

**PUBLIC GOVERNANCE DIRECTORATE  
COMMITTEE OF SENIOR BUDGET OFFICIALS**

**OECD Best Practices for Gender Budgeting**

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Scherie.NICOL@oecd.org

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## 1. Introduction

1. Budgets are about more than money. They are a statement of a nation's priorities. As part of a broader government effort to progress on gender equality goals, gender budgeting is a practice which can help ensure that the budget advances priorities relating to gender equality, such as reducing the gender pay gap and closing gender gaps in the labour market. It is rooted in the gender mainstreaming approach, which recognises the need to remove inherent gender biases from key government processes and tools and instead seeks to leverage these processes and tools to meaningfully advance gender equality goals.

2. Closing gender gaps requires concerted efforts across government. A whole-of-government approach is therefore needed, encompassing legal, regulatory, policy and budget decisions. Government tax and spending decisions have powerful social, environmental, and economic implications for a country, shaping people's choices regarding work and economic participation. When implemented effectively, gender budgeting can ensure that budget decision-making helps deliver transformational change that will bring social and economic gains.

3. A growing number of OECD countries use gender budgeting. Just over 60% of OECD countries now practice gender budgeting, compared to fewer than half of OECD countries (44%) in 2015 (OECD, Forthcoming<sup>[1]</sup>). Countries recognise its value in raising awareness of how budget proposals impact gender equality. The benefits of gender budgeting include:

- An improved evidence base upon which resource allocations decisions can be made.
- Improvements to the effectiveness of the budget in closing gender gaps.
- Greater transparency on the impact of the budget on different groups of society.

4. With many countries still in the early phases of implementing gender budgeting, these best practices aim to highlight ways in which the practice can be designed and implemented to ensure its sustainability and impact.

5. A wide variety of gender budgeting approaches are practised across OECD countries. These best practices are relevant for all countries, regardless of their approach. They draw on lessons learned through the OECD Network on Gender Budgeting and the OECD's support towards countries in relation to gender budgeting. They build on, and complement, existing OECD standards and resources including the 2015 Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life (OECD, 2016<sup>[2]</sup>), *Designing and Implementing Gender Budgeting: A Path to Action* (Downes, 2020<sup>[3]</sup>) and the *Framework for Gender Budgeting* (OECD, 2019<sup>[4]</sup>).

## 2. Best practices

### 2.1. Best practice 1: Gender budgeting strengthens the link between budgeting and key gender equality objectives

#### 2.1.1. Gender budgeting links gender equality objectives with the budget process

6. Having a budget that clearly reflects the higher-level priorities of the government ensures that the government can deliver outcomes for citizens in relation to its political commitments. Gender budgeting is a practice which can be used to ensure that the budget, as far as possible, reflects the priorities of the government in relation to gender equality. This is not done through creating a separate budget for women's policies. It is done through building a gender budget practice that encourages departments to table budget proposals in line with the government's priorities, and brings information to the fore on the gender impact of budget proposals to support better-informed and more impactful budget decisions.

7. A well-designed gender budgeting practice may help bring about cultural changes that strengthen the link between budgeting and gender equality objectives through:

- Increasing understanding around how closing gender gaps can benefit economic growth and fiscal sustainability.
- Including consideration of the governments gender equality objectives when setting out the high-level priorities for the budget.
- Requiring analysis of the impact of budget measures on gender equality (whether or not their primary objective is gender-related).
- Considering the results of this analysis alongside budget proposals, so that budget decisions can be made in light of the government's gender equality priorities.

#### 2.1.2. The government sets out clear policy priorities relating to gender equality

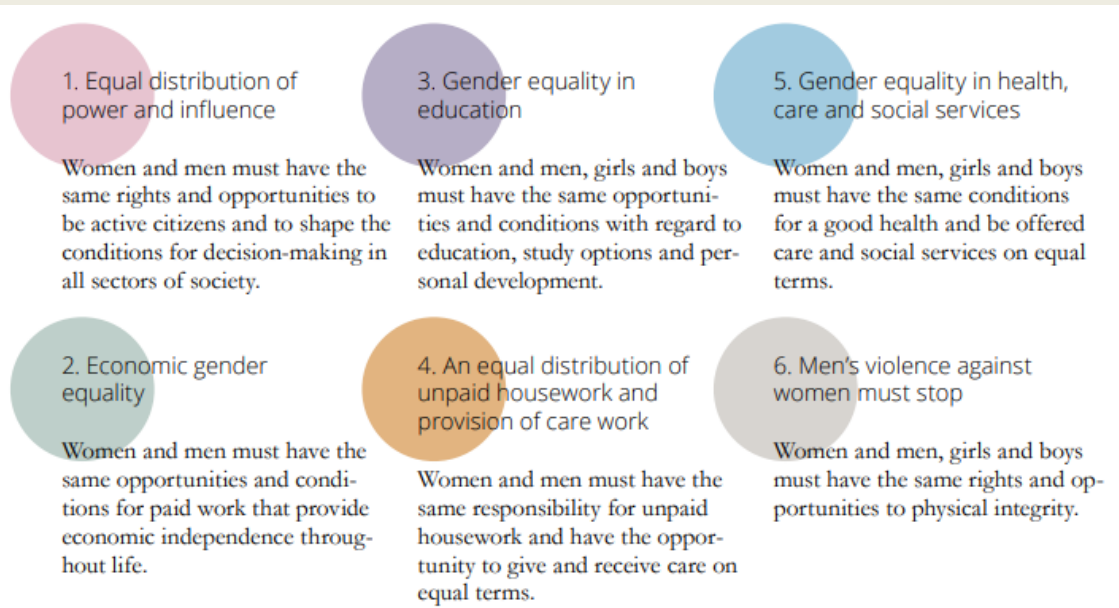
8. Gender equality is a broad cross-cutting policy area, and so a strong approach to gender budgeting will benefit from national gender equality objectives identifying the key areas of focus for whole-of-government action. Objectives should be specific, rather than general, providing information on the main policy priorities of the government, and how gender budgeting will help to achieve those. National gender equality objectives should be set out in a credible government document that holds political weight, such as a gender equality strategy. A good practice example is provided by Sweden (see Box 1).

