

Status of Gender Responsive Budgeting in the Health Sector

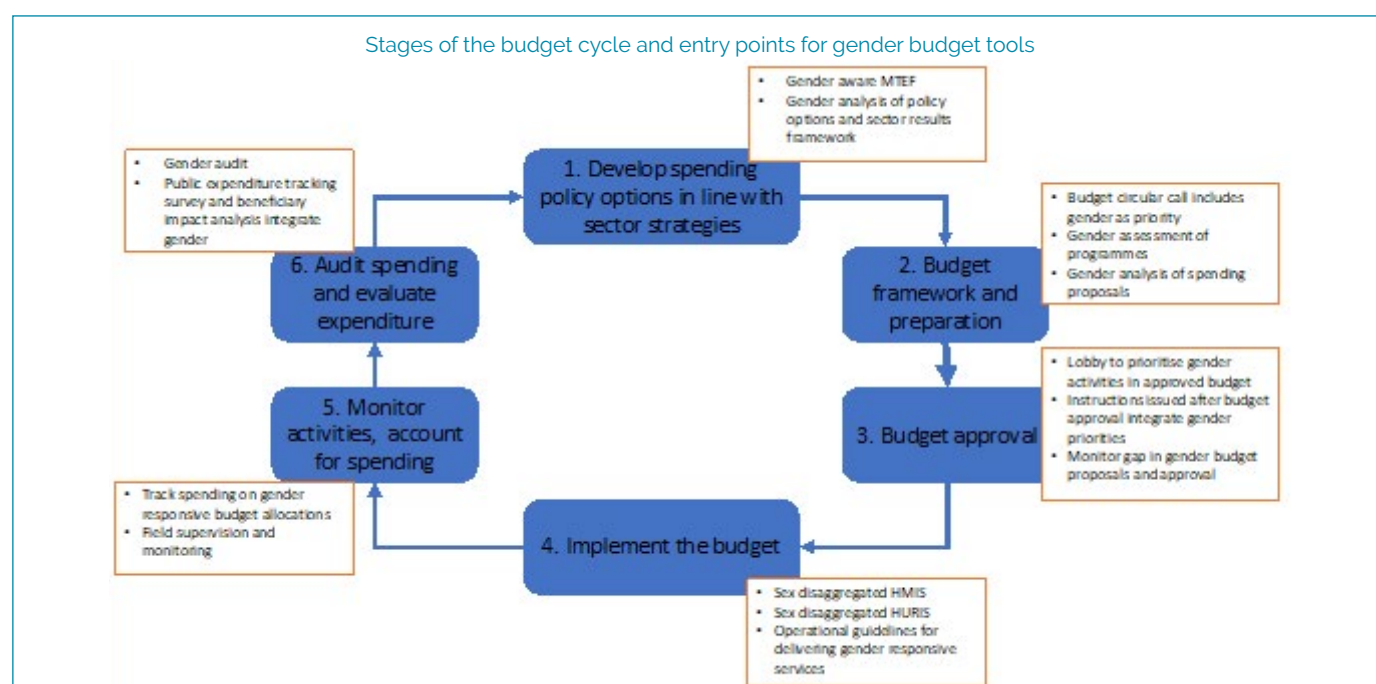
Background to Gender responsive budgeting (GRB):

GRB aims to mainstream gender in the macro-economic policy and budgetary system of a country to promote gender equality. It is not a budget for women but a budget that works for everyone by ensuring gender equitable distribution of resources and equal opportunities for all. GRB integrates a gender perspective into the budget cycle from the setting of policy objectives and budget formulation through to audit and evaluation of budget impact. GRB assesses the differential impact of the budget on women and men and girls and boys and the norms that underpin gender in a given context. By examining the needs of women, men, girls and boys, and how budgets respond to those different needs, gender budget tools identify deficits and contribute to the better allocation of resources for women's empowerment and gender inclusion. GRB involves transforming budgets to achieve gender equality. GRB evaluates the execution of budgets against results to measure gender equity and accountability and encourages women's participation and transparency at all stages of budgeting. The objectives and methodologies of GRB contribute to the broader goals of transparent, evidence based and accountable public expenditure management more generally. GRB involves the use of a wide range of tools and methods to mainstream a gender perspective in the budgeting process as shown below.

