

Faith Innerarity

Making Policy Responses More Effective

1. Introduction

In the field of human rights and social development examples abound of significant gaps between the formal adoption and the actual attainment of policy objectives contained in various treaties, declarations, commitments, plans and programmes of action and other policy instruments crafted at the international and regional levels and reflected in policy responses of national governments. This divide in relation to official policy pronouncements versus effective implementation is probably most discernible in respect of policies aimed at promoting gender equality within the context of the rights-based approach to development.

The full attainment of gender equality remains one of the most elusive goals of social development. However, there is significant variation among countries and regions in respect of the level of success attained in the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) and other related policies and plans.

Arab countries and the wider Muslim world are generally regarded as achieving only limited success in the promotion of gender equality principally as a result of religious and a range of other historical and cultural factors which pose a considerable challenge to the empowerment of women. It is therefore particularly important for these countries that policy responses intended to empower women are effective. However, the issues highlighted and the approaches and measures proposed for increased policy effectiveness which are outlined in this paper, while focused on the Arab region are broadly applicable within the developing as well as the developed world.

Factors identified as being critical for translating policies into effective action include the primacy of the demonstration of political will and the importance of public education and re-socialization to overcome negative societal attitudes and other systemic barriers to gender equality. It is further argued that advocacy, agenda setting and legislative measures must be coupled with the institutional level adoption of practical measures such as gender impact assessment and gender-sensitive budgeting processes to operationalize and truly realize gender mainstreaming and avoid policy evaporation.

2. Translating Policies into Action

Increasing the effectiveness of policy responses hinges mainly on translating policy intent into concrete actions with measurable outcomes. This requires moving from

rhetorical statements to devising optimal strategies to successfully drive the process of implementing policy decisions. These strategies must take into account a range of political, social, economic and institutional factors which are preconditions for realizing policy goals and objectives. Some of these factors are discussed below.

2.1 Political Will

The usage of the term “political will” has been described as both ubiquitous and ambiguous and therefore often serving as a rhetorical tool. Post et al. (2008) observes that Hammergrens (1998) characterises political will as the “slipperiest of concepts in policy lexicon” while calling it “the sine qua non of policy success which is never defined except by its absence”. It is therefore useful to indicate at the outset that the sense in which the term is being used in this paper reflects the ideal-type construct posited by Post et al. (2008) in which political will is defined as a contextual condition where a “sufficient set of political actors with a common understanding of a particular problem on the public agenda genuinely intends to support a commonly perceived, potentially effective policy solution.”⁹⁹

Within the context of the Arab region where there are strong cultural traditions and social norms which pose a challenge to the enactment of the principles of gender equality political will is indispensable to effective policy responses. This political will must be demonstrated, among other things, through the passage of legislation, where required, coupled with support structures for enforcement through the justice system; and also the allocation of necessary resources for the implementation of related social intervention programmes and other initiatives. Political will must also encompass building broad public support for the required changes and reforms, even more so in circumstances where there is opposition from some sectors of the society.

As indicated in The Arab Human Development Report 2005 the spread of the concept of “women’s empowerment” has resulted in a backlash from some socio-political forces which regard it as a western imposition and have therefore sought to resist the efforts of governments and women’s organizations to implement development plans which adopt a gender perspective.¹⁰⁰ Within this scenario, state actors and other duty-bearers from a human rights standpoint must have a very strong commitment and resolve to counteract opposing forces and relentlessly pursue the realization of the provisions of CEDAW to which all Arab countries are signatories. Although, in some cases reservations have been entered in respect of central elements such as Article 2 – Principle of equality between men and women. Governments in the region should work toward retracting such reservations by making the required legislative changes at the national level, the need for which was cited by some countries as the cause for entering the res-

⁹⁹ Lori Post, Amber Raile and Eric Raile, *Defining Political Will*, Paper submitted to the 2008 Annual Meeting of the National Communication Association.

