

Gender Responsive Budgeting in Pakistan: Experience and lessons learned

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Abstract

This article describes the experience and lesson learned to date during the implementation of gender responsive budgeting in Pakistan through a dedicated project 'Gender Responsive Budgeting Initiative'. The article provides the background, and details GRB activities undertaken including implementation of various GRB tools, steps taken to gender sensitize the budgetary processes, linkages and synergies developed, and challenges and lesson learned.

The project, a joint venture of Government of Pakistan and UNDP Pakistan, initiated work in 2005 at the federal level and in one of the provinces, Punjab. The Project Management Units were housed in Ministry of Finance at federal level and Finance Department at the provincial level. The introduction of GRB was facilitated by the fact that government has recently introduced a medium-term budget framework. This provided an opportunity to introduce gender into the budgetary reforms. The project activities included awareness raising at the federal, provincial and district levels of the government supplemented by development of resource material suitable for the Pakistan context. Targeted capacity building of government officials and other stakeholders was carried out along with development of training manuals and handbooks. Various GRB tools such as gender aware policy appraisal, gender aware beneficiary assessment survey, time use survey and gender budget statement have been employed. These have provided useful insights and the research findings have been disseminated to concerned quarters. Gender-sensitive amendments have been introduced in the government's budget call circular which is a key step in institutionalizing a gender perspective in the government's established budgetary procedures and could help ensure sustainability.

In the short period since the inception of the project there has been substantial progress and inroads have been made in the government's budgetary system to gender-sensitize them. Given the prevailing gender disparities, the initiation of GRB in Pakistan is an important development which is being further strengthened by aligning it with the PRSP process in the country.

Introduction and Background

During recent years, the Government of Pakistan has introduced a range of budgetary and planning reform processes intended to improve the overall quality of planning and budgeting at various levels of government. As part of the budgetary reforms, the country is currently moving towards a medium-term budget framework (MTBF). MTBF is a form of budgeting that aims to align budgets with policies, and to do so over a rolling three-year period rather than for a single year budget as in traditional budgeting. Pakistan is a federation with three tiers of the government, i.e. the federal, provincial and district level of governments. The MTBF approach has to date been introduced at the federal level and in one of the provinces i.e. Punjab.

The MTBF approach places a lot of emphasis on the outcomes or impact of government policies and budget. Outcomes and impact are also at the heart of gender responsive budgeting (GRB) work. GRB aims to mainstream the gender dimension into all stages of the budget cycle and involves analysis of the differential impacts of public expenditure as well as revenue policy on women and girls, and men and boys, respectively. The ultimate aim is, through policies and associated budget, to make a real difference in the lives of women and men, girls and boys – and especially those who are poor. GRB thus fits in well with MTBF approach.

GRB is far from the only gender-related initiative in the country. Given the large-scale gender inequalities prevalent in Pakistan, various programmes and projects have been launched to support gender mainstreaming. The government's current flagship programme for gender mainstreaming is the Gender Reform Action Plan (GRAP). A GRAP has been approved at federal level, and there are also provincial GRAPs. The federal GRAP confirms government's commitments in respect of GRB by stating that a preliminary gender review of public sector expenditure will be undertaken in an effort to make the budgetary processes more gender-sensitive. Apart from GRAP, other key documents of the Government of Pakistan have also highlighted and made commitments to introduce GRB in Pakistan. These include the government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) produced under the auspices of the Ministry of Finance and the Medium Term Development Framework produced under the auspices of the Planning Commission.

With these facilitating factors for introducing GRB in Pakistan, in 2005 the Government of Pakistan in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pakistan and its cost-sharing donors, namely Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Royal Norwegian Embassy, initiated the Gender Responsive Budgeting Initiative (GRBI). The GRBI was initiated at federal level, in the province of Punjab and in two pilot districts of Punjab, one of which was amongst the wealthiest and the other among the poorest.

The GRBI was designed to work on an incremental basis. For the first years it focused on the federal and Punjab budgets in three sectors – Education, Health and Population Welfare. Two Project Management Units (PMUs), one at the federal level and one at the

provincial level, were established and housed in the respective Finance ministry and department to implement the project activities. The Project Directors were ex-officio officers of the Finance ministry/department while the rest of the staff was employed through a competitive application process. A Project Steering Committee under the chairpersonship of Secretary Finance, the most senior civil servant of the Ministry of Finance, was established to provide overall guidance and support. During its first two years, Pakistan's GRBI made important gains in showing how budget approaches and instruments can be made more gender-responsive. This article describes what was done.

