

GENDER AND BUDGET 2005

Introduction

Government's commitment to gender equity is entrenched in the Constitution, in various pieces of legislation and policies that were developed during the first decade of democracy. Most recently this commitment was reiterated both by the President in his State of the Nation Address on 11 February 2005 and by the Minister of Finance in Budget 2005.

However, what is gender equity all about, and more importantly, why is it of relevance to examining the government budget? It is relevant because we live in a society that has a history of providing more opportunities and access for men and boys than for women and girls. This is evident in the imbalance observed with regard to who is most vulnerable in the society e.g. those most vulnerable to HIV/Aids infection are female; those most vulnerable to poverty are female; those most vulnerable to lower paid employment and to unemployment are women. Within the South African context, these vulnerabilities are compounded by racial, class and geographical factors. Thus, when developing plans and programmes to address the imbalances within the society, a gender perspective provides a critical lens through which these layers of inequalities can be considered. Unless gender-sensitive plans and programmes have money allocated to them, it is not possible to implement them. Thus, budgets also need to be gender-sensitive.

Looking for gender within the budget is *not* about separate budgets for women and men or girls and boys. It is about budgets that give critical consideration to the imbalances that exist in society and respond effectively to addressing these.

Budget 2005 gives some consideration to tackling gender inequities. However, many interventions tend to be gender-blind i.e. interventions that benefit everyone, including women, will benefit women less than men and girls less than boys, as a result of the imbalances mentioned above. Thus a gender-blind policy/intervention becomes gender-insensitive. What is needed is a move away from gender-blind interventions to proactive gender-sensitive interventions. In order for this to happen, there has to be ongoing critical engagement with the impact of budget expenditures on vulnerable groups, both inside government and within civil society.

What is prioritised within Budget 2005?

Budget 2005, committed to the government Programme of Action outlined in May last year, sets out to fulfil three overarching and inter-related goals in the upcoming budget period: *accelerating economic growth, advancing social development and reducing levels of inequality*¹. Government's commitment to this Programme of Action was echoed by President Thabo Mbeki in his State of the Nation Address in February this year and again in the Budget speech.

¹ National Treasury Budget Speech (2005:6)

Budget 2005 priorities are set against a backdrop of what government describes as a sound fiscal policy. During the first ten years of democracy emphasis was placed on creating a stable economy. A cautious fiscal policy was implemented in the early years, thereafter becoming somewhat more expansionary since 1999/00. The current budget reflects this expansionary trend: there is increased non-interest spending of R74 billion over the upcoming MTEF period and tax relief of over R10 billion.

In order to fulfil its three overarching and inter-related goals, what has Budget 2005 prioritised and what are some gender questions that we need to raise?

Accelerating economic growth

Because of government's emphasis on the close relationship between an increase in economic growth in order to have a trickle-down increase in the rate at which employment opportunities are created, focus is therefore on:

- Increasing public and private investment spending, particularly on improving economic infrastructure – those factors such as telecommunications, transport, and electricity generation which enable economic activity to occur efficiently and optimally
- Improving roads and the public transport systems
- Implementing new water infrastructure projects
- Reducing barriers for small businesses through reducing taxes and related administrative burdens

Gender questions

- In which sectors are these developments happening i.e. is it industries that are female-dominated or not?
- In which areas are improvements occurring i.e. is it in areas that enable easy and safe access to job opportunities relative to where the majority of those who are poor live?

Advancing social development

Based on government's belief that social development is integral to sustainable economic growth, Budget 2005 allocates increased spending in the following areas:

- As of April 1, 2005 the child support grant increases from R170 to R180, state old age pension, disability and care dependency grants increase from R740 to R780, and foster care grants increase from R530 to R560.

Gender questions

Women are the ones primarily accessing grants to provide for their families, therefore,

- How great is this increase when one takes inflation into account?
- What does it mean for poor households when the child support grant is only provided for children until 14 years of age?

