



Participants holding discussions at a workshop session. The photo was provided by PWDC who granted permission to include it in this volume



Yumiko Yamamoto (Programme Specialist, UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre) posing a question to the speakers. The photo was provided by PWDC who granted permission to include it in this volume

Chapter 2

Interlinking Gender Responsiveness and Participation in Public Budgeting Processes

Regina Frey

Abstract This chapter examines the links between participatory budgeting and gender budgeting discourses, analysing similarities, differences and tensions. What can actors involved in participatory processes learn from a gender discourse, and what can actors working to achieve gender equality learn from discourses on participation? Assuming the main objectives of gender responsive budgeting are gender equality, greater transparency, empowerment of disempowered social groups and more effective budgeting, this chapter discusses the challenges and opportunities for social change in these processes in light of the German experience.

Keywords GRB • Germany • PB • Gender equality • Participation • Budget cycle

2.1 Introduction

Participatory budgeting (PB) is not automatically gender just; and gender responsive budgeting is not automatically participatory. Participatory approaches and methodologies have been criticized for being gender naive (Guijt/Shah 1998: 2), while gender budgeting (GB) could be criticized for a technical (if not technocratic) approach driven by expert knowledge that does not take into account the needs and interests of the most marginalized groups. This chapter argues that both critiques are valid but have shortcomings.

Two examples from Germany are used to highlight situations where GB and PB have both been implemented. The first is Berlin, one of 16 federal states in Germany, and the first government to start GB. It was implemented in Berlin ministries and at the community level (in the 12 Berlin boroughs) and had participatory elements from the beginning. The borough of Lichtenberg is of special interest with respect to GB and PB, as it was one of the first administrative bodies piloting the former in the early 2000s. It was also a pilot community for PB.

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However, the two processes of GB and PB were not interlinked (Schubert-Lehnhardt/Viola 2006). Another interesting case in terms of the intersection of gender and PB is the south German city of Freiburg, where PB and GB were implemented in the late 2000s.

The next section examines PB through a gender lens. The third section analyses GB from a participatory lens, including discussing the different possibilities and entry points for participation in the budget cycle. The conclusion summarizes the arguments in the chapter in terms of the opportunities and challenges in the context of the German experience.

2.2 Participatory Budgeting Through a Gender Lens

In their book *The Myth of Community: Gender Issues in Participatory Development*, Guijt/Shah (1998) state: “Despite the stated intention of social inclusion, it has become clear that many participatory development initiatives do not deal well with the complexity of community differences including age, economic, religious, caste, ethnic and, in particular, gender” (Guijt/Shah 1998: 1). This observation, made in light of the experiences of Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) towards the end of the 1990s and in the context of development work,¹ can also be applied to current PB processes all over the world. In spite of many different participatory and citizens’ budgeting processes, examples of gender blindness or superficial inclusion of gender issues abound. For instance, ‘taking a gender perspective’ has come to mean only efforts to ensure equal access for women and men or counting the numbers of women and men involved in participatory processes.

If, however, participation should be more than just involvement, i.e. if the aim of introducing a ‘people’s’ budget’ is empowerment, then it is important to note that participation per se does not ensure a transformation of power relations. On the contrary, adverse effects may arise where research has shown that “participatory spaces can merely reinforce old hierarchies based on gender, caste or race. They can also contribute to greater competition and conflict across groups who compete for the recognition and resources in new ways” (Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability 2011: 7). This statement can also be applied to projects in Europe, as observed by Massner who pointed out that in Germany, it is ‘middle-aged, well-educated men’ who are involved in PB:

One general point of criticism directed at all processes of citizen participation is that these processes provide individuals and influential interest groups who are in any case particularly politically active, with additional opportunities to get involved and influence things. At the level of individuals, this primarily means men from better-educated, higher-earning strata, who not infrequently dominate the participant groups. At the level of groups, this means well-organized interest groups and ‘grassroots elites’ that are usually both financially strong, and have human resources or time at their disposal. The criticism that additional

¹See also Cornwall (2000).

participatory offerings enable these segments of society to gain disproportionate and basically undemocratic influence (...) also applies to numerous PB processes (Massner 2013).