¹⁰⁰ The Arab Human Development Report 2005: *Toward the Rise of Women in the Arab World*, United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS), p. 6.

ervations.

Political engagement with religious institutions and other influential bodies which oppose gender equality should be pursued drawing on growing favourable public opinion on issues such as women's education and political participation. Research has shown, for example, that the majority of persons in Arab countries believe that women and men have an equal right to education and that public opinion also endorse women's right to participate in political activity and hold executive positions.¹⁰¹

Charney (2009) argues that in practice, political will combines the existence of opinion, its intensity (often marked by a polarization of views) and salience.¹⁰² In this regard, the issue of Islam's cultural and political reassertion marked by the rise of Islamist movements and the related contending views concerning the position of women in the Muslim world as highlighted by Moghadam (2004)¹⁰³ present not only a challenge but an opportunity for decisive political action.

The tension that now exists in the Arab region and elsewhere in the Middle East between "concepts of cultural heritage" and "concepts of cultural freedoms" has been widely observed and documented. It has also been generally acknowledged that in spite of a shared religion and culture there is considerable variability in gender norms and laws in the Arab World/Middle East and that significant changes have occurred in the position of women over time.¹⁰⁴

A careful assessment of the forces at play which account for the notable differences between states in respect of the progress that has been made, suggest that the political will to improve the status of women coalesced around state action propelled by the activism of non-state actors, the latter including various types of women's organizations.

Moghadam (2004) identifies Tunisian feminists and women's NGO's as being among the most successful women's activists in working with Government agencies to develop and implement a national plan of action in accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action.¹⁰⁵ Tunisia, it is stated, "seems to have crafted a national identity and legal framework that reflects its own Arab-Islamic heritage as well as social and gender rights as understood internationally".¹⁰⁶

Notwithstanding difficulties such as the ambivalence displayed by some states towards NGO's, this type of action can be intensified to ensure that the gender equality agenda is realized, even in those countries where the resistance to legislative and other reform

101 Arab Human Development Report 2005, pp. 8-9.

102 Craig Charney, Political Will: What is it? How is it Measured?, Presentation to: Advocacy Evaluation Advances Convening the California Endowment Los Angeles, CA, January 2009.

103 Valentine M. Moshadam, Toward Gender Equality in the Arab/Middle East Region: Islamic Culture and Feminist Activism, Human Development Report Office, Occasional Paper, Prepared for the HDR 2004.

104 This is argued, for example by Moshadam (2004).

105 Op.cit p.48

106 Moshadam 2004, pp. 66-67

measures is most pronounced.

2.2 Public Education and Re-Socialization

In the context of the social construction of gender relations, particularly the deeply engrained notions of what are the appropriate roles of women and men in society, the transformation of socio-cultural attitudes inimical to gender equality is essential for the effective implementation of gender policies. Strategies directed at achieving such attitudinal changes must involve all the agents of socialization including the family, educational and religious institutions, and the media which all perpetuate gender-role stereotypes and discriminatory practices. In this vein, the 2005 AHDR calls for changes in patterns of upbringing, education and media presentations to revise social norms, erase harmful stereotypes and vitally transform relations between the sexes in a culture of equal treatment.¹⁰⁷ It states poignantly that:

“Correction of outmoded assumptions and attitudes is a leading priority, one that demands...cultural and societal measures to instil in coming generations, a balanced vision of women and their role”¹⁰⁸

This correction must of necessity begin in the family as the most important agent of primary socialization. Patriarchy is established and reinforced in family relationships and it is there that patterns of gender discrimination are first practised and promoted. Principles of equality between males and females must be taught in the family beginning with children at the earliest ages. This should be demonstrated in actions such as encouraging the participation of children of both sexes in age-appropriate domestic chores and placing the same emphasis on daughters and sons attending school. This would naturally need to be aligned to state provision of equal opportunities for the education of boys and girls through legislation or other regulations to enforce universality.