#### Box 1. National Gender Equality Policy Goals in Sweden

Gender equality has been recognised as a separate policy area in Sweden since the 1970s. Since then, Sweden has shown clear results, now having achieved one of the highest female employment rates in the OECD.

The government's main strategy to achieve gender equality policy objectives has been gender mainstreaming, in place since 1994. The overall policy objective is that women and men shall have the same power to shape society and their own lives. It has been in place since 2006 and benefits from broad political support, having guided gender equality policy in several different governments. With this

as its starting point, the government is working towards the following six sub-goals:



The budget process and the Budget Bill are of key importance in realising the government's policy agenda. The Ministry of Finance has introduced a formalised requirement in the budget circular which requires that all ministries include a gender-equality impact assessments as part of the budget proposals that they put forward. The intention is to ensure that policies take gender equality aspects into consideration at the design stage. These gender impact assessments also inform the direction and distribution of resources.

Source: (Sweden, 2020<sub>[5]</sub>)

9. Gender equality objectives set by individual ministries and agencies should link policy action to overarching gender equality goals. This includes gender goals set out in departmental plans as well as those relating to specific budget programmes. Concerting government efforts towards the same objectives ensures more coherent and effective government policy.

## 2.2. Best practice 2: Gender budgeting is sustainable beyond political cycles

### 2.2.1. Gender budgeting has legal underpinning

10. Public financial management reforms that have legal underpinning are more likely to be both viable and sustainable. Legal underpinning, combined with a technical capacity for gender analysis, helps ensure the implementation of gender budgeting and fosters engagement from government stakeholders as well as the wider institutions of government, such as parliament and the supreme audit institution.

11. It may be that in the early stages of gender budgeting, implementation is driven by political support. Strong political leadership helps provide a clear purpose and vision for the reform. This is important to mobilise cultural change within government. It can also help pave the way for any institutional changes to be put in place that ensure clear leadership arrangements and strong coordination mechanisms.

12. While political leadership is important at the start, legal foundations for gender budgeting help ensure its sustainability in the longer term and insulate it, as far as possible, from fluctuations arising from the economic or political environment. Legislation that is fully tested and debated in parliament will help embed gender budgeting as a valued and enduring feature of public policy making (Downes, 2020<sup>[31]</sup>).

13. Legislation provides a strong foundation for gender budgeting, but this must also be built upon with robust tools, methods and supports so that gender budgeting becomes entrenched in the work of government and enjoys continued relevance. The combination of factors that have helped build an enduring gender budgeting practice in Spain are set out in Box 2.

### Box 2. Gender budgeting beyond political cycles in Spain

Spain has been publishing its Gender Budgeting Report alongside the budget since 2008. There are several factors that have ensured the sustainability of gender budgeting in Spain beyond political cycles. These are outlined below.

First, gender budgeting has strong legal underpinning. The 2007 Organic Law for Effective Equality Between Men and Women made it an obligation for the government to publish a Gender Budgeting Report alongside the annual State Budget. The introduction of this report through an Organic Law illustrates the broad political support that existed for the introduction of gender budgeting. The legal underpinning of the Gender Budgeting Report was further reinforced through an obligation for its publication to be incorporated into the General Budget Law through an amendment in 2020.

Second, gender budgeting has strong methodological foundations. The initial methodology linked budgetary programmes with key objectives in the Strategic Plan for Equal Opportunities. This methodology was revised in 2020 and is now based on the study of three dimensions: Reality, Representation and Resources-Results. These methodologies have created a sustainable analytical framework to guide gender budgeting, outside the political sphere.