If a normalization of unequal power relations is to be avoided, the critique of ‘gender-naivety’ (if not gender-blindness) would have to be taken seriously. A stabilization of unjust power relations can be avoided if:

- (a) different social groups of women and men have the same opportunities to have political influence in PB and
- (b) gender is included as a structural category in the processes of PB.

The following section will focus on these two dimensions of gender in PB.

2.2.1 Influencing Participatory Budgeting

Studies on PB in Germany show a frequent overrepresentation of men aged 25–45. In the German city of Trier, only 37 % of the contributors to PB were women. Online participation figures showed lower representations of women (Massner 2013). According to Stiefel, only 15 % of the votes in an online survey in Hamburg in May 2006 came from women. The survey attempted to identify ways to cut public expenditure; consequently, the proposals represented ‘male preferences’. Interestingly, but understandably perhaps, proposals for reduction in public expenditure were in the areas of social welfare, family support and culture (Stiefel 2010).

A gender-based evaluation of PB in Freiburg also showed that women were often underrepresented (Färber, undated). An exception in terms of representation of women and men in PB is the borough of Berlin-Lichtenberg, where procedures and methods for GB were piloted in the 2000s. It introduced PB some years later. Although, as mentioned above, the processes were not interlinked, an evaluation of the participation of women and men in 2010 showed that women’s involvement at 54.6 % was in all forms/modalities (online surveys, events and quarterly conferences).²

Examining possible inequalities in women’s involvement in PB, however, is only one dimension of ‘gender’. A deeper analysis would involve ascertaining whether different social groups of women and men would articulate different or similar needs and interests in such a process. Figures from Germany provide a mixed picture. In the example of Freiburg, Färber demonstrates many different priorities for women, men and single parents, the vast majority of whom were women (Färber 2009: 44). Analysing figures from Lichtenberg, Middendorf

²Source: http://gleichstellung-weiter-denken.de/pdf/17_forum2_johannes_middendorf_gb_im_buergerhaushalt.pdf (15 February 2014).

concludes that setting citizens' priorities depends on geographical location rather than on gender (Middendorf 2010: 18).

Ensuring equal access is also about choosing different means and methods of participation. For example, online surveys are common instruments employed in PB to assess priorities and seek opinions. However, access to and use of the internet depends on various social categories like social status, age and sex. Figures from Germany show that older persons, particularly women, are 'non-liners', that is, they hardly or never use the internet. In 2007, the 50-plus age cohort had 27.8 % women using the internet compared to 44.3 % of men users (Kompetenzzentrum 2007). In 2013, the overall gender gap in using the internet in Germany was almost 10 %.³ Thus, if online surveys are a major, or the only, instrument within PB, women, particularly the elderly, and the poor will be excluded.

It is important to differentiate between 'involving women' or ensuring equal representation of women and men on the one hand and ensuring representation with respect to impact and control on the other. As noted earlier, the involvement of different social groups in political and governance processes does not guarantee diminished influence and impact on the existence of 'grass root elites'.

2.2.2 Gender as an Explicit Topic Within Participatory Budgeting

A second component to making PB gender-aware rather than gender-naïve is explicitly addressing gender issues within the process and providing funds to ensure gender equality. Gender equality has been legally mandated in Germany in that Article 3 of the German constitution requires the State to actively provide for gender equality and equal opportunities. The government has to ensure gender equality as a basic democratic standard. This not only means that resources should be distributed in a gender-just way, but that, for example, public expenditure should be distributed among boys and girls such that they have similar opportunities to obtain a degree. Further, public funds should be provided to implement affirmative action and gender equality programmes and projects.