The school curriculum is often a source for the reinforcement of gender-stereotypes. Major efforts are therefore required to ensure that values of equality are reflected in pedagogy and integrated in the curricula at all levels of the educational system from early childhood to tertiary education. According to the AHDR 2005 there is an enormous gap between the advances made by Arab women in political, social and economic fields and the stereotypical images presented in school curricula which confine them to domestic roles. The Report further indicates that as a consequence there have been demands by pedagogy specialists for the modification of some curricula and the formulation of new guidelines and concepts in respect of content “that rescues girls from the superficial setting to which they are still confined”. It is further stated that these specialists have issued a call for Arab women to participate in the drafting of education policies “a task from which they have been almost completely excluded”.

107 The Arab Human Development Report 2005: Toward the Rise of Women in the Arab World, UNDP, Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS), p.

108 AHDR 2005 ,Forward, President of the Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) p.VII.

This was supported by a random sampling of Arab curricula which estimated that there was less than 8 per cent female participation in the setting of school subjects.¹⁰⁹ Implementation of the demands of the pedagogy specialist would definitely promote and support freedom of choice of educational pursuit and eventually eliminate not only explicit but subtle limitations on the career options available to women.

Increasingly, the media plays a significant role in shaping social attitudes and social behaviours. It is an integral part of our lives and generates popular interest and debate about social problems. The manner in which women are presented in the media has far reaching implications for society.

In the 2005 AHDR the observation is made that current media forms such as the Internet and television channels with specialised programmes have benefitted the women's movement in ways that would not be possible by the print media alone. They have, it is argued, "facilitated new discourse of liberation by enabling women to occupy public spaces", thereby promoting gender awareness oriented towards social cohesion, equality and the principle of equity instead of sex-based discrimination. The Report, however, raises doubt as to whether the increased number of Arab women in the media has had a positive influence on "the general orientation of programming and the image of women" and points to the ongoing debate surrounding countervailing views:¹¹⁰

"The Arab living room has become a veritable battleground in the war of information. Like the wars over the interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence, the clash of popular proverbs and the struggles of Arab civil society to promote the values of freedom and equality, it is a conflict that confronts citizens with different and confusing choices."

Within the context of the foregoing, governments and development partners in the NGO community need to adopt innovative communication strategies and public education tools in a culturally sensitive manner to effectively raise awareness of gender issues in a positive direction and garner critical public support for the reform agenda bearing in mind the constant potential for conflict with Islamic orthodoxy.

As stated by the office of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights (UNCHR), "...human rights are universally recognized regardless of cultural differences but their practical implementation does demand sensitivity to culture".¹¹¹

An example referred to by the UNCHR is that of a manual for women's human rights education in Muslim societies – written by female activists from various Islamic backgrounds – covering issues such as rights within the family, autonomy in family planning decisions, rights to educational employment and rights to political participation.

109 AHDR 2005, p. 17

110 AHDR 2005, p. 15

111 Frequently Asked Questions on a Human-Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2006, p.5.

This manual uses “interactive and interpretative exercises” which “interweaves excerpts from the international human rights with verses from the Koran, Sharia-rules, stories, and personal experiences”.¹¹²

2.3 Effective Gender Mainstreaming

Effective gender mainstreaming is central to the successful outcome of policies promoting gender equality. As reaffirmed by Murison (2004), gender mainstreaming involves all the stages between analysis and its incorporation into the policy and programme decisions that will contribute to equality of outcome for men and women in all development initiatives. It also includes advocacy, networking and knowledge management and is concerned with policy influence as well the design of projects and programmes. A clearly defined strategic plan is necessary to ensure that the various elements produce coherent results.¹¹³

Adopting a model of three interrelated “spheres” of gender mainstreaming put forward by the Swedish Development Agency (SIDA), Murison (2004) elaborates fourteen elements of a complete gender mainstreaming strategy:¹¹⁴

