Gender Budgeting

What is the issue?

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Time-bound goals needed for female school enrolment, gender-based violence, and health.

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What is gender budgeting?

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- Gender budgeting comprises activities and initiatives for preparing budgets or analysing policies and budgets from a gender perspective.
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- It is also known as gender-sensitive budgeting or gender-responsive budgeting.
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- It embeds gender-specific goals into fiscal policies and in general into the public financial management stream.
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- It is important to note that gender budgeting is not about creating separate budgets for women, or solely increasing spending on women's programmes.
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- But rather is concerned with addressing budgetary gender inequality issues, such as how gender hierarchies influence budgets, and gender-based unpaid or low paid work.
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Why is gender budgeting important?

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- Women constitute around half of the world population.
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- All measures across the globe taken towards development, poverty alleviation and improvement of social indicators like health, education and gender equality are worthless unless policies are implemented specifically for women and girls.
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- Global development organisations like the United Nations have also formed goals around this.
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- For example, “achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls” is one of the key goals under the Sustainable Development Goals set by the UN.
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What did India do to achieve gender budgeting?

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- The first significant attempt at making gender-sensitive budgets was introduced as part of the Ninth Plan (1997-2002), a “women’s component plan” (WCP) was introduced.
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- WCP earmarked 30 per cent of funds for all women-related sectors.
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- The initiative got further institutionalised when the gender budget statement was first introduced in the Union Budget in 2005-06.
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- According to an IMF study, there are over 16 Indian states that have adopted gender-based budgeting, which is a good achievement.
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- There are gender budgeting cells formed under 56 government ministries/departments to identify gender-related goals and the approach to achieve them.
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- The ministry of women and child development has also come up with guidelines for integrating gender budgeting into beneficiary-oriented schemes.
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What are the problems involved in implementation of gender budgeting?

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- First, there is limited availability of disaggregated gender-specific data sets for all schemes and programmes under various ministries.
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- In the absence of this data, it is difficult to study the impact of budgetary allocations on gender equality.
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- Second, the budgeting exercise is linked to schemes instead of outcomes.
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- For example, in the Budget for 2015-16 there are funds allocated for infrastructure maintenance under the ministry of health and family welfare.
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- However, there is very little data available on the impact these funds made in reducing female mortality rates.
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- Third, there is an immediate need to conduct an assessment of gender-specific parameters and set goals accordingly.
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- For example, it is important to understand time-bound goals for parameters such as female school enrolment, gender-based violence, health, labour force participation.
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- Fourth, authority should be created for gender auditing, to conduct an annual impact assessment of budgetary allocations for all schemes, thus bringing accountability to the process.
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- There is also a critical need for capacity building across government, corporates, public sector undertakings, NGOs and all involved agencies.
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- While steps have been taken to mainstream the gender budgeting process at central and state government level, there is a definite need to deepen this process.
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- A national-level reporting platform should be created under the ministry of statistics and programme implementation, which will collect the disaggregated data by sex for understanding the impact and outcome of the gender budgeting initiative.
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- The Central Statistics Office should also be engaged for better data collection and analysis techniques.

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- Shared responsibility between the central and state governments would accelerate this process.
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Source: Business Standard

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