

GENDER BUDGET INITIATIVES IN CEE/CIS REGION

Network of East–West Women (NNEW)

After the first women's budget was established in Australia, in the mid-1980s it has become an inspiration for several of the current initiatives all over the world. However it took a bit longer to implement the idea in Europe and especially in Central and Eastern Europe. The Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec),¹ to which Australia belongs among others, has had an explicit programme of support for gender budget initiatives since 1996. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has not had an explicit programme but has, nevertheless, provided support of various kinds under other programme headings.² In 2005 the Council of Europe published a Gender Budgeting Report,³ so the strategy of Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Budgeting itself are becoming more and more influential. Also in some countries in the CEE/CIS region Gender Budgeting has become quickly popular, especially in Kosovo and Georgia.

Kosovo⁴

Women's NGO Shoqata Afariste e Gruas SHE - ERA⁵ has prepared the first analysis in Kosovo of Gender Budget and the impact of fiscal policies on the poverty level of rural women in the municipality of Gjakova. Their study presents the findings of research in Gjakova, focusing on the possibility of applying a gender perspective to the budget allocations of the Gjakova mu-

nicipality. This research identified causes, problems and opportunities for introducing a gender balance in the allocation of resources, starting at the local level with a focus on the Department of Agriculture. The research revealed that the application of gender balanced policies in the agriculture development sector has five main constraints: the need to empower women farmers in the rural areas of Gjakova, a lack of ownership by women over the land they farm, municipal budget limitations and inadequate support from the local government towards rural agriculture development, the constant need to build the capacities of the Municipal Gender Office, the need to build the capacities of civil society for advocacy on gender balanced budgeting in municipal policies of all sectors.

Poland⁶

Network of East-West Women has raised the topic of Gender Budget in Poland. The Association coordinated "GdaŃsk Gender Budget Initiative", which main objectives were to point out to areas which demand improvement and present recommendation for action and advocacy. In the Report⁷ many issues having an immediate impact on the lives of the inhabitants were raised. Due to the complexity of the research NEWW applied an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis. Among the most important problems that the inhabitants of Gdansk have to face are: lack of programs for seniors (both women and men), unequal treatment of women and men on the labour market and poor professional activation of women, long term unemployment of women and men. This report was an invitation to further discussion on the problems vital to GdaŃsk and finding possible solutions. It was also a suggestion that analyses of that type can be a tool to fight discrimination. The project presented Gender Budgeting as an excellent instrument for the city, local authorities and local community to advocate and apply more transparency in spending meant for the benefit of the local community. ■

1 Fifty-three independent states working together in the common interests of their citizens for development, democracy and peace: www.thecommonwealth.org

2 Budlender D., "Review of gender budget initiatives", Community Agency for Social Enquiry, 2001, <http://www.internationalbudget.org/resources/library/GenderBudget.pdf>

3 "Gender budgeting: Final report of the Group of specialists on gender budgeting (EG-S-GB)", Directorate General of Human Rights, Strasbourg, 2005

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5 The Story Behind the Numbers: Women and Employment in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS: "Gender Budget analysis and the impact of fiscal policies on the poverty level of rural women in the municipality of Gjakova in Kosovo", Shoqata Afariste e Gruas/Women's Business Association, Gjakova, Kosovo, 2006

6 For further information, contact Zofia Lapniewska: zofia@neww.org.pl

7 Balandynowicz-Panfil K., Opacka U.: "GdaŃsk Gender Budget Initiative", Network of East-West Women, Gdansk, Poland 2005

in aid programmes as a "broadening" of the definition of ODA next to long-standing priorities in infrastructure which remain in place. New aid modalities piloted on a large scale in the follow-up of the Paris Declaration – which the EU is spearheading – de-link aid to allocation in particular areas. While these new aid modalities may provide some opportunities, the hypothesis that these might advance the MDGs is untested. Given that the EU is by far the largest contributor to ODA, the largest sponsor of the MDGs, and currently heavily involved in large-scale testing of the new aid modalities, it may be concluded that there is considerable risk that the investment in MDG sectors will remain minimal, and that ODA is not targeted towards their achievement. In addition, the direction of the trade negotiations seems to fail to assist developing country partners and where compensation or extra measures are due, these are taken from existing development finance and redirected from direct investment in MDG areas.

The achievement of MDG 8 by the EU can therefore be regarded as extremely weak and currently lacking conviction and political will to implement the pledges made for the realization of the MDGs. ■

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