Third, gender budgeting has benefited from international momentum. It is not just in Spain where there is increased attention on the impacts of the budget on high-level priorities. A growing number of OECD countries are publishing reports alongside the budget that highlight the impact of the budget on cross-cutting goals, such as gender, climate, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Lastly, gender budgeting has helped support a broader government push towards greater budget transparency. The Gender Budgeting Report, and associated data visualisations accessible through an interactive online tool, increase the quantity and quality of information accessible to citizens to help them better-understand how the government is directing public resources, and the impact of these choices on gender equality.

Source: (Spanish Ministry of Finance and Civil Service, 2022<sup>[6]</sup>)

#### 2.2.2. Gender budgeting demonstrates impact

14. For gender budgeting to be sustainable over time, it needs to demonstrate added value as a practice to politicians, the public administration, and civil society. With this in

mind, it is helpful to have in place - from the start - a framework which seeks to measure the impact of gender budgeting.

15. Measuring the general impact of gender budgeting on gender equality outcomes is complex for various reasons. The changes may be difficult to detect and measure, progress depends on the actions of several actors, indicators can be impacted by a number of exogenous factors, and the time that it takes to see changes may exceed the temporary horizons of any monitoring exercise. Nevertheless, it is possible to select certain indicators to identify how gender budgeting is contributing to changes in public policy.

16. One important way in which gender budgeting can have impact is through helping increase awareness among government stakeholders of how budget measures impact gender equality. Requirements for gender analysis to accompany budget proposals can help draw attention to gender equality issues, affecting the awareness, attitudes, and perceptions of policymakers. Assessing progress in this regard could be done in different ways, for example, through tracking the percentage of budget measures that are assessed as gender neutral in different policy areas, and how this evolves over time.

17. Gender budgeting can also have impact through affecting the design and content of policies, so that they are better-targeted to achieve gender equality objectives. One way to measure this is to try and capture where gender budgeting efforts have resulted in the redesign of policies or programmes. For example, the Canadian Government looks at the budget programmes where its gender and diversity impact analysis (GBA Plus) has identified negative impacts and captures information on whether – as a result - steps have been taken to lower or mitigate these. This information is presented in its Impacts Report, published alongside the budget (Government of Canada, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>).

18. A key challenge relating to the impact of gender budgeting in OECD countries is that the evidence gathered is often under-utilised in decision-making. Presenting the information in a timely and succinct manner during key stages of the budget cycle can help increase the chance that this information is taken into account. This requires evidence on gender outcomes to be collected on an ongoing basis in anticipation of these decisions. Where public servants and citizens can see the information generated from gender budgeting being used in decision-making, the practice is more likely to be enduring.

### **2.3. Best practice 3: Gender budgeting is incorporated into the overarching budget framework**

#### ***2.3.1. Gender budgeting is led by the central budget authority***

19. The central budget authority (CBA) has decision-making power on resource allocation, giving it considerable influence over government-wide policymaking and the achievement of national policy goals. It is beneficial that the CBA leads on gender budgeting efforts because it has the authority to influence what information is considered alongside budget proposals in decision-making. It also has the authority to ask line ministries for information to be provided alongside budget proposals on their gender impact. Having this requirement as part of the budget process can be particularly powerful and help move gender mainstreaming beyond a “box-ticking” exercise. Line ministries may be more likely to provide good quality gender impact assessments, for example, when they know that this impacts on budget proposals being considered for funding.

20. Leading on gender budgeting efforts involves designing an approach, planning its implementation, supporting line ministries through the process of implementation, and using the information gathered from gender budgeting to inform resource allocation

decisions. Best practice is to create a dedicated team in the CBA, with counterparts in line ministries to develop and implement gender budgeting.

21. As the lead for gender budgeting, the CBA should also set out clear roles and responsibilities for different government actors including the gender equality institution and line departments and agencies. Gender budgeting often involves close collaboration between the CBA and the gender equality institution, given the gender equality institution's central role in setting overarching gender equality objectives, coordinating gender equality policy, and developing capacity across government for gender mainstreaming.

22. Although it is important that the CBA has the lead role, the skills-sets of budget experts are not necessarily attuned to complex gender equality issues. For this reason, the CBA can benefit from broadening its traditional skillset so that relevant staff are equipped to fully understand the actions needed to drive change in key policy areas such as equal pay and closing the employment gap in the labour market (see also Best Practice 6).

### ***2.3.2. Gender budgeting builds on the existing budget framework***

23. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to gender budgeting and - while countries can benefit from the study of existing models, experiences, and international standards - each country should design an approach which fits their own national context and budget framework. The budget framework is the set of rules, procedures, tools and responsibilities that underpin the government's budget process. It covers all stages of the budget process, from planning and formulation to approval, implementation, and control.

24. There are many entry points for gender budgeting, be it through the performance framework, impact assessment or spending review. The approach chosen should build on existing cross-government strengths and fit within the national budget framework. For example, a country with a strong focus on performance budgeting may choose to integrate a gender perspective through the performance framework to ensure that the government is using public resources to increase gender equality. Alternatively, a country with a strong culture of policy impact assessment may choose to integrate a gender perspective to the budget through requiring gender impact assessments alongside all new budget proposals.