GRB Activities

The GRBI has been characterized by conception and execution of key activities in a stage-wise manner. To assist with operationalising the initiative, the official project document described a series of stage under which different activities would be conceived and executed. The planned stages included: awareness raising; gender-based budgetary analysis; capacity building; and advocacy. In practice, these stages are not strictly sequential in that, for example, capacity building is needed for analysis, and analytical results can be used in awareness raising.

The project document and subsequent planning emphasized performance indicators, facilitating factors and expected risks. Detailed planning of work is carried out at annual basis based on the experience of the previous year.

(a) Awareness Raising

Since GRB was a relatively new concept in Pakistan, a concerted awareness raising effort was initiated in the first year. A series of awareness-raising workshops were conducted at the federal, provincial and district levels for sensitizing key stakeholders, from the public sector and beyond, on the concept and benefits of GRB. TV and print media were also utilized to raise awareness. TV talk shows, news bulletin and newspaper articles were commissioned for disseminating the ideas which would lay the foundation for subsequent project activities.

In tandem with the above, awareness-raising resource materials on GRB, tailored to the context of Pakistan, were developed and disseminated. These consisted of a selection of key materials that reinforced the potential of GRB as a tool for advancing gender equality. These served to answer basic queries about the project and GRB and sensitized readers about the need for and modalities of GRB. As part of development of resource material on GRB, the project also developed a comprehensive 'Resource Kit'. It contained, among others, case studies, practical tools and guidelines, and identified entry points and strategies for integrating a gender perspective in the ongoing budgetary reforms in Pakistan. The Resource Kit is available on the project website (www.grbi.gov.pk) along with other resource material.

Further, in order to understand better the context of the budgetary reforms with which the GRBI would need to align its approach, background studies were conducted to review the

recent planning and budgetary reforms in Pakistan and to examine the indicators and other data currently available through official sources for GRB reporting. The latter investigation confirmed that ample sex-disaggregated data are available in the country despite the common perception to the contrary. The problem, however, remains that the available data are not analyzed in a comprehensive manner from a gender perspective, and are not used when formulating and reporting on budgets.

(b) Gender budget analysis

In order to prioritize and move in a methodical manner, an implementation strategy in respect of the potential GRB tools was developed with the support of an international subject specialist on GRB. The implementation strategy highlighted the priority areas and provided a road map to be followed. The following tools were deemed feasible in the context of Pakistan's GRBI: gender-aware policy appraisal, gender-aware beneficiary assessment survey, time use survey and gender budget statement. Each of these then had to be adapted for the Pakistani context.

The first GRB tool to be implemented was the gender-aware policy appraisal. Academics with knowledge of the different sectors were commissioned to conduct gender-aware policy appraisals for the sectors of Education, Health and Population Welfare. These appraisals analysed the situation of women and men, girls and boys in the given sector, and assessed the extent to which the formulation, funding and implementation of the policies and programmes within that same sector addressed the identified gender issues. The studies thus involved a gender-sensitive and sector-specific situation, policy, and budget analysis along with analysis of the preliminary impacts so as to understand the needs and identify gaps from a gender perspective. The studies were widely disseminated and became part of the gender-related inputs to the Sector Review reports which government prepares as part of the MTBF process.

GRBI also commissioned a gender-aware beneficiary assessment survey in the pilot districts of Rajanpur and Gujrat in the province of Punjab. The survey aimed to collect and analyze the opinions of men and women as to whether and how the current forms of public investment and public service delivery met their needs and how far the current patterns of public expenditure accorded with their priorities. The survey involved primary field-based research and utilized both quantitative (e.g. survey) and qualitative (e.g. focus group discussions) methods. The specific objectives of the survey included determining the level of satisfaction of intended beneficiaries by sex; understanding the degree and manner in which community members had benefited from education and health services by sex; and learning how stakeholders felt the education and health services could be improved in terms of equitable access. The survey findings were shared with stakeholders, in particular the officials of the pilot districts, in the hope that they would use the findings for the following year's planning and budgeting.