Germany offers few examples of PB processes that address gender issues in a systematic manner. One of these is the Freiburg PB process. A consultant's evaluation report recommended methods for including a gender perspective in PB within the course of a 13-month cycle. It started with anchoring gender aspects in the planning phase, training key actors of the administration, generating gender-sensitive material for informing citizens and systematically producing data disaggregated by sex and other categories (Färber undated: 138).

To summarize, participatory processes aimed at empowerment do not always consider gender aspects systematically. It should go beyond equal representation of

³Source: <http://www.nonliner-atlas.de/> (15 February 2014).

women and men in PB. Actors involved in PB should know about gender issues and should continuously reflect on the impact and implications of unequal gender relations in the whole process.

A gender-sensitive participatory approach has challenges since it is more demanding and complex (participation has to be organized and co-ordinated), requires certain expertise (like knowledge of participatory approaches and facilitation) and therefore is more expensive. However, since the alternative might be a gender-blind or ‘gender-naïve’ process that could even reinforce unequal gender relations, a gender-sensitive participatory approach should be worth the additional effort.

2.3 Gender Budgeting Through a Participatory Lens

Examining the intersection of PB and GB from a different angle raises a question—to what extent have other ideas and approaches inspired GB? A study of documents on GB reveals that they do not normally refer to participation but focus on technical procedures and expert budgetary knowledge. To understand why participation is not a major topic in many GB initiatives, it is important to consider the history and the origins of this strategy.

A key publication on the GB discourse is credited to Budlender et al. (1998) who present seven tools for gender budget analysis. These tools were mainly research techniques about collecting data, creating documents and coming up with activities to lobby for gender equality. It addressed gender equality advocates and civil society organizations (CSOs) working on women’s rights and needed expert knowledge of government regulations and procedures.

Elements of participatory approaches can be found in these documents, for example, in certain tools proposed by the authors. One of these is ‘sex-disaggregated beneficiary assessments’; that is,

...a tool which allows the voice of the citizen to be heard. Potential and actual beneficiaries of a government programme are asked, using a variety of techniques, their views as to whether existing forms of public service delivery meet their needs as they perceive them. These responses are analysed in order to assess the extent to which a government’s current budget meets the priorities of women and men. In essence, women and men participants in beneficiary studies are being “asked how, if they were the Finance Minister, they would slice the national budgetary pie” [Elson 1997b: 13] (Budlender et al. 1998: 41).

This clearly introduces participation but the application of these methods is still mediated and facilitated by experts. One of the reasons for the lack of direct participation is that GB originated from a ‘macro-perspective’ focussing on the national budget, whereas PB has its origins in a grassroots perspective and has been applied within the context of communities. This clearly shows that GB is not participatory *per se*. However, some entry points for participatory methods exist within GB as discussed in the next section.

2.3.1 Levels and Forms of Participation in Gender Budgeting

What does participation then mean in the context of GB and what forms of participation can the implementation of GB involve? A broad definition of participation would encompass the involvement of actors outside the government (directly or indirectly) in political decision making. This definition identifies three groups of actors in GB processes, each contributing different forms of knowledge:

1. Gender consultants: These actors contribute ‘gender expertise’, that is, they create or demonstrate data and provide information on gender aspects in different fields of intervention. This results in more evidence-based decision making. Contracted by the government, these experts are not necessarily independent, but as scientists and professionals they provide an outside perspective.
2. Lobby groups/gender equality advocates: These provide knowledge on the situation of various social groups in society. Often, they act as a watchdog and monitor governments, insisting on democratic standards and transparency. They also represent parts of the electorate, thereby giving them substantial political power.
3. Unorganized local citizens: They are rarely involved directly, if GB is understood as a means of influencing and managing the budget. However, if GB implementation requires sex-disaggregated data for a beneficiary analysis, this could involve participatory data collection, where citizens could contribute.

A conflation of roles occurs sometimes, not only because each consultant and lobbyist/advocate is also a citizen, but also because these lobby groups and gender equality advocates enhance their knowledge over time and become experts on gender issues. The following section elaborates on the roles of these three groups in relation to the entry points of participation, citing examples in the German context.