Level One - Organization’s structure, policies and culture

- 1. A clear policy on its commitment to gender equality*
- 2. Time-bound strategies to implement the policy*
- 3. Human resource practices that are gender sensitive*
- 4. Internal tracking and monitoring capability to ensure that strategic milestones are being reached.*
- 5. Central gender mainstreaming unit*
- 6. Recognized network of staff responsible for gender equality*

Level Two - The organization’s programmes

- 7. Systematic on-going consultations with women, as well as men, to identify their own priorities, success stories, lessons learned, tools and mechanisms.*
- 8. Project management that is technically proficient and aware of implications of gender differences for project outcome.*
- 9. Effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms*
- 10. Gender Analysis as a subset of socio-economic analysis*

Level Three – The Outcomes and impact

112 This illustration by the UNCHR (2006 p. 5) is in reference to a document by M. Afkhami and H. Vaziri entitled Claiming our Rights: A Manual for Women’s Human Rights Education in Muslim Societies (Bethesda, Sisterhood is Global Institute 1996). The UNCHR cites as its source for this information C. Nyamu-Musembi, “Towards an actor-oriented perspective on human rights”, IDS Working Paper 169 (Brighton Institute of Development Studies October 2002), p. 9.

113 Sarah Murison (2004), Elements of a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy: A fourteen-point framework, p.2

114. Op.cit pp. 2-9

11. *Relevant baseline information, and appropriate milestones and indicators so that progress towards gender equality can be identified and described.*
12. *Consultation with the community concerned to check and compare their perspectives with the information revealed by formal indicators.*
13. *Clear reporting mechanisms that can get the word out efficiently.*
14. *Good relationship with the media, opinion leaders and decision makers both in the community served and wider society, so that lessons learned can be effectively disseminated, and absorbed into social practice.*

This approach to gender mainstreaming proposed by Murison within an organizational context is relevant to government institutions and can serve as a useful guide in ensuring that concrete steps are taken to translate gender policies into action both within state organizations and the constituencies which they serve through various programmatic interventions.

2.4 Gender Impact Assessment

The gender implications of some policies are clear but there are others where the relevance of gender is not as readily apparent and these policies may consequently be considered gender-neutral; although in reality they have a differential impact on women and men leading to unintended effects and outcomes.

Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) is regarded as one of the tools of ‘gender proofing’¹¹⁵ and has been adopted by a number of EU member states for implementing mainstreaming. It involves an assessment of policies and practices to determine whether they will affect women and men differently, with the objective of adapting these policies/practices to ensure that any discriminatory effects are eliminated.¹¹⁶

Gender Impact Assessment enhances the process of gender mainstreaming and could assist policy makers in the Arab region to incorporate a gender perspective in the development of policies, plans and programmes. Ideally, GIA should be done at an early stage of the decision-making process so that changes can be made where required or action redirected. Sex-disaggregated data and expertise in the dynamics of gender relations are critical for conducting this type of analysis.

The GIA process addresses two principal questions. Firstly, is there inequality or a potential inequality between women and men in the area under consideration? Secondly, if there is, what can be done about it?¹¹⁷ When it is established that a proposed policy is discriminatory or has the potential to foster inequality, the GIA is applied in the investigation of the situation so that the root cause of the inequality can be identified

115 Marie Crawley and Louise O’Meara (2004) define ‘gender proofing’ as “The Means by which it is ensured that policies and practices within organizations have equally beneficial effects on men and women”.

116 Marie Crawley and Louise O’Meara (2004), *Gender Impact Assessment Handbook*, p. 8

117 See Crawley and O’Meara

and remedial action instituted. The aim of the GIA is not seek to apportion blame for inequalities which exist or past discrimination, but searches for an understanding of the cause and takes action to ensure that there is no reoccurrence. The realization of equality of opportunity may require affirmative action.¹¹⁸

Attention to ‘indirect’ or ‘unintentional’ discrimination not easily detectable is considered as one of the strong features of the GIA. As stated by Crawley and O’Meara(2004) :¹¹⁹

One of the strengths of the gender impact assessment process is that it focuses on indirect or unintentional discrimination. In-direct discrimination can be very subtle and based on given beliefs, assumptions and practices which go largely unchallenged and, as such, are considered ‘normal’.