25. Where the government has concerns about the capacity of the public administration to implement gender budgeting, it may consider introducing it initially on a pilot basis, or in several stages. This enables lessons from the pilot to inform wider roll-out of gender budgeting, as well as the development of government capacity over time.

### ***2.3.3. Gender budgeting is incorporated into relevant budget reforms***

26. Large scale budget reforms can offer an important window of opportunity to introduce new practices such as gender budgeting. Several OECD countries, such as Austria and Iceland, have followed this approach. Introducing the initiative as part of a larger package of reforms ensures that gender budgeting is built-in to the overall approach to budgeting, rather than an "add-on".

27. When designing an approach to gender budgeting, it is also important to ensure that it is coherent with other priority budgeting initiatives that may be in place, such as green budgeting or wellbeing budgeting. For example, a country that implements green budget tagging as part of their approach to green budgeting may wish to also use tagging as a key tool within their approach to gender budgeting. Ensuring coherence will help minimise any additional burden that these initiatives place on staff resources.



28. Iceland provides a good practice example of a country where gender budgeting has built on the existing budget framework and as well as being incorporated into subsequent relevant budget reforms (Box 3).

### Box 3. The incorporation of gender budgeting into the overarching budget framework in Iceland

Gender budgeting was introduced in Iceland as part of the budget reforms instigated in response to the global financial crisis in 2008. Subsequent years focussed on developing an initial approach to gender budgeting and piloting its implementation across the ministries. Between 2011 and 2016, line ministries focussed on one policy area, undertaking analysis of its gender impact, and then planning and implementing policy changes to improve gender equality.

Gender budgeting was then incorporated into the new Public Finances Act 2016. The Act also introduced performance budgeting, and this gave new opportunities for the approach to gender budgeting to evolve. An annual Gender Baseline Report mapping gender perspectives in different policy areas is used as a basis for policy development and is used to help set performance objectives with a gender dimension. The introduction of spending reviews has also provided an opportunity to further develop gender budgeting. The Ministry of Finance is currently experimenting with integrating information on the gender impact of policies into the spending review process.

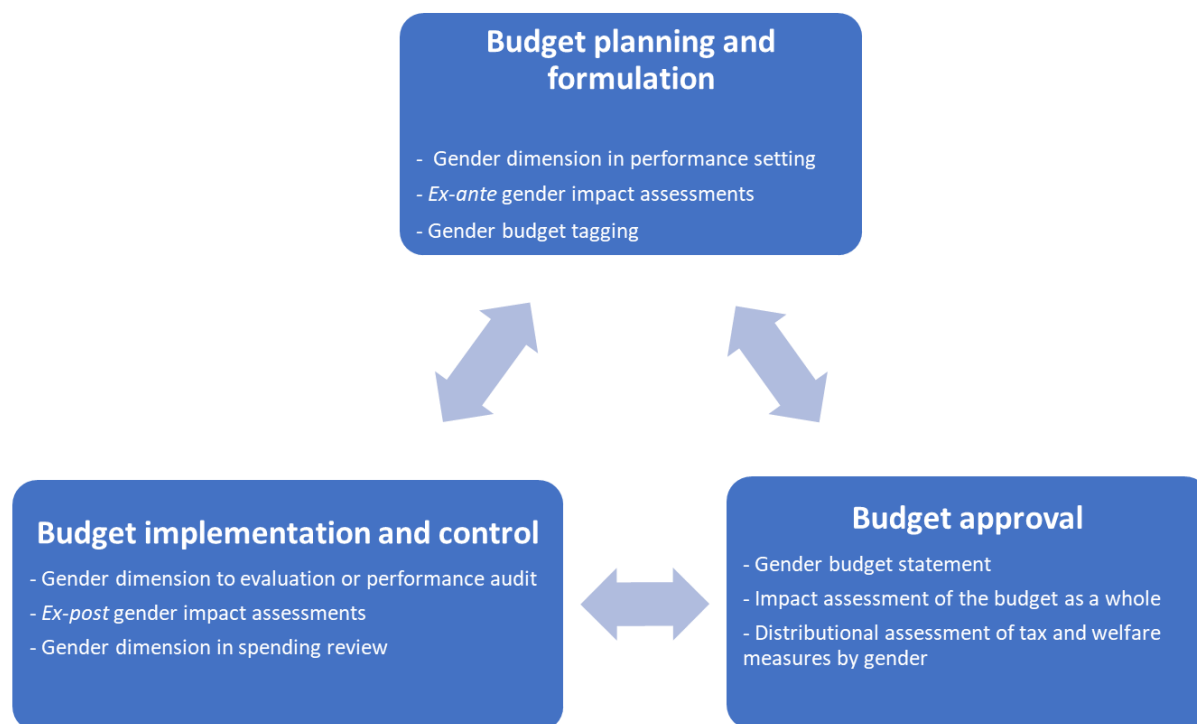
The COVID crisis has also brought about evolutions to the gender budgeting approach. The Ministry of Finance undertook gender impact assessments of the different tranches of investment in response to the crisis. This was informed by gender impact assessments of individual budget measures. Following on from the crisis, the provision of gender impact assessments alongside new budget measures has now become regularised as part of the budget approach.