2.3.2 Entry Points for Participation

GB is closely linked to gender mainstreaming. In Europe, the dominant definition of GB stems from an expert group of the Council of Europe. It defines GB as ‘an application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process’ (Council of Europe 2005).⁴ This suggests that GB is a management process integrating gender issues

⁴Gender mainstreaming has its origins in the Gender and Development (GAD) discourse. Within GAD, various gender-analysis frameworks have been created which again offer a variety of methods and tools (March et al. 1999). Many of these tools are applied in a participatory manner.

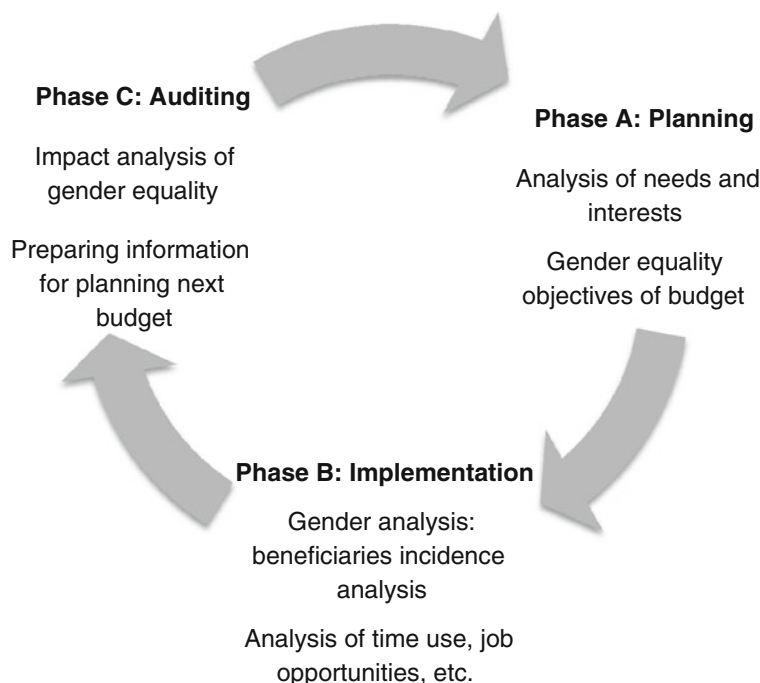


Fig. 2.1 The Budget Cycle. *Source* The author

into the ‘mainstream’ procedures and regulations of an administration. It is not an additional project and is not limited to one sector of the budget.

As discussed below, the budget cycle is the management cycle for budget planning, implementation and auditing. This section also provides examples of tools that could be used in a participatory manner in the course of this cycle. The budget cycle (Fig. 2.1 above) consists of three phases:

1. **Planning:** This encompasses budget formulation and its adoption by a government. The result of this phase is a legally binding budget.⁵
2. **Implementing:** In this phase, the public administration spends money to employ staff, implements different programmes and projects, contracts private companies or hires individuals and so on.
3. **Auditing:** Monitoring and evaluation takes place during this phase. Was public money spent according to the approved budget (law) and stated objectives?

NGOs/CSOs/gender equality advocates can be involved in steering group committees that monitor GB in all phases of this cycle. For example, in Berlin, a Gender Commission was established at the beginning of the process. Its members

⁵Sharp (2003) differentiates this phase into two stages (preparation and enhancement) and, therefore, identifies four phases within the budget cycle.

comprised high-level administrative staff from various units and from both levels of the Berlin administration (senate and borough). This commission sought advice from gender experts from the very beginning, installing a working group on GB. A member of the NGO (lobby group) ‘Initiative for a gender just budgeting in the City of Berlin’ was represented in this working group which became the core driver in developing the Berlin GB approach. The members adapted tools for the Berlin context and produced materials documenting approaches and results for a wider public.