- In an expressed attempt to ensure administrative efficiency in disbursing these grants, government goes ahead with its plan of establishing the South African Social Security Agency that will assume full responsibility for the administration and implementation of these grants. The Agency will be located within the national department of Social Development, and undoubtedly, will take some time to set up. In the interim, provinces are still responsible for implementation of social grants but the money available for social assistance is now in the form of a conditional grant (i.e. additional allocations of R125 million, R160 million and R190 million over the MTEF).

Gender Questions

- How is this agency going to ensure efficiency thus be of benefit to those (i.e. primarily women) who are accessing these grants?

- Provincial social development receives additional allocations (R60 million each year over the MTEF) for the implementation of the HIV/Aids home and community-based care for those affected by HIV/Aids, allowing for the expansion of these services

Gender questions

- As the majority of those people providing caring services are women, how much allowance is made within the increased allocations for an increase in payment of these workers?

- In line with the emphasis on quality education in order to address the lack of skills that are required for the economy, there are increases in allocation for improving access to education and improving school buildings where learning takes place. In supporting access to education, there are increases in the allocation to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (R226million in 2005/06; R200 million in R2006/07 and R350 million in 2007/08) and improvement of further education and training colleges which operates at tertiary level (R1 billion over MTEF).

Gender questions

- What is the gender breakdown of information with regard to who is awarded support through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme as this information has not been available in previous years?
- How is the education and training from FET colleges viewed? Are women making use of these facilities advantaged or disadvantaged as a result of the perception of the training and education received?

- In recognition of the need to retain skills, salary increases for social workers (mainly women), teachers (more women than men) and police officers (mostly men, and have had increases fairly recently) have been prioritised in the Budget.

Gender questions

- How substantial are these increases?

- In promoting the provision of houses within an environment that creates sustainable communities, the upgrading of informal settlements has been prioritised (with what appears to be little thought to plans which is already creating major problems in Cape Town) and the provision of basic infrastructure for poor communities – provision of clean water, sanitation, electricity, lighting, public telephones, construction of community centres such as crèches, community halls and public open spaces, sports facilities and improving access to health and income-earning opportunities. This is in line with implementing the Comprehensive Plan for the Development of Sustainable Human Settlements launched by government in 2004.

Gender questions

- Who qualifies for housing and housing subsidies?
- In whose name is the title deed and how does that affect the qualification for housing subsidies i.e. women who have left abusive relationships and apply for housing subsidies are often turned down as they are told they already have a subsidy, however the title deed is in the man's name?
- Where are the houses being developed in relation to easy access to job opportunities?

- Budget 2005 provides increases for financing safe and secure environments (however, there is no real mention of gender-based violence in the Budget speech). The department of Safety and Security sees an increase in funding to allow for hiring more police personnel (29 790 new personnel over the MTEF). The department of Justice and Constitutional development also gets substantial increases for improving court administration and security as well as for the appointment of additional personnel (prosecutors) and improvement of court buildings (but no mention of specific gender services).

Gender questions

- Which courts are being prioritised i.e. courts that deal with maintenance, domestic violence and sexual offences?
- Are increases in positions for personnel targeting those services that women are most in need of i.e. prosecutors to prosecute sexual offences (which are what women will need) or are prosecutors being appointed for prosecution of organised crime?

- An additional R6 billion has been allocated to conclude land restitution processes, particularly within rural areas and to support emerging farmers (i.e. not the poorest of the poor) to ensure sustainable and productive use of land. There is also concentration on improving rural farming infrastructure

Gender questions

- What is the gender breakdown of those who qualify for land restitution?
- What is the gender breakdown of emerging farmers?

Reducing levels of inequality

Even with transformation within the country, the fact remains that South Africa is among the most unequal societies in the world. Government has therefore prioritised spending within poor areas so that basic needs can be provided for and the divide that exists along class and racial lines addressed (with limited mention of addressing inequalities along gender lines).