A GRBI staff member undertook gender-aware benefit incidence analysis of the budgets of the education and health sectors. A three-step methodology was employed. In the first step, estimates were obtained of the unit cost of providing public services based on reported public spending in budget documents and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

(PRSP) Annual Progress Report 2004-05. In the next step, these unit costs were imputed to households identified through the dataset from the Pakistan Social and Living Standard Measurement (PSLSM) Survey 2004-05 as users of the subsidized public services. Finally, aggregated estimates of benefit incidence were obtained in groups ordered by income quintiles for each province. Interestingly, the research revealed some patterns that differed from those found in a similar exercise conducted using data several years earlier. Further research would be needed to explore possible reasons for these differences.

A nation-wide time use survey is currently underway to reveal macroeconomic implications of the unpaid care work in the country. The survey is being conducted by the official statistics agency of Pakistan, Federal Bureau of Statistics (FBS), and will cover respondents from a total of approximately 20,000 households. This is the first time that a survey of this kind is being conducted on a national level in Pakistan. It should be especially helpful in highlighting the distribution of unpaid care work between women and men, and across other divides. This information, in turn, can be used to inform government programmes and budgets.

Pakistan's time use survey is utilizing a diary-based approach in which respondents aged 10 years and above are asked, in a face-to-face interview, what activities they performed in each half-hour of the preceding day (a 'yesterday' diary). The survey is being conducted in four 'tranches', one in each quarter, so as to ensure that seasonal variation in activity is captured. During the preparatory stage, in-depth discussions were held with the FBS on the questionnaire, coding list and index and a detailed work plan was prepared and finalized with input from the international consultant and the project staff. A training manual for the field enumerators and supervisors was also completed, and training organized on a cascade basis whereby trained officials of the FBS held trainings for the enumerators at the regional level. Planning for the survey included a pre-testing pilot of the questionnaire in the field to test the quality and adequacy of responses. The questionnaire was subsequently revised to address shortcomings. Female enumerators were specially hired for the survey on a scale which is unusual for surveys conducted by FBS, and two-member teams of male and female established to do the fieldwork. The fieldwork should be completed in early 2008. In the interim, the FBS has finalized a tabulation plan and tested this using data from the first quarter.

Finally, the gender budget statement (GBS), an accountability tool which a government uses to inform parliamentarians and members of civil society about money allocated for initiatives that advance gender equality, was also employed. In 2006, the GRBI commissioned the drafting of pilot gender budget statements for the Education, Health and Population Welfare sectors in Punjab. This was done after a series of workshops which explored, with government officials and others, what gender budget statements should look like in Pakistan at the provincial level and after development of a handbook for government officials explaining how to undertake the task.

A Gender Budget Statement (GBS) for Education, Health and Population Welfare sectors was issued by the Finance Department, Govt. of the Punjab in 2006 and GBS for federal and Punjab level are being prepared for the current year. An attempt was made to prepare gender budget statements for the two districts. This came up against the problem that the

districts have virtually no development funds over which they have direct control. The statements for the various levels of government are the first effort of their kind in Pakistan. They are expected to improve in the coming years and should facilitate discussion as to how to make resource allocations more gender-responsive and ensure that the money is used for effective implementation. The format of the GBS used in Pakistan is as below. This format is used to describe the three or four programmes or projects within each sector that are considered to contribute most to gender equality.

Format of Punjab's gender budget statement

- Programme name
- Sub-programme name (where relevant)
- Gender issues
- Planned activities
- Budget for previous and current financial year
- Inputs (including targets and actual progress on ground)
- Outputs (including targets and actual progress on ground)
- Overall achievements

(c) Gender Sensitizing the Budgetary Process

Each year the budget wings of the federal Ministry of Finance and Finance Department, Government of Punjab issue budget call circulars to ministries (or departments in the case of the province) instructing them how to draw up their budget for the following financial year and prescribing the forms they should use for this purpose. The officials within the ministries and departments then use this format to draw up their budget submissions.

As mentioned earlier, Pakistan has been moving towards a MTBF that helps align operations with policies over a three-year framework rather than the single-year budgets of traditional budgeting.

In order to emphasise the link between policy and budget, the submissions required from ministries and departments must include narratives as well as numbers showing delivery performance alongside the budget numbers. GRB is also based on the idea of aligning budgets with policies and, in particular, policies that promote gender equality. MTBF, therefore, provides a window of opportunity for introducing GRB in the government's budget cycle.

The GRBI took advantage of this window and proposed refinements to the MTBF approach rather than a separate complicated approach to GRB that would impose a large additional burden. The simple amendments proposed could nevertheless have a significant positive impact in encouraging ministries and departments to address gender issues in their policies, programmes, projects and budgets.

