

WORKSHOP

"Building an Asian community of practice on monitoring and budget analysis"

09-11 July 2007 Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Organized by SILAKA and Social Watch
in collaboration with OXFAM- Novib/KIC

PARTICIPANT'S QUESTIONNAIRE

SYSTEMATIZATION OF EXPERIENCES

To be submitted before 3 July, 2007

Congratulations on being selected to participate in the workshop. Since this workshop is based on the exchange of knowledge contained in specific practices, please fill in this form as fully as possible so that we can make the most of it. If you have any queries about how to complete it, do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you.

I. Personal and Contact Information

(Please check your personal and contact data)

Gender | F | | M |

Name(s) | Taifur

Surname (s) | Rahman

Nationality | Bangladeshi

Name of the Organization/Movement/Community (and Acronym)

Unnayan Shamannay (US)

Describe your current position at the organization

Research Fellow (in charge of research, action research, advocacy and training programs)

Does your organization take part or has bonds with local, national, regional or international networks - which Network(s)?

Bangladesh Secretariat of Social Watch

II. Description of experiences and selection of a practice:

Please answer the following questions. Use the necessary space.

What is a practice?

We understand a practice to be a process, strategy or activity of an organisation or a group of organisations to achieve social change. A practice may vary from an agricultural technique or an educational method to more complex processes like international coalition building. Its scope may be limited, but it may also correspond to entire projects or programmes.

1. ¿Which are the principal fields of expertise of your organization? (E.g., social development, human rights, budget monitoring, sexual and reproductive rights, etc)

Budget monitoring and analysis.
Livelihood and poverty.
Agriculture
Demography
Disaster
Electricity and renewable energy
Employment
Environment, Energy, Climate Change, pollution and Forestry
Fisheries
Gender
Governance
Health, population and family planning
Infrastructure
Landlessness
Local level planning
Micro-credit
Participation
Poverty alleviation
Rural development
Trade
Water resource management

2. ¿Which are the main strategies used in your organization? (E.g., education, research, campaigning, advocacy, lobbying, satisfaction of specific demands, etc.)

Research
Advocacy
Training for capacity building
Publication
Media campaign

3. Among the activities and experiences of your organization, please chose one you consider relevant to be transmitted to the other participants. The practice selected should be a specific action, plan, intervention or process in one of the four topics that will be explored in the workshop (ESCR, Budget analysis, monitoring, advocacy). And you should be able to divide it into the following elements:

a. **Summary** of the practice (no more than 5 lines, please).

The project 'Mainstreaming Gender in Policy Agenda' (*Narir Jibon*) aims at mainstreaming gender issues in the national and local level policies. The project considers budget to be one of the strongest policy tools of the government and focuses on advocating for gender-sensitive budgets at the national and local government levels. This on-going project has undertaken a pilot initiative with four local government bodies (called *Union Parishad* in Bangladesh) for more gender-sensitive budget through greater participation of women in the budget making process.

b. **Motivation:** Situation or problem that the practice aimed to resolve.

Despite the stated commitments of successive governments of Bangladesh for enhancing gender equity in the country, differences between commitments and their actual implementation often are appalling. As a result women are still subject to discrimination, injustices and inequality. It is widely acknowledged that still in Bangladesh the worst

form of discrimination is that against women.

However, some positive changes have been noticeable in recent years in Bangladesh in terms of achieving gender equity. One of the visible changes is the increasing participation of women in public life, resulting in a slow paradigm shift in traditional norms and gender roles. While the national and international non-governmental organisations are very active in this regard, the government is also supportive in many cases. Positive changes at the policy level have also been occurring. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) of the Government of Bangladesh has given high priority on gender equality issues. PRSP considers gender equality as an important poverty reduction strategy and sets out key objectives and targets relating to achieving gender equality through women's advancement, their rights and poverty reduction.

As national budget is a very strong policy instrument of the government, engendering the budget has been discussed for quite sometime now, with a view to attaining more effective targeting of government expenditure and better analysis of the incidence of budgets. However, the budget analysis initiatives undertaken so far conclude that government budgets are prepared using bureaucratic, incremental and non-transparent mechanism, and that both poor and women are excluded from budgetary practices, and there are serious leakages in the flow of resources allocated for the poor. It is estimated that only 2 percent of development budget are targeted for women, 25 percent has partial benefits for women, and the rest are gender blind.

Given the above reality, achievement of the goals stated in the PRSP is likely to be much more difficult than making mere statements in the strategy paper in the socio-economic and cultural setting of the country. In this context, it is evident that a lot more is there to be done in terms of moving forward towards achievement of gender equality. The main challenge in this regard clearly involves a significant change in the mindset at all levels including those responsible for implementing policies at national and local level. Therefore, strong advocacy is required to influence the relevant people and agencies working at the national and local levels. However, effective advocacy needs to be strongly supported by sound research. In this context, although reviews of national budget were done by a number of research works in the past, as indicated above, hardly any such effort has been undertaken since 2002-03.

In light of this, the project aims at advocating for mainstreaming gender in the policy framework in general and national and local budget in particular (i.e. policy formulation and implementation) at all levels in the country. The advocacy at the national level is based on research undertaken in the forms of reviewing sectoral policies and national budgets and at local level, the project undertakes advocacy activities with four selected Union Parishads (UPs). It is expected that the achievements from local level will later be demonstrated at the national level. The project focuses on health and education sectors in particular given the fact that much remains to be achieved in terms MDGs in the areas of maternal and child health and girls' education, especially in the secondary and tertiary levels.