The following have been identified as the main steps in the multi-dimensional GIA process:¹²⁰

- Step 1: Analysis of the present situation – Determining the initial position of individuals in a certain context - at cultural, social, political and economical level - by gender with respect to the dimensions of participation, resources, norms and values, and rights. This initial assessment is intended to determine the intensity of the gender equality deficit and thereby feed into determining the priority to be attached to gender equality in the formulation, the monitoring and development of the policy measures. It also provides a benchmark against which to assess policy outcomes.
- Step 2: Analysis of future trends – Future risks and past trends are taken into account as well as any contradictory direction trends in gender deficits that may be operating.
- Step 3: Determining Priority – The main goal of this step is to determine priority based on the range of policies that actively promote gender equality thorough an assessment of the current degree of inequality and its potential impact on women and men.
- Step 4: Assessing general impact of the programme – Assessing the potential impact of the programme with reference to participation, resources, norms and values and rights.

118 Crawley and O’Meara, p. 16

119 Op. cit p. 16

120 Evaluating Socio Economic Development, SOURCEBOOK 2: Methods & Techniques Gender Impact Assessment, pp 3-10, [http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/evalsed/sourcebooks/method_techniques/conducting_impact_assessments/gender/index_en.htm]

- Step 5: Assessing specific and direct impact of the programme – Assessing the impact of the policy on a particular group of women and men.
- Step 6: Assessing specific in-direct impact of the programme – Assessing the indirect impacts of the current state of gender inequalities and proposed policies.
- Step 7: Defining further development – Identifying ways in which a policy might be redesigned to promote gender equality, to determine where the policy is assessed to have a negative impact on gender equality and/or to be broadly gender neutral.
- Step 8: Defining a set of gender sensitive evaluation indicators – The definition of a gender sensitive evaluation indicators is necessary to identify essential data that will be useful for the comparison between potential and effective impacts of a programme.

Documentation on the use of GIA methodologies indicate that clear political commitment and recognised institutional procedures are required for the process to be effectively implemented. Also needed are instruments and methodological toolkits linked to method-based difficulties that may be encountered in GIA exercises.¹²¹

2.5 Gender Responsive Budgeting

For the Arab/Muslim region as in other parts of the world, the allocation of public resources within the broader scope of a government's macroeconomic policy framework is of fundamental importance to making policy responses more effective and realizing gender equality goals. In this regard, a very useful practical tool is the introduction of gender-sensitive approaches in budgeting processes.

The emergence of the concept of gender responsive budgets is based on the increasing recognition of the gap between the stated gender equality commitments of governments and how budgetary resources are allocated. Gender budgeting, pioneered by Australia, gained momentum internationally in 1995 influenced by the recommendation in the Platform for Action that:¹²²

Governments should make efforts to systematically review how women benefit from public sector expenditures; adjust budgets to ensure equality of access to public sector expenditures, both for enhancing productive capacity and for meeting social needs.

As outlined by Budlender et. al (2003), gender-responsive budget initiatives constitute a method of assessment of the impact of government revenue and expenditure on

¹²¹ Op. cit p. 10

¹²² Rhonda Sharp, Budgeting for Equity: Gender budget initiatives within a framework of performance oriented budgeting.

women and men girls and boys and are known by several names, ‘women’s budgets’, ‘gender-sensitive budgets’, ‘gender budgets’, and ‘applied gender-responsive budgets’. These initiatives help to ‘improve economic governance and financial management’, provide feedback to government on whether it is meeting the needs of different group of women and men and girls and boys’. From the standpoint of those outside of government they can be used to ‘encourage transparency, accountability and participation’ and also ‘provide data that can be used for advocacy’.¹²³ Budlender concludes that:

For those both inside and outside government, gender budget work provides information that allows for better decision-making on how policies and priorities should be revised and the accompanying resources needed to achieve the goal of gender equality.

