and consequently, gender planning. Quite a number, it seems, mistake seeming gender neutrality for gender fairness, unaware that it can, in fact, become gender bias and gender blindness.

Fifth, capability building for both LGUs and NGOs must be sustained so that gender budgeting is not just individual but organizational. This is essential to building an organizational culture that is gender responsive and participatory.

Lastly, GRRB demands transparency and accountability in local governance. Its participatory and inclusive character makes it a tool for curbing corruption and promoting good governance.

Gains and impact

Arguably, the project's singular gains are: a city health program whose two competing organizational structures are well on the way to integration with the hallmarks of gender responsiveness and results orientation for Sorsogon City; and, for Hilongos, a focusing on the fundamental problem of destructive quarrying and its intersecting socio-economic and gender ramifications.

The project has done as much as it could by way of readying the infrastructure, technical and human, for gender responsive and results based budgeting and planning: LGU and CSO personnel skilled in gender analysis and gender planning; a sensitized and committed leadership ready to take risks and essay untried paths; empowered constituencies willing to match vision with action; tools refined and adapted to local needs; deepening LGU-CSO

partnerships and expanding NGO networks; and resource pools for the critical tasks of training, organizing and advocacy, are some outstanding achievements.

Conclusion

This local GBI project, and any project for that matter that earnestly addresses gender, is akin to a ball of yarn that must be painstakingly and fully unraveled before the process of knitting or weaving can begin.

Put differently, even as GRRB is compelled by a grand vision, it must start with nuts and bolts, the nitty gritty of counting and budgeting, the wisdom of learning and unlearning; it must face up to shortfalls and deficits and welcome grace in unexpected places. Change must proceed from the inside out, the political meshing in with the technical in a slow but sure process that brooks no shortcuts. No principle is too cumbersome to be compromised, no detail too small to be ignored. Indeed, the devil is in the details and, at the risk of oversimplification, GRRB is all about details. The volumes of plans generated by ten months of workshops attest to this.

But grand plans must be matched by a steel will, dogged commitment, forbearing collegiality, humility to admit error and start afresh, and always, gender equity, if not equality, as a first and final measure.

Hilongos and Sorsogon stakeholders have taken baby steps in the past ten months. It is time to tackle bigger steps and bigger stakes. Hilongos and Sorsogon City have shown that they can talk the talk. But can they walk the talk and put their muscle and money where their mouth is?

WAND, UNIFEM and partner NGOs have wagered they can. But in the end, it is the Hilongos and Sorsogon teams and their constituencies that can make good on the wager, redeeming the promise of the GAD budget and proving GRRB's mettle for gender-fair governance.