Source: (Icelandic Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, 2022<sup>[8]</sup>)

## 2.4. Best practice 4: Gender budgeting tools are used at all stages of the budget cycle

29. The budget process is an annual (or indeed multiannual) event, and there are several opportunities across the cycle in which the gender perspective can be brought to bear (see Figure 1). A more advanced approach to gender budgeting benefits from the incorporation a gender perspective at all the different stages of the budget process. This facilitates learning and improvement in the effectiveness of the budget in meeting gender goals.

Figure 1. Key stages of the budget cycle, and relevant gender budgeting tools



#### 2.4.1. Gender objectives help guide budget planning and formulation

30. The *ex-ante* phase of the budget process involves budget planning and formulation. In the planning phase of the budget, the CBA may encourage ministries and agencies to consider the overarching gender equality objectives of government, and the specific gender needs in their policy areas, as part of policy priority-setting for the budget. This information will be helpful in ministries and agencies setting performance goals with a gender dimension.

31. Moving to budget formulation, to support gender budgeting, the CBA may require gender information or analysis to accompany budget proposals. For example, there may be a requirement for an *ex-ante* gender impact assessment to be provided alongside each budget proposal. Gender budget tagging may also be a requirement at the *ex-ante* phase, highlighting how proposed budget measures impact gender equality goals. This provides the CBA with information that helps it to identify and prioritise budget proposals that progress gender equality goals.

#### 2.4.2. Information is presented on the impact of the budget on gender equality

32. Once the government has formulated the budget, the draft budget is presented to parliament for debate and approval. A gender budget statement tabled alongside the draft budget can be helpful to provide information on how the budget impacts gender equality, and key actions being taken to progress gender equality objectives. This supports stakeholders such as parliament and citizens in understanding whether the budget is adequately progressing gender equality, helping inform a richer debate on budget choices.

33. The most appropriate way to publish the information will be different in each country. This information is often presented in a standalone gender budget statement, although it may also be integrated into the main budget documentation. Each option can have its merits. In some countries a standalone statement will give the information greater visibility, but in other countries the information will get more readership if it is included in the main budget documentation.

34. Key information that can be presented includes progress towards gender goals, summary information from gender budget tagging, a summary of the gender impact of individual budget programmes, or a gender impact assessment of the budget as a whole (a qualitative assessment of how the overall budget impacts gender equality objectives). A distributional assessment of tax and welfare measures by gender may also be presented. This quantitative analysis may focus on gender impacts, or it may form part of a broader piece of work looking at the distributional impact of the budget on different groups of society.

#### ***2.4.3. The implementation and control phases of the budget include consideration of whether budget programmes are delivering their intended gender impacts***

35. During the implementation and control phases of the budget, gender budgeting tools can provide useful information on whether budget programmes are achieving intended results. Tools such as a gender dimension to evaluation or performance audit, *ex-post* gender impact assessments, and a gender dimension in spending review can help give insights into whether the design and/or funding of programmes need be adjusted to deliver better results.

36. The integration of a gender perspective to the implementation and control phases of the budget can also help extend the reach of gender budgeting to baseline tax and spend. This is particularly useful in countries where the annual budget only includes new budget measures, and where spending at the margin may only a small proportion of overall government spending.

37. The integration of a gender perspective throughout the overall budget cycle has proven challenging in many countries. Most commonly, countries bring a gender perspective to bear at the *ex-ante* phase of the budget process, for example, through assessing the expected gender impact of budget proposals. Although this can be a good stage to introduce gender budgeting considerations, over time it is also important that countries expand the gender lens to later stages of the budget cycle. This helps in assessing the actual gender impact of programmes once they are approved. Feeding this information back into future budget decision-making is important to improve the effectiveness of public policy in progressing gender equality goals over time. An approach to gender budgeting that focusses solely on the *ex-post* phase of the budget process is also suboptimal since information on the gender impact of budget measures is obtained after budget decisions have been made. This will limit the use and impact of the analysis, unless there are strong mechanisms to feed this information back into budget planning and formulation.

38. A good practice example of gender budgeting tools being used at all stages of the budget cycle is provided by Austria (Box 4).