- Much concentration is placed on education. Here specific attention is given to building the skills and experience of youth in particular. A strong focus is thus also on utilisation of the SETA's so that learnerships can be provided.

Gender questions

- What is the gender breakdown of those who qualify for learnerships?
- In which sectors are learnerships primarily being offered?

- Government continues with its Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) as a means of creating opportunities for those most vulnerable (women, disabled, youth) through short-term, labour-intensive and low-paying employment

Gender questions

- What is the gender disaggregation of job opportunities that are created with regards to the disabled and youth?

- Black economic empowerment is a strong focus in addressing inequality, and government states that it does so through awarding of contracts targeting small businesses, businesses owned by women and other historically disadvantaged groups.

Gender questions

- How many contracts are awarded to businesses owned by women compared contracts awarded to businesses owned by men?

Addressing gender inequalities through Budget 2005 – issues for advocacy

Accelerating economic growth thus creating more employment opportunities bodes well for all in our society – women and men – and particularly for poor households. However, thus far there has only been limited impact. Advancing social development inevitably has gender implications. It is largely women who assume caring responsibilities in the society – caring for their families, children, and the sick. The improvements in provision of grants, quality health and education services and salary increases in professions that are dominated by women are welcomed – even though women and girls have not been directly targeted. Furthermore, provision not only of houses but houses within environments that foster building healthy, safe and secure communities and citizens is essential, more especially for women and girls who are

most vulnerable to violence. With regards to the government focus on reducing inequality, there appears to be limited benefits along gender lines as addressing gender inequality does not seem to be a primary target. The EPWP is meant to give priority to women as the target set is that 60% of work must go to women – only few of these programmes appear to succeed in this regard.

While there is some direct recognition of gender issues, largely it seems to be an unintended spin-off. In order for efficient planning that addresses social problems, gender-sensitive budgets are crucial. Currently, the budget presented holds many positives that need to be acknowledged. However, there are some concerns that need to be raised. A core concern is the ability of government to implement these plans/programmes that have been allocated substantial amounts of money. We are pleased that the issue of delivery and monitoring is prioritised by government – both echoed in the President’s State of the Nation Address and within the Budget documents. However, we within civil society also need to assume monitoring functions. We need to vigilantly watch the mechanisms that government is putting in place to address inefficiencies. Some areas that that can be explored more closely are identified below.

Accelerating economic growth

- We need to monitor where improvement of transport routes and road improvements are occurring and whether these developments are also in areas that are impoverished or merely limited to those areas that have existing high commercial benefit.
- We need to monitor the extent to which job creation takes into account important issues such as the employment positions that women and men hold, earnings of women and men, and caring responsibilities that limit largely women’s access to employment. Also, we need to examine which sectors are growing and which ones are collapsing e.g. are they sectors that are female dominated such as the textile industry. Reports on the number of women employed in a work place are insufficient to monitor the extent to which gender inequalities are being addressed.

Advancing social development

- With regard to social grants, we need to look closely at what the spending power of the increase is i.e. what the amount is worth when taking inflation into consideration, and we need to remember that the child support grant is only for a limited number of children (i.e. means tested and does not extend to children older than 14 years of age). While the Minister of Finance expressed increases in social grants between R10 and R40, these values were expressed in nominal terms i.e. they did not take inflation into consideration. When we do take inflation into consideration, we see that the increase ranges between R2.74 and R8.56². This increase is likely to have miniscule beneficial impact in poor households. Further, when a grant such as the child support grant does not extend to children beyond 14 years of age, this means that a substantial number of children are without assistance. This is problematic when we consider that between the ages of 14 and 18, children should be in high school

² CPIX inflation figures provided in the Budget Review (2005:20) for 2005/06 have been used

and their needs increase, thus social assistance would have a major impact in their lives.