After a series of discussions and focused deliberations with senior hierarchy in the Ministry of Finance and Finance Department, Government of Punjab, gender sensitive amendments were incorporated in the MTBF budget call circulars. These modified budget call circulars require that ministries and departments to write about gender when discussing their missions, visions, goals and activities. One complication was that the MTBF formats and approaches differ between the federal and provincial levels. Nevertheless, relevant refinements were proposed and accepted for the call circulars of both levels of government.

Extracts from 2007/08 federal budget call circular

Ministerial policy objectives

Indicate gender-related objectives in the Ministry's own policy as well as objectives relevant to the sector from general GoP policies.

Key output indicators

Indicate the required disaggregations, such as sex/gender and age group for services delivered to individuals.

Input indicators

Indicate the relevant disaggregations. In particular, indicate the current gender/sex breakdown of both qualified and unqualified staff.

Mission statement and functions of the Ministry

Specify where and how functions contribute to the achievement of gender equity.

Objectives statement of the Ministry

Disaggregate targets and performances measures where appropriate. In particular, indicate sex/gender disaggregation wherever possible. Include specific performance measures related to gender equity.

Key output indicators in the medium term

Disaggregate key output indicators wherever relevant. In particular, disaggregate by sex/gender wherever possible. Include specific output indicators related to gender equity.

Extracts from 2007/08 Punjab budget call circular

Sectoral mission statement

Departments should indicate where their services are meant to provide any particular benefits to men, women, girls or boys within the larger population context.

Three year goals

Where goals refer to individuals, Departments should include gender-related goals, e.g. moving towards gender-parity in school enrolment. Wherever possible, quantified gender-disaggregated indicators may also be included.

Strategic issues

The problems and issues, including gender-related matters, expected to hinder the Department in achieving its goals may be listed under this field.

Major initiatives / activities planned

Any initiatives intended to promote gender equity or to address gender issues may be highlighted.

Performance targets

Output and outcome indicators relating to individuals should be gender-disaggregated.

These amendments constitute one of the most significant achievements to date for the GRBI as they not only demonstrate the commitment of the government to GRB, but also take an important step institutionalizing a gender perspective in the government's established budgetary forms and procedures. Further work will be needed at both levels of government to assist the responsible officials to respond appropriately (and in a gender-sensitive way) to the gender requirements.

The amended budget call circular has already, however, begun to provide useful information that was not previously available. Already for the 2006 budget, as a result of GRBI intervention, the Punjab call circular required that departments report on the number of men and women employed by them, as well as the numbers they proposed to employ in the coming year. The information provided by departments in response to the call circular was analyzed and published in a study entitled 'Gender Patterns in Employment Related Public Sector Expenditures'.

A call circular that requires gender issues to be explicitly addressed and the annual publication of gender budget statements should facilitate participation in budget discussions by parliament and civil society. It will do this, among others, by addressing the common complaint from people interested in women's empowerment that they cannot 'see' gender in the budget because of the format in which it is presented. Because the budget information produced as a result of the gender-aware call circulars and gender budget statements will be more explicit as to what government is planning to do in respect of gender issues, the new information provided will make analysis, discussion and advocacy easier.

In addition, in responding to call circulars and in drawing up gender budget statements, officials may discover some inadequacies in available gender-related statistics. This can stimulate them to improve their information systems so that they produce better information in the future. Over time, as this information becomes publicly available, evidence-based analysis, discussion and advocacy will be further facilitated.

Call circulars, departmental submissions and gender budget statements are not the only budget-related documents that can be 'engendered'. The Government of the Punjab each year publishes a white paper on budget to inform public on the budget process and the government aims, objectives and targets in the budget process. In the White Papers on the Budget for 2006-07 and 2007-08, the importance of the GRB approach was duly recognized as complete sections on the subject were included. This again shows government's commitment and interest towards gender issues and allocations.

(d) Capacity Building and Advocacy

The capacity building component of the GRBI was initiated with a training needs assessment which assisted in developing a capacity building plan for the project. Thereafter, a training manual was developed catering specifically to the needs of government officials of Finance division/department and the line ministries/departments of Education, Health and Population Welfare of Pakistan. Using the training manual, a pool of resource persons was developed consisting of both government officials and members of civil society. Over a period of time, a series of trainings were held for various stakeholders including government officials, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and researchers in order to build their capacities so that they could start analyzing budgets from a gender lens.