It is also observed that the application of gender responsive budget initiatives vary across countries based on a range of factors such as the social and economic context, whether they are coordinated by government or civil society organizations, the capacity of the institutions to implement them and whether they focus on national or sub-national levels.¹²⁴ The quest by practitioners ‘to adopt the methodology to their specific situation, needs and interests’ is regarded as one of the strong features of gender budget work.¹²⁵

The gender responsive budget methodology has been endorsed in the five-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing +5), the Monterrey Consensus, and the communiqué of the 2002 Commonwealth Finance Minister’s Meeting.¹²⁶

123 Debbie Budlender and Guy Hewitt, *Engendering Budgets: A Practitioners’ Guide to Understanding and Implementing Gender Responsive Budgets*, Commonwealth Secretariat 2003

124 Budlender and Hewitt, *Engendering Budgets: A Practitioners’ Guide to Understanding and Implementing Gender Responsive Budgets*, Commonwealth Secretariat 2003

125 Budlender and Hewitt (2003)

126 Budlender and Hewitt (2003)

Text Box 1

Beijing + 5 called upon governments to:

Incorporate a gender perspective into the design, development, adoption and execution of all budgetary processes...in order to promote equitable effective and appropriate resource allocations to support gender equality and development programmes which enhance women's empowerment and develop the necessary analytical and methodological tools and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.

Commonwealth Finance Ministers 2002:

Agreed to make substantial progress on implementing gender-responsive budgets within their respective budget setting processes.

Proponents of the concept of gender budgets have correctly emphasised that they are not separate budgets for women and girls but rather the analysis of public resources through 'gender lens'. In essence, they represent attempts to break-down national or local budgets on the basis of gender impact. Diane Elson (1997), development economist and a leading expert in the field, identifies the key questions in the gender responsive budget process as:¹²⁷

- What impact does a fiscal measure have on gender equality?
- Does it reduce gender inequality; increase it?
- Or leave it unchanged?

According to Sharp (2003), the three (interrelated) core goals of gender responsive budgets are to:¹²⁸

- raise awareness and understanding of gender issues and impacts of budgets and policies;
- make governments accountable for their gender budgetary and policy commitments;
- change and refine government budgets and policies to promote gender equality.

It is further argued by Sharp (2003) that:

Gender responsive budgets have emerged as an important and widespread strategy for shining a brighter light on what government budgets have and have not done towards

¹²⁷ Cited by Isabella Bakker, Gender Budget Initiatives: Why They Matter in Canada, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), 2006.

¹²⁸ Rhonda Sharp, Budgeting for Equity: Gender budget initiatives within a framework of performance oriented budgeting, 2003

the promotion of economic and social equality between men and women.

The increase in the adoption of gender responsive budgets has been described by Budlender (2003) as ‘phenomenal’. This is evidenced by the fact that in 1995 there were only a few countries and agencies involved in the practice and by 2003 there were over sixty executing some form of gender budget process and many development agencies either having a gender responsive budget programme or providing support at the country level.¹²⁹

The considerable support provided by donor and multilateral agencies in the form of assistance, research and information dissemination, has been a major contributor to the rapid growth of gender responsive budget initiatives.¹³⁰

There is significant variation in approach to gender responsive budgets with the efforts of some countries being characterised as ‘one-off exercises’. In some instances the process has also been found to be largely ‘dependent on external assistance’ provided. It is therefore emphasised that gender responsive budgets have the greatest potential impact as a continuous process instead of a ‘one-off exercise’, and also where there is local ownership rather than it being donor driven.¹³¹

It has been observed that while a number of tools and processes have contributed to a better understanding of the gender impact of budgets, success has been limited in terms of ‘achieving accountability and changes to policies and resource allocation’. This, it is argued, has weakened gender responsive budget initiatives ‘as a strategy for embedding gender into mainstream policy and budgetary processes and outcomes’. As stated by Sharp:¹³²

It is now widely appreciated that gender budgets haven’t yet fulfilled their potential and need to extend their strategies. In particular various commentators are advocating that the next step for gender budgets is to bridge the gap between undertaking gender sensitive analyses and for instituting a gender sensitive budget.