- We need to monitor whether the administration of the grant through the South African Social Security Agency will ensure efficient administration of the grant (as it will take a while before this Agency is set up, monitoring still needs to be focused at a provincial level). The issues of efficient administration through the establishment of this Agency is a huge concern as there is no clarity about how the new system is going to ensure efficiencies that were lacking in the previous provincially-driven system. The concern is even more important when we are made aware that many of the same people currently responsible for administering the grant at provincial level are likely to be employed to do the same function at national level.
- We need to watch the administration of education opportunities, particularly in relation to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). It is important to track how much money is available and who the money is benefiting. The need for gender disaggregated data is therefore essential.
- Housing needs to be closely monitored particularly as the history of providing houses has been plagued by corruption and discontent among communities who are waiting for many years for decent living accommodation. This area is critical because a key complaint about the housing department, especially in the Western Cape, is that they have often failed to spend the allocations. It is not clear what shifts are occurring within the administration of housing to ensure the increased allocations will be spent. We also need to be watchful of who qualifies for housing and how applications for subsidies are dealt with, particularly for women fleeing abusive relationships. An issue of importance that needs monitoring is where housing will be in relation to access to job opportunities e.g. how will one get a job if one is living in Delft? Once again it is imperative that we push for gender-disaggregated data to be made available.
- Vulnerability to HIV/Aids infection remains critical for women in particular. While it is noted that government has allocated money for HIV related programmes especially within social development, education (a real decrease of 3% over the MTEF is noted) and health, several concerns remain. Firstly, the Minister of Finance made no reference to HIV/Aids in his budget speech – silence around such a critical issue is unacceptable because society needs to be reminded of the harsh realities that we are facing, especially when budgeting to address such realities. Secondly, while there have been increases for the home and community based care programme, the effectiveness of the EPWP component is questioned, particularly as a means of alleviating poverty within households – will there be increases in money paid to those (volunteers who are primarily poor women) providing the caring service. Thirdly, while there is a new Youth and Gender sub-programme within the department of Social Development, careful monitoring of the services need to be done to see who is benefiting. It is once again essential to obtain detailed gender disaggregated data and to do so for the Youth component as well, and to have data that

provides a cross-cutting of youth and gender i.e. male and female youth and male and female non-youth.

- While the increases in personnel for education, social work and police are welcomed, we need to examine whether the new personnel will be well trained thus provide effective assistance to citizens who use their services. Also, with regard to police services, it is necessary to monitor where the new employees will be deployed – the positions that they are going to fill, as often it is not for functions where they are most needed e.g. there is a far greater need for uniform officers who work in the charge office and for detectives than for radio controllers.
- The justice system is critical to monitor. With regard to the emphasis on court administration, we need to examine which court administration will be prioritised. There are several pilot family courts that are predominantly used by women and children that have remained pilots for several years. It is unclear when they are going to become permanent fixtures and whether administrative problems that plague these courts will be prioritised. While establishment of further sexual offence courts are welcomed, it is unclear whether additional prosecutors will be employed for these courts. (According to the department's budget, the appointment of 200 prosecutors is for high priority criminal cases). And, once again the prosecutors that may be placed within these sexual offences courts should be trained so that they can deal effectively and sensitively with victims of such crimes.
- Land restitution has been a long drawn out process. The extent to which the pace of delivery will increase must be monitored including the gender make-up of who is qualifying for land claims i.e. women or men.

Reducing levels of inequality

- The EPWP makes a concerted effort at providing opportunities for those who are most vulnerable. However, we need to be wary of what the EPWP can really deliver. The design and policy intention of the programme as a short-term, low-income job opportunity does not enable it to provide an adequate response to poverty nor to unemployment. Furthermore, the learning opportunities in the work that fall within the ambit of the EPWP do not equip any of the workers (drawn from the local community) with sufficient skills to enable them to start their own businesses, neither are there other job opportunities that are created from which they can benefit.