Trainings on specific GRB tools and topics were also conducted for particular groups of officials or other stakeholders to support the use of the tools discussed above. These included training on gender budget statements and the time use survey among others. A supporting handbook on gender budget statements and an enumerator's manual for the time use survey were also developed and provided to relevant government officials. Trainings were also held for government officials dealing with the amended budget call circular at the federal as well as provincial levels.

In order to disseminate the research findings and advocate for the institutionalization of GRB, focus group discussion and workshops were held for different groups of key stakeholders. Brief and easy-to-read policy briefs based on the research findings were developed and disseminated. This helped in advocating for GRB in that the target audience of researchers, civil society and government could raise issues and identify further areas of work. Also important were the advocacy sessions which were held with the federal and provincial parliamentarians along with the local elected head of districts. These were important because the budgets at all levels are passed by the respective assemblies and, therefore, the involvement of elected representatives is vital for the sustainability of this initiative in Pakistan. As the result of these advocacy activities by the project, there was a debate on GRB in the National Assembly during the 2007 budget session. This lays the basis for further advocating the GRB agenda at all levels.

Finally, a website was developed (www.grbi.gov.pk) reflecting project activities, knowledge-based outputs, workshop reports, and training material among others. The web-site is updated on a regular basis.

Linkages and Synergies

Alongside implementation of the planned activities, partnerships were forged and synergies developed to anchor the GRB work more widely in the country. This aspect of the project included working with other gender projects and programmes such as Women's Political School (a project to gender sensitize local women councilors); Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT) (which focuses on capacity building of elected representatives); the Social Policy and Development Centre (an independent research centre which conducts budgetary analysis); the National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA) (which provides capacity building of middle-ranking government officials); and Aga Khan Rural Support Program (NGO working in the Northern Areas of Pakistan) among others.

Government is currently spearheading the implementation of GRB in the country. However, the project realizes that GRB will only be sustainable if there is support of and involvement from NGOs and other civil society organizations (CSOs). The GRBI therefore organized sessions for leading NGOs and CSOs working on gender issues in which participants were orient on GRB and the role of NGOs and CSOs in advocacy and lobbying for more equitable resource allocations. This initiative was supplemented by the development of a booklet entitled 'GRB: Opportunities for NGOs'. The booklet was intended to assist NGOs in thinking about what their role could be in the government's GRBI as well as in their own GRB activities. The booklet includes case studies of how NGOs in different countries have carried out diverse GRB-related activities.

Challenges and lessons learned

The implementation of the GRBI faced a range of challenges as this was the first time in Pakistan that a dedicated government-based project on GRB was launched. It is always difficult to convince those who are at the helm of policy making to change standard ways of working. Convincing them to introduce gender-sensitive changes to the mechanisms of public sector resource allocations at a time when other major reforms were underway was thus a challenging task. However, the initial commitment by the government to implement the project and the housing of the PMUs in the Ministry of Finance and Finance department with ex-officio government officials as its project directors provided the initial impetus and enabling environment for introducing GRB. Further, constant interaction and advocacy by the project with the key officials of the line/sector ministries created allies who could help convince the higher-ups in the Finance ministry/department to gender-sensitize the budgetary processes.

GRB is relatively a new concept in Pakistan and when the project started there were not many subject specialists, either at the individual or organizational level, in the country. GRB resource persons needed to be well versed in the fields of gender as well as in public finance. There are, however, very few resource persons who have command over

both the subjects. Resultantly, the project had to rely on the services of international subject specialists. This has worked in the favour of the project so far, but it is not a long term solution.

During the initial months of the project, the governments in all three tiers i.e. federal, provincial and district levels were asked to nominate focal persons from each of the relevant ministries/departments for the GRBI project. These focal persons were to support the project and assist with coordination of project activities. The focal persons were given orientation on GRB and were invited to project workshops so as to build their capacity and keep them on board. The focal persons proved to be a great asset for the project. For example, they supported the project in collecting relevant data and helped with finalization of GRB products such as the gender aware policy appraisals. More generally, the existence of focal persons helped to create ownership by government rather than a view that the GRBI was an externally imposed project.

For introducing the gender sensitive amendments in the budget call circulars, the respective budget wings of the federal Ministry of Finance and provincial Finance department were approached. As noted above, GRB was proposed as an amendment to the MTBF approach, rather than a complicated and separate system that would impose a large burden. Presentations were given on trial responses to the proposed amendments to demonstrate that they were easily implementable. The approach worked and amendments were deemed reasonable and justifiable by the concerned high-level officials of Finance and thus they were accepted and introduced accordingly.