GRB in Nepal:

The Constitution of Nepal includes provisions for gender equality, social inclusion and women's empowerment. The National Policy and Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, 1997 has led gender equality actions in the country, and national periodic plans integrate gender into the national development framework. The Fifteenth Periodic Plan includes the goal of institutionalizing GRB down to local government levels in all sectors. The UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women which Nepal ratified in 1991, includes gender responsive budgeting as a strategy for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

Gender responsive budgeting was introduced in Nepal in 2007/2008. The Ministry of Finance Gender Responsive Budgeting Manual, 2012 provides a uniform framework for government sectors to integrate gender into the budget formulation stage of the budget cycle and to classify the level of gender responsiveness of their programmes and budgets. Likewise, the Ministry of Finance has integrated the principles of GRB into the Budget Management Information System and the Line Ministry Budget Information System.



GRB in the health sector:

The National Health Policy 2014 and National Health Sector Strategy 2015-2022 set out a path towards universal health coverage. The Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy of the Health Sector, 2022 (draft and waiting for Cabinet approval) provides a detailed framework for achieving the Government's gender objectives and priorities in the health sector and includes the institutionalization of gender responsive budgeting as an instrument to achieve gender equality and mainstream gender in the sector.

GRB progress in health:

In view of the importance of gender equality to achieve improved health in the country, the Federal Ministry of Health and Population (FMoHP) has developed and approved the health specific gender responsive budgeting guideline, 2019 to tailor GRB to the sector context and strengthen gender inclusion in the programming and budgeting cycle. The overall purpose of the guideline is to provide a guiding framework for undertaking gender responsive budgeting in the health sector to achieve the Government's gender equality and health objectives. The guideline provides tools and processes for integrating gender at each stage of the budget cycle in a phased approach tailored to the capacity and institutional context. The guideline maintains consistency with the overarching national classification of budgets for gender responsiveness as set out by the Ministry of Finance as directly gender responsive, indirectly gender responsive and gender neutral but has adjusted the indicators and scoring to better fit with the health sector context.

Based on the GRB guidelines, the FMoHP has developed a training package and the first round of training has been provided to health staff from five provincial health ministries at National Health Training Center. FMoHP plans to roll-out the training package and operationalization of the GRB guidelines to all provinces in a phase-wise manner through annual workplan and budgets, and provide orientation to divisions/sections of FMoHP, Provinces and Palikas. Nepal Health Sector Support Programme (UKaid/NHSSP) provided financial and technical support for the development of the Health Sector Gender Responsive Budgeting Guidelines.

Roadmap for GRB in the health sector:

Building on the achievements to date in introducing GRB formulation into the health sector and the enabling legal, policy and governance environment for GRB, the FMoHP has decided to take an incremental and phased approach to strengthening GRB given capacity constraints and weaknesses in the institutional environment. The phased approach recognises the necessity to establish and strengthen the mandatory requirements for GRB as a foundational step before introducing stronger evidence-based approaches, and the time and learning that it will take to align and embed GRB into federal structures.

- The first phase focuses on strengthening the building blocks for GRB, introducing simple gender assessment tools and testing GRB in a limited number of sites to learn how GRB can work within the federal structure. In Phase 1, the focus of GRB extends beyond budget preparation to include participatory budget monitoring and auditing.
- The second phase adapts, continues and rolls-out learning from phase 1 and extends the focus of GRB in the budget cycle to include more rigorous budget monitoring and evaluation methodologies and stronger gender analytical tools.

GRB will continue to include all health programmes which cover more than 40 budget heads. To date GRB activities have centred on the gender classification of budgets at the time of budget formulation which has been undertaken centrally by Policy, Planning and Monitoring Division (FMoHP/PPMD). While this activity will continue in order to maintain gender responsive budget tracking data, responsibility will be transferred to programme planners in each programme area. In time, provincial and local governments are expected to absorb this function under the localising strategy, and coordination across the three levels of government to standardise the process will be important. The focus of the new gender budget tools continues to be at the budget preparation stage with extension of a gender perspective into budget monitoring. This incremental approach is a pragmatic response to the limited capacity for GRB at present and the significant demands on the system resulting from federalisation.