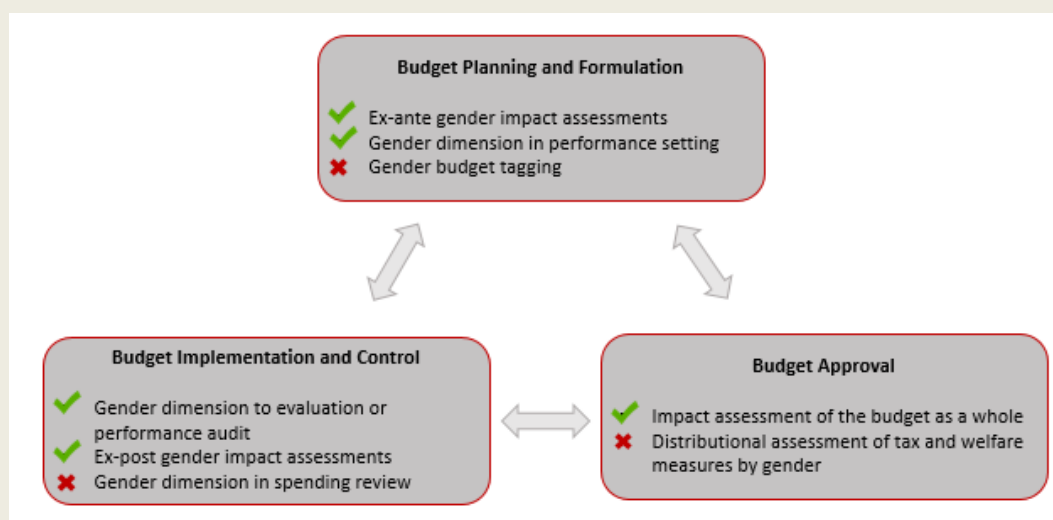
#### Box 4. Gender budgeting at each key stage of the budget cycle in Austria

Gender budgeting has been enshrined in the Austrian Constitution since 2009, where it states that the Austrian Federation should apply gender budgeting as an integral element of performance budgeting. The two main instruments through which gender budgeting is implemented are:

- Gender budgeting as part of performance setting in the course of the annual budget process
- The integration of gender considerations in *ex-ante* and *ex-post* Regulatory Impact Assessments undertaken for laws, regulations, and major projects

Although the Austrian Government does not regularly publish a distributional assessment of tax and welfare measures by gender, the Austrian Parliamentary Budget Office has conducted some analysis in this regard. In addition, the Austrian Court of Audit regularly looks at gender, and other diversity aspects, in relevant performance audits. The Court of Audit does this through asking questions such as: whether or not gender objectives are relevant, if the level of ambition is appropriate and what the impact of the measure is on society.

Mapping these tools across the budget cycle, it can be seen that instruments of gender budgeting are applied at each key budget stage in Austria:



Source: (Austrian Federal Ministry of Finance, 2022<sup>[9]</sup>)

#### 2.4.4. Gender budgeting can be applied to the full breadth and depth of government spend

39. It is important that gender budgeting is designed and practiced in a way that enables consideration of how the budget impacts gender objectives across all areas of the budget. For example, different analytical requirements for government bills compared to those proposed by parliament, may inadvertently mean that one does not fall under the scope of gender budgeting. Alternatively, gender impact assessments may be required in relation to new spending measures, but not in relation to new tax measures. These situations should, to the extent possible, be avoided so that gender budgeting can be applied to the full breadth

of the budget. In addition, the application of gender budgeting at all levels of government recognises that tax and spend decisions at all levels of government impact gender equality.

## **2.5. Best practice 5: Gender budgeting is underpinned by strong data and analysis**

### ***2.5.1. Gender budgeting benefits from good availability of gender-disaggregated data***

40. Gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting will only ever be as good as the data that informs it. The availability of gender-disaggregated data is an area of concern for many OECD countries that have a gender budgeting system. Poor availability of gender disaggregated data is one of the main obstacles to effective implementation of gender budgeting tools such as gender impact assessments. For this reason, the introduction of gender budgeting can also require investments to increase the availability of gender-disaggregated data.

41. To understand the impact of budget measures on gender equality, line ministries and agencies may need to strengthen existing data collection or collect new gender-disaggregated data on who uses public services and how they use them, as well as how needs and preferences vary by gender in their respective policy areas. This helps inform more complete gender assessments and gives an improved evidence base for policy discussion and design. There may be a particularly strong need for new data in “hard-to-understand” areas (such as environment or infrastructure) where the gender impact of spending may not be immediately obvious.

42. The national statistics agency also has a key role to play in relation to ensuring there is broad availability of gender disaggregated data. In Sweden, official statistics must be disaggregated by sex unless there are special reasons for not doing so. Statistics Sweden has a specific unit in charge of promoting the production of sex-disaggregated data, and a webpage dedicated to gender statistics. The agency uses this information in its regular publication “Women and men in Sweden, Facts and Figures”. In addition, several government agencies have requirements related to sex-disaggregated statistics in their instructions, including for non-official statistics (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022<sup>[10]</sup>).

43. National statistics agencies may also have a role in relation to compiling and tracking progress in relation to overarching gender objectives. The additional value of the national statistics agency undertaking this role is that the measurement standards they use are often defined by international institutions, facilitating cross-country benchmarking and learning.

### ***2.5.2. Analysis sheds light on the multifaceted nature of gender inequality***

44. Gender inequality can be compounded by multiple aspects of an individual’s identity (e.g., race, socio-economic class, sexual orientation, disability). Collecting data on the how these aspects intersect facilitates analysis of the linkages between gender inequality and other aspects of an individual’s identity. This is referred to as intersectional analysis. Such analysis considers how multiple overlapping factors shape social, health and economic opportunities and outcomes for people, as well as barriers to accessing programs or services. This analysis is the foundation to better understanding the nature of gender inequality being experienced by citizens, and how to address it.