In the following section, an example is provided for methods to make each phase of GB more participatory, while highlighting challenges. The example used refers to the public promotion of sports.⁶

Phase A: Planning

When preparing the budget, a government should base its plans on evidence about the requirements, needs and interests of citizens of all genders, age, social status, ethnicity and other categories of social stratification. As mentioned above, one of the instruments in GB is the sex-disaggregated beneficiary assessment that can have participatory elements (Budlender et al. 1998: 41).

The Berlin government published a gender equality framework for 2008–2011, referred to as ‘GPR’. This document lists objectives for gender equality policy at the federal state and community levels. When creating the GPR in 2007, the administration organized thematic focus groups and a conference inviting gender equality experts and representatives of NGOs involved in women’s programmes and projects. The result was a definition of gender equality objectives in a wide range of thematic fields. It complemented the existing gender equality law and was also used for a re-orientation of ongoing gender mainstreaming and GB implementation by the Berlin government with the help of gender equality master plans. At each level, the administration had to regularly report how it contributed to the objectives set in the GPR. A guideline on GB for the Berlin administration was also provided; it refers to the GPR and the master plan. When setting precise objectives in a certain area of intervention, administration staff had to select objectives for expenditure that had to be in accordance with GPR objectives. They also had to indicate how a certain title or expenditure would contribute to fulfilling GPR objectives.

The GPR defines promotion of sports, especially for elderly women and for single mothers, as part of the gender equality objectives since data from surveys showed that these groups were especially underrepresented in sports services subsidized by the government. Figures on the representation of women and men in the Berlin Sports Association (the main recipient of sports subsidies by the state) showed 36.5 % women’s participation (Landessportbund Berlin 2014: 53) as well as 27.3 % women in the executive committee (Landessportbund Berlin 2014: 28).

⁶The example is hypothetical in that it does not exist throughout the whole budget cycle. The figures given in this example, however, are based on evidence.

This is an example of how participatory elements can be included in the implementation of GB in the planning stage when it comes to setting gender equality objectives. It also shows that PB and GB can be viewed as complementary. Sometimes, like in the borough of Lichtenberg, PB and GB processes may run at the same time. Citizens are asked via participatory methods (district assemblies, online or household surveys or other instruments) about their priorities. As outlined above, this should be done in a gender-sensitive way. The results of these processes will be a ranking of priorities that a government should set, although it might not be able to go into detail on how this part of the budget should be spent. If, for example, a result of PB would be ‘more subsidies for the promotion of sports’, the government will be responsible for the *just* distribution of public funds for the promotion of sports. At this point, gender equality objectives can and should be linked to Berlin’s gender equality framework as outlined above. Enhancing participatory mechanisms by including a gender perspective also could mean to communicate gender equality objectives as defined by the GPR. Also, gender analysis results could be introduced to citizens, for example on the website introducing the PB process (Schubert-Lehnhardt 2006: 16). With this background information, citizens would be able to draw a decision on an even broader base of evidence.

Phase B: Implementation

During the implementation phase, the public money spent will invariably have gender impacts. With the help of gender analysis methods such impacts can be assessed: Who benefits? Who will have employment opportunities? Who will have to work without being paid for it? An important (but not the only) instrument of GB in this phase is the sex-disaggregated public expenditure incidence analysis. “This tool can be used to provide an assessment of the distribution of government expenditure of a given programme between men and women and boys and girls” (Budlender et al. 1998: 44f). The questions asked and the instruments selected strongly depend on the output area in a budget and the thematic areas it aims to address.