In light of this need to make further advances in the field of gender responsive budgets, UNIFEM supported research has explored the implications of public sector performance oriented reforms in government budgeting for such initiatives. The principal task of the research was to determine whether ‘performance oriented budgeting could serve as framework for making budgets more gender responsive’. The main aim was to develop strategies for gender responsive budget initiatives to more effectively realize their goals within a performance oriented budget framework.¹³³ This was approached

129 Debbie Budlender and Guy Hewitt, *Engendering Budgets: A Practitioners’ Guide to Understanding and Implementing Gender Responsive Budgets*, Commonwealth Secretariat 2003

130 Rhonda Sharp, *Budgeting for equity: Gender Budget Initiatives within a framework of performance oriented budgeting*.

131 Debbie Budlender and Guy Hewitt, *Engendering Budgets: A Practitioners’ Guide to Understanding and Implementing Gender Responsive Budgets*, Commonwealth Secretariat 2003

132 Rhonda Sharp, *Budgeting for equity: Gender Budget Initiatives within a framework of performance oriented budgeting*, p. 18

with particular reference to “output and outcomes” budgeting, which was identified as ‘the most recent manifestation of performance oriented budgeting’.¹³⁴ The research results have indicated that with appropriate changes, output and outcome budgeting can contribute toward the achievement of genuine progress towards gender equality.

The potential for the development of synergies between performance oriented budgeting and gender responsive budgets is very useful for developing as well as developed countries. This is especially important because within the framework of improved governance structures for increased accountability and transparency, many countries have undertaken public sector reform programmes - or are in the process of doing so – in which performance oriented budgeting is among the major features. Linking gender responsive budgets to the overall process of public sector reform can play a very positive role in the mainstreaming of gender equality goals in state institutions.

In the Arab region Morocco and Egypt are among those countries that have implemented gender responsive budgeting processes and the outcomes of those initiatives can be analysed in terms of lessons of experience which could benefit the region as a whole. The evaluation of their experience should take into account reflections on the manner in which a link with performance oriented budgeting would increase effectiveness.

A gender inclusive macro-economic framework is crucial to the attainment of gender equality goals at sector and project level. As a consequence, attention must be given to gender considerations in all macro-economic activities through which policies are translated into programmes. This is relevant not only at the national but also at the regional level. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action calls upon Regional Financial Institutions to:

- increase resources allocated to eliminating absolute poverty;
- support financial institutions that serve low income, small scale and micro-scale women entrepreneurs and producers
- increase funding for the education and training needs of girls and women;
- revise policies, procedures and staffing in order to ensure that investments and programmes benefit women; and
- allocate loans and programmes for implementing the Platform for Action.

133 Rhonda Sharp (2003), Budgeting for equity

134 As elaborated by Sharp: “Output and outcomes budgeting involves measuring the outputs (products and services delivered by agencies) and outcomes (the impacts of government policies) of the government budget and incorporating this performance information into budgetary decision making processes”. The performance of government is thus “assessed in terms of its capacity to achieve ‘value for money’ by applying the performance criteria of economy, efficiency and effectiveness”.

Sharpening the tools of gender responsive budgeting practices will contribute to furthering the achievement these objectives.

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

The governments and people of the Arab region must be relentless in their efforts to promote actions aimed at achieving gender equality as an integral component of the rights based approach to development in spite of the many challenges which are present.

As the 2004 Arab Human Development Report and other assessments show, women of the region have made outstanding contributions in a wide range of areas including in the arts, sciences, political life and other fields of endeavor which impact on national and regional development. Notwithstanding these achievements, major setbacks remain in respect of the status of women in the Arab and wider Muslim world in relation to their counterparts in western societies.