45. Canada is an example of a country where the introduction of gender budgeting was supported by major investments in disaggregated data on gender equality as well as other

intersectional characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical disability (see Box 5).

### Box 5. The strong data and analysis underpinning gender budgeting in Canada

Canada's *Gender Budgeting Act* (December 2018) requires that the Minister of Finance table a report on the impacts in terms of gender and diversity of all new budget measures described in the annual federal budget. For example, Budget 2022's Statement and Impacts Report on Gender, Diversity, and Quality of Life includes a summary of the Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) undertaken for new measures announced in the budget. The Statement also includes aggregate analysis of the gender and diversity impacts of the budget, showing the share of the budget targeting different sub-groups of the population and the share of the budget with expected benefits for gender equality.

The Canadian *Gender Budgeting Act* also requires that *ex-post* impact assessments be done on all expenditures and shared publicly on an annual basis. To this end, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat is working with line departments so that they are able to obtain proper authorities and enabled to collect the required data to monitor and report program *ex-post* impacts. Further work is being undertaken to integrate GBA Plus into government-wide reporting.

A key challenge of effective gender budgeting in Canada is the availability of disaggregated data. In response to this, the government increased funding for Statistics Canada in Budgets 2018 and 2021. The 2018 investment was targeted towards a Gender and Diversity Hub enabling data users to more easily find disaggregated and intersectional data, analytical products, and insights. The 2021 allocation funded major investments to implement a Disaggregated Data Action Plan over 5 years. The objectives of the Disaggregated Data Action Plan are to:

- Support more representative data collection
- Enhance statistics on diverse populations
- Support the government and society's efforts to address systemic racism and gender discrimination
- Bring fairness and inclusion considerations into decision-making processes

The Plan will lead to the production of detailed statistical information to highlight the experiences of specific population groups, such as women, Indigenous Peoples, racialised populations and people living with disabilities. Within the first year of the Plan, key results included improving and expanding data collection through the Labour Force Survey, the Canadian Community Health Survey, the General Social Survey, and the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey allowing for greater disaggregation across statistics programmes on health, society, the economy, and the environment.

Increased availability of disaggregated statistics helps make analysis conducted as part of gender budgeting, using GBA Plus, more robust. GBA Plus is an analytical process that assesses how diverse groups of women, men, and gender diverse people may experience policies, programmes, and initiatives. The "plus" in GBA Plus acknowledges that such analysis is not just about differences that are biological (sex) and socio-cultural (gender), and considers many other identity factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical disability, and how the interaction between these factors influences the way citizens might experience government policies and initiatives.

Source: (Canadian Department of Finance, 2022<sup>[11]</sup>)

## 2.6. Best practice 6: Gender budgeting implementation is supported through capacity building

### *2.6.1. Government staff are given training and support to implement gender budgeting*

46. Gender mainstreaming, and specifically the integration of a gender perspective into budget planning, formulation, implementation, and control, is often a new concept for government actors, who face competing demands for their time. In this context, the successful implementation of gender budgeting relies on training and capacity development, and financial resources to help implement it. This helps increase openness to, and understanding of, gender budgeting.

47. Training should be available for relevant budget analysts in the CBA as well as programme managers and evaluators in line ministries. Training needs will likely relate to the tools and methods of gender budgeting, the information needed to support them, as well as how to analyse the information produced and use them in the budget process. Line ministries can also benefit from customised sector-specific training that shows how policy within their domain is relevant to the achievement of gender equality objectives, and the role of gender budgeting. Other stakeholders, including the budget and accounts committees of parliament, ministers and senior civil servants and wider civil society, may also need to be sensitised to the new system. The transition to gender budgeting may in some cases require a change in culture and mind-set that requires long-term effort.

48. The gender equality institution and women's non-governmental organisations (NGOs) at the national and regional level can be important partners in relation to capacity building for gender budgeting across the government administration. This might be through providing training, or through providing feedback on gender analysis undertaken as part of gender budgeting efforts. International institutions can also play a role in providing technical assistance and capacity building.

49. Strong co-ordination mechanisms (for example, an inter-agency working group) can be a valuable element of capacity development for gender budgeting, facilitating a common approach and exchange of good practices among different stakeholders.

50. The adoption of gender budgeting will also require the CBA to provide guidance and make amendments to its budget circular and may require increased capacity to improve the budgetary process itself through adjustments to the Chart of Accounts and or IT systems. For example, where gender budget tagging is introduced, there can be a need to introduce tagging functionality in the IT system where budget proposals are submitted.

51. Finally, gender budgeting systems in many OECD countries are still relatively new and many countries are still learning what works and what does not. Once the system is operational, the CBA will benefit from regularly reviewing how well it is functioning, to improve its effectiveness and impact over time.

52. Mexico provides a good practice example of how capacity building can support the implementation of gender budgeting (Box 6).