Returning to the sports example: in Berlin, the 12 boroughs regularly assess the product of ‘allocation of sports grounds’, conducting a sex-disaggregated expenditure incidence analysis. The results of the assessment in Lichtenberg showed that more than 60 % of this product benefited men (Senatsverwaltung für Wirtschaft et al. 2005: 14). A similar pattern was evident in other boroughs. A survey by the Senate of Internal Affairs and Sports in 2008 showed a slight difference in the number of sports activities undertaken by women and men. Men, on average, were more active, with the overall gender gap being less than 4 % (Senatsverwaltung für Inneres und Sport 2008: 12). However, women and men undertook different *types* of sports. Men and boys preferred sports significantly subsidized by public funding (for example, football), women and girls preferred sports like gymnastics which are often provided by private companies (Senatsverwaltung für Inneres und Sport 2008: 17). Because of these different preferences it can be stated that an imbalance existed between the needs of women and men on the one hand and the subsidies provided by the government on the other.

Phase C: Auditing

An impact analysis is usually conducted in this phase. Technically, this is a comparison of the objectives (determined in phase A) with the output or outcome of implementing the budget (phase B). When this ex-post evaluation shows a deviation from the objectives set, a government will have to think about how goals can be met within the course of the next budget cycle or whether objectives should be adjusted.

The sports example showed an imbalance between the objectives set by the GPR (involving more women, especially certain groups, in sports), the needs of women and men involved in sports (less than 4 % difference) and government subsidies. In at least one borough, an almost 20 % difference was noted in the provision of sports grounds in favour of men. This indicates that the government should reallocate funds according to the different needs of different people.

The results of this analysis can be used by gender equality advocates and in the context of other participatory approaches to 'highlight' and demonstrate the gap between objectives and real outcomes. These facts help CSOs make a government accountable for a gender-just allocation of budget.

2.4 Conclusion

While the importance of linking gender and PB is recognized, several challenges have yet to be overcome. As the chapter argues, integrating gender concerns into PB requires time, energy and money particularly when different social groups (across sex, ethnicity, age, etc.) have to be given a voice in terms of transforming power relations (for example, access to and control over resources). Participation is not merely about numeric representation of women and men. It would be difficult to insert participatory approaches especially at the community level into GB since it was not meant to be participatory in the first place. GB originated from macro (feminist) economics which prioritized interrogating national budgets (Elson 1989, 1991). However, certain participatory methods could form entry points in the budget cycle.

One can thus generally conclude that GB and PB are (still) separately implemented and clear connections between both approaches only exist in some cases. However, opportunities to interlink these two important processes definitely exist. Mainstreaming a gender perspective into PB has the potential to provide more precise results by actively including all social groups of citizens and allowing them to voice their perspectives and concerns. Adopting a gender perspective also means raising questions of inclusion and exclusion in decision-making processes. This is not limited to the representation of women and men of various social groups in PB. It also enables an administration to better reflect its procedures and standards.

However, as noted earlier, combining PB with gender issues poses challenges. Dealing with the complexity of social stratification is difficult. Gender is not just about ‘women’ or about women and men. It is about women and men in various life situations, according to age, social status, ethnic groups and various other identities. Facilitating this diversity to ensure that power relations are more balanced can make participatory approaches very demanding and expensive.

GB actors can also learn from participatory processes. Although it was not designed as a participatory strategy, GB still has elements of participatory methods. Participatory approaches can anchor GB in concretely interpreting gender equality for women and men. For sustainable governance, objectives should be set on the basis of ground realities, and not from merely speculating about the needs and interests of women and men. Several challenges arise when trying to make GB more participatory:

- In Germany, gender equality is mandated by law. If participatory budgeting exercises were to result in an unjust distribution of funds it could contravene gender equality laws.
- The public budget is a complex matter, especially at the national or federal state level. Good examples exist for combined gender and participatory approaches on budgeting at the community level. However, specialized knowledge is needed to evaluate the impact of certain budget policies on gender relations. Forms of direct participation are likely to have limitations.

From the German experiences, this chapter concludes that GB and PB can and should complement each other given the clear commonality between both strategies. However, challenges, if not limitations, must be borne in mind. At the end of the day, (democratically) elected bodies have to be accountable for allocating the public budget in a transparent and gender-just manner. A government should, therefore, make use of the various opportunities GB and PB offer for good and sustainable governance.

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