GRBI subsequently provided technical backstopping for the relevant officials of Ministry of Finance, Finance Department, and pilot ministries and departments to assist them in understanding how to respond to the new requirements in the gender-responsive call circulars. However, the quality of the responses received so far requires further improvements. The project is responding to this issue by organizing further trainings for the concerned official but the process will take time.

The initial gender budget statements for the line departments were developed with the support of external consultants. This was done after obtaining the in-principle consent of government officials, and after officials had participated in workshops in which they developed draft gender budget statements. The idea behind the approach was that the project, through consultants, could provide mentoring to the relevant official in the initial years until they themselves are able to prepare these statements. After their preparation, despite the support of the focal persons, the approval of the gender budget statements by the higher ups of the line departments took some time. Such bureaucratic delays are among the issues which the project is likely to face on a continuing basis.

For the time use survey, the FBS was the natural partner since the main user of the survey findings was going to be the government and government officials are more comfortable using government-generated data. The FBS also had sufficient in-house capacity and experience to carry out large-scale surveys and had a physical presence in all parts of the country. However, since this was the first time that they were carrying out a

time use survey, initial training and technical backstopping were provided for them through an international subject specialist. The fact that the work was done by a large government agency resulted in some administrative problems and resulted in delays in starting the field work. These delays were accepted as it was important that the government should have full confidence in the survey work in order to have acceptance and integration of survey findings in government policies in the long run.

For capacity building, the project's approach has been to impart trainings to targeted groups for a specific GRB tool keeping in view the role that the participants are going to play and the GRB tools that they are going to implement. Thus, for instance, the gender budget statement was planned to be prepared and issued by the line ministries/departments. It was therefore primarily government officials who were trained on the subject. Similarly, for the time use survey, trainings were held for national-level employees of the FBS who were going to implement it. However, experience has shown that capacity building of government officials cannot be a once-off activity. Refresher courses are needed to emphasize concepts and means, and build on their growing experience.

After the orientation of NGOs and after they had been invited to participate in project activities, some of the NGOs showed interest in carrying forward the GRB work. To date this has not, however, produced much in concrete terms. The NGOs have pointed out that they require funding if they are to do GRB-related work. As there was no provision of funds for NGOs during this phase of the GRBI, no such funding could be offered. This is, however, something which the project management might consider in the next phase.

The UNDP Pakistan has provided valuable technical backstopping throughout the project period and has also made available important resource material. UNDP also assisted in getting international partners such as the Commonwealth Secretariat on board. The latter has supported GRB initiatives in other countries, and has forged a partnership with the GRBI to carry forward the GRB work in a further province of the country, Sindh. The Sindh activities are building on the experience at the federal level and in Punjab.

Gender sensitization of policy and resource allocations is a slow process with multiple constraints. Nevertheless, the project has made an encouraging start. The project is receiving increasing recognition and coverage and a range of organizations have indicated their interest in collaborating with it. The project has also been invited to a number of local and international events to present its work.

At present, there is good support from the government for the GRB. Reprioritization of resources is, however, a 'political economy' issue and there is always a risk that government may not give due importance to the findings and recommendations of the GRB analysis and allocate budgets according to other considerations. Therefore, the measures initiated for gender responsiveness of the government budgetary processes needs to be further consolidated. Gender sensitive amendments in the budgetary processes, which are seen as key to sustainability, will need to be given special focus in

coming years. Technical backstopping and mentoring for the relevant budget officers will need to continue for some time to come to cement the reforms introduced.

Way Forward

One positive development during the last year of the first phase of the GRBI was the development of a strategic alliance with Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRSP) Secretariat. Through the efforts of the project, the draft document of PRSP II envisages an enhanced scope and coverage of GRB in coming years. The current phase of the GRBI comes to end in December 2007, it has been agreed and approved in principle by the government that the GRB initiative will continue as part of a new PRSP Monitoring project. This new project is intended to support implementation of the PRSP II and would have a dedicated component of GRB. Since the new project is expected to start from January 2008, it will basically pick up the activities being undertaken by GRBI. The scope will, however, be expanded to other provinces, as well as to other sectors. The expansion to other sectors is especially important in underlining the fact that gender is not relevant only for the social sectors.

Aligning GRB with PRSP will further strengthen the implementation of GRB in Pakistan and would help in the process of mainstreaming gender responsive resource allocations in the government's budgetary system on a sustainable basis.