### Box 6. Capacity building to support gender budgeting in Mexico

Since 2008, Mexico has included an Annex in the Budget Decree called “Budget for women and gender equality”. This Annex was renamed later as “Expenditures for equality between women and men”.

Several factors have helped ensure that there is adequate capacity to support the production of this Annex in Mexico, including:

- The Ministry of Finance developing manuals and guidelines for the implementation of gender budgeting.
- The establishment of Gender Equality Units across line ministries to strengthen the promotion, control and application of gender equality policies and assist with gathering the information needed for the gender budgeting Annex.
- Inter-institutional collaboration between the Ministry of Finance, the National Institute for Women, and the Congress to assess the training needs of budget managers.
- The National Institute for Women providing training on the incorporation of gender considerations in planning, programming, and budgeting.

Source: (Mexican Ministry of Finance and Public Credit, 2022<sup>[12]</sup>)

## 2.7. Best practice 7: Gender budgeting reinforces government transparency and accountability

53. Key information on the impact of the budget on gender equality should be published to improve budget transparency and increase accountability and public engagement on how the government is using the budget to ensure that gender goals are prioritised and achieved.

### *2.7.1. Gender budgeting reinforces government transparency and accountability*

54. Transparency on the impact of the budget on gender equality helps external stakeholders, such as parliament and citizens, understand how the government is using the budget to progress gender goals. Best Practice 4 highlighted that information on the impact of the budget on gender equality goals should be presented alongside financial information as part of the annual budget presented to parliament.

55. In addition, publication of the analysis flowing from gender budgeting can also reinforce government transparency and help in terms of sharing best practice and improving analytical rigour across government. Canada’s publication of its GBA Plus assessments is a good example of how transparency in relation to gender impact assessments can help shine a light on areas for improvement and showcase best practice, helping drive improvements in their quality across different government departments.

56. Transparency can also be fostered through seeking citizen participation in relation to gender budgeting. There are many ways in which a government can bring in the external viewpoints of citizens, strengthening transparency and the approach to gender budgeting. Citizen inputs can be sought through formal and regular consultation opportunities, for example, an annual pre-budget consultation seeking views on key priorities in relation to gender equality policy. Alternatively, it could be that the government has a formal group



of societal representatives from which it regularly seeks opinions on key developments regarding gender budgeting.

57. Ireland has showcased how equality budgeting can be used as a tool to strengthen government transparency and accountability (Box 7).

### Box 7. Equality budgeting and its impact on strengthen government transparency and accountability in Ireland

Ireland introduced equality budgeting in 2017. The initiative built on Ireland's framework for performance budgeting by encouraging departments to identify programmes where they could set performance targets relating to one of nine equality dimensions (including gender).

Equality budgeting was one of several public financial management reforms that the government introduced to increase accountability and transparency. This has principally been achieved through the publication of a new Equality Budgeting Section in the annual Public Service Performance Report. This helps parliament and citizens identify actions that support equality goals and track performance in relation to each of these.

Government departments were encouraged to set targets in relation to equality objectives. This was the first time that targets had been included in the Performance Report, helping change the culture of performance reporting and raising the bar for the performance information in other areas of the report.

The Performance Report is a key tool in government scrutiny. The information provided in the Report is clear and accessible, with a one-page summary for each department. Clear graphics depict progress towards targets.

Other elements of transparency and accountability in relation to equality budgeting in Ireland include:

- Oversight of equality budgeting by the Budget Oversight Committee at Parliament. The Committee undertook a specific inquiry into gender budgeting and holds an annual evidence session on the Public Service Performance Report.
- Oversight by the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO). The PBO has in the past provided an impartial assessment of Public Service Performance Report to help Committee scrutiny. It has also published themed research papers on equality budgeting to help support parliamentary scrutiny.
- The use of an Equality Budgeting Expert Advisory Group to provide ongoing strategic guidance on the implementation of equality budgeting. This includes representatives from Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and brings in external dialogue to help refine and further develop the Irish approach to equality budgeting.

Source: (Irish Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2022<sup>[13]</sup>)

### 2.7.2. Gender budgeting facilitates monitoring progress towards gender equality goals

58. Parliaments in several OECD countries have played an important role in holding government to account for how the budget is progressing gender equality goals, discussing

information on the gender impact of the budget. This is typically the work of specialised committees dealing with budgeting but may also be considered by committees dealing with gender equality policy.

59. A key benefit of presenting information on the gender impact of the budget alongside the draft budget is that it helps parliament understand how the budget progresses gender equality goals. This can support a richer budget debate in parliament and enables parliamentary stakeholders to make more informed choices around amending or approving the budget.

60. As the official reviewer of how public money has been used, acting on behalf of the legislature, the supreme audit institution also has an important role to play in respect of the gender budgeting system. External audit is likely to be interested in reviewing and validating assessments of the gender impact of the budget, and progress towards gender equality goals. Supreme audit institutions may also use their increasing role in the area of performance audit to provide insights on whether budget programmes are meeting their stated objectives relating to gender equality.

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