The issues outlined in this paper in addressing the matter of making policy responses more effective, are not intended to be exhaustive but merely to highlight what are considered to be some of the critical elements in translating gender equality policies into effective action by governments in collaboration with development partners at all levels.

The battle for gender equality must be fought and won in the public as well as the domestic sphere hence the emphasis that is placed on political will, and public education and re-socialization as core elements supportive of translating policies into action. Government efforts through the passage of legislation are necessary as they send a powerful signal of intent in terms of gender equality. Such vital measures are however most successful when supported by skilful advocacy on the part of state operatives in collaboration with activists in civil society in establishing the reform agenda and gaining broad-based public support. Modern media technology notably, television, the internet and other technologically-driven medium should be harnessed to give a fillip to the campaign for equality. The portrayal of positive and non-stereotypical images of women, especially on television, should be promoted. At the same time, traditional agencies of socialization such as the family and school must also be fully engaged in the process of bringing about attitudinal changes to cultural predispositions which regard women as inferior to men and foster gender-based discrimination.

The constant danger of the articulation of the goal of gender equality becoming a mere platitude or being perceived as such, can only be overcome by ensuring the impact of policies enunciated. One of the first steps in ensuring impact is to fully institutionalize, from an operational standpoint, the concept of gender mainstreaming in the formulation of policies and the planning and implementation of programmes. The significant body of knowledge that has been built-up on the subject as evidenced

by the available literature needs to be more effectively utilized in specific country and regional contexts. In this regard, the examples outlined in this paper are offered as practical illustrations of measures which can make gender mainstreaming efforts more effective, resulting in the desired policy outcomes and impact. These measures include:

- Murison's adoption of the SIDA model of three interrelated 'spheres' of gender mainstreaming into an overall strategy comprised of several elements.
- Gender Impact Assessment methodology as is currently practised by some member states of the European Union.
- Gender responsive budgeting techniques being implemented by several countries including some in the Arab region. Special note is taken of the broad context of public sector reform programmes and performance oriented (output and outcome) budgeting and its potential to enhance gender responsive budgeting.

As in most cases of successful implementation of development strategies, an approach that is tailored to country specific and in some instances regional conditions yields the best results. The "one-size-fit-all" approach is not being recommended in respect of the measures identified but the application of relevant principles and practices. Procedures should be modified as warranted based on particular contexts.

Recommendations

On the basis of the foregoing analysis and conclusions, the following recommendations are put forward to increase the effectiveness of policy responses:

1. Greater political commitment and policy coherence is necessary to advance the gender and development agenda. This has to be a collaborative effort between governments, civil society organizations and regional and international institutions. This political commitment and policy coherence is especially important in areas such as legislation, and engendering macro-economic policies and frameworks. In addition, reforms in favour of gender equality are enhanced within a framework where other governance issues such as accountability, transparency and deepening democracy are being addressed.
2. Increasing focus on public education and re-socialization must be integral components of policies, programmes and plans to advance the reform agenda for gender equality against the background of the social construction of gender relations. Gender equality cannot be truly realized without the involvement of the social institutions which influence and shape attitudes and behaviour in respect of gender roles. Both traditional and contemporary agencies of socialization must be fully incorporated in the public education and re-socialization process.

3. Strengthening of the institutional capacities at the national level to effectively operationalize gender mainstreaming must be made a priority. This should incorporate relevant training (taking into account the cultural ramifications) at all levels including senior and middle management and other key personnel. Political representatives and civil society leaders should also be targeted for training.
4. Adoption of analytical tools such as Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) and gender responsive budgeting to enhance mainstreaming. This should be preceded by a careful review of the experiences of countries within and outside the region that have implemented such initiatives. This ought to be done with a view to identifying strengths, possible limitations, and complexity of the methodologies involved and the requirements for successful adoption, including refinements of the associated instruments and procedures taking into account country specific conditions.

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