Through this project, Unnayan Shamannay intends to support consensus building across the sectors to facilitate formulation, implementation and review of national and local budget from the perspective of gender mainstreaming, which is expected to provide inputs into the next round of the country PRSP.

c. Objective(s)

To mainstream gender issues in the national and local level policy agenda;

Specific Objectives:

- To advocate for incorporation of gender issues in the mainstream policy agenda;
- To advocate for more gender-sensitive national budget;
- To advocate for increased effective participation of women in the national and local policy formulation and in the process of implementation;
- To demonstrate how gender issues can be mainstreamed at the local government level.

d. Strategies used to solve the problem or situation.

The project follows a two-tiered strategy. At the national level, activities of advocacy for gender mainstreaming in policy framework are undertaken. The advocacy at the national level is based on research undertaken in the forms of review of sectoral policies and national budgets. Simultaneously, advocacy activities with four selected Union Parishads (UPs) tires to mainstream gender issues in the policies at that level, the achievement of which will later be demonstrated at the national level. The selection of the UPs is based on two principles: two of the UPs have advanced level of awareness in terms of budgeting or similar exercises, and rest of the two UPs have female chairmen. This diversity in the selection of UPs will hopefully contribute in understanding how advocacy work under different conditions.

The advocacy strategy involves partnerships with electronic and print media to disseminate the messages that the project wants to convey to the wider audience.

Although there is no formal mechanism to involve the civil society and other organizations in the project, the informal involvement of such organizations is there to carry out the project activities successfully. As it is an advocacy-oriented project, it makes sure while disseminating research findings and carrying out advocacy campaigns that the civil society representatives and organizations participate to raise the voice in favour of gender mainstreaming. The reputed civil society organizations and personnel are invited in the workshops, seminars or roundtables arranged

under the project so that they can also provide their inputs in the process.

e. Resources (financial, human, materials, etc.).

The project is implemented by Unnayan Shamannay with financial support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). While the donors contribute the major share of the budget, the implementer also contributes significantly in it, not only in the form of financial resources, but also in the forms of human resources and logistics.

f. Level of action (local, national, regional and/or international, and if there are any relations among them)

The project simultaneously works at two levels. At the national level, it advocates for gender sensitive national budget and at the local level, it tries to develop a model of gender-sensitive budget of the local government body called *Union Parishad* (UP). The project hypothesise that it is much easier to influence the budget making process of the local government than the national government. So the project plans to demonstrate the model developed at the local level to influence the national policies in favour of a more gender-sensitive budget and budget making process.

g. Brief description of the process (main activities, beneficiaries, when and where it was carried out, methodology, collaboration with partners, etc.).

Project Activities: (Output-wise Major Activities and Process of Implementation)

A number of activities are to be undertaken under each of the outputs. The proposed activities are stated under the respective outputs.

Output-1: Sectoral Policies Reviewed

- (i) Review of policy documents of the health and education sectors for analysing the gender aspects in the policies. As part of this, PRSP will also be reviewed.
- (ii) Review of relevant literature (e.g. project evaluations, research reports etc).
- (iii) Preparation of review report for the two sectors highlighting the gender issues as addressed currently in the policy documents.

Output-2: National Budget Reviewed

- (i) Review of national budgets (of three consecutive years) to analyse how gender issues are addressed in fiscal policies and budgetary allocations.
- (ii) Review of national budgets (of three consecutive years) to analyse the sectoral policies and allocations provisioned for women's advancement.

Output-3: Advocacy Campaign at Local Government Level

- (i) Reviewing the policies of four selected *Union Parishads* (UPs) to analyse how gender issues are addressed at the UP level policies and gather data accordingly.
- (ii) Arranging FGDs with the UP cabinets to know the process of UP level policy formulation, annual budget and how women are involved in that process and prepare FGD reports accordingly.
- (iii) On the basis of above stated reviews and FGDs, developing UP Manual to providing guidance to the UP cabinets on the means of gender mainstreaming in their policy framework.
- (iv) On the basis of newly developed UP Manual, arranging orientation workshops to provide guidance to the UP cabinets of pilot areas. This is to encourage and facilitate the UP cabinets to address gender issues more effectively in their policy formulation and implementation.
- (v) Further reviewing the policies of the UPs to assess the impact and reflection of the increased gender awareness in policy formulation and in the process of implementation.
- (vi) Demonstrating the story of gender mainstreaming at the UPs through a national level workshop.

Output-4: Advocacy Campaign at National Level

- (i) Arranging national level workshops/seminars to disseminate the review reports and discuss with the gender issues.
- (ii) Arranging pre-budget workshops to put specific proposals for a more gender sensitive budget.
- (iii) Arranging post budget workshops/seminars to disseminate the findings of budget reviews from gender perspective.
- (iv) Establishing partnership with print and electronic media and publishing and broadcasting advocacy materials in through media partners.

h. Main results and changes made during the implementation (if it is still running, please comment on the potential outcomes, obstacles, etc.)

The project, which is on-going, expects to have three major outcomes in the long run:

1. Enhanced knowledge and awareness about the gender-sensitive aspects of national and local policies.
2. Capacity of local government authority enhanced to formulate and implement gender sensitive budget at local level.
3. Issues of gender equality and equity are addressed more in the national level policy formulation and implementation.

3 Evaluation of the Practice.

1. What is the general evaluation of the practice? Was the practice successful in achieving the objectives stated? Was the situation/problem resolved?

Although the project has started 8 months ago, it has already made some marks in terms of engendering the budget making process at the local government level. The main motivator for this has been a training program organized to build the capacity of all the four local government bodies, each having a cabinet of 14 members. Following the training, two of the UPs have already manifested significant reflections of gender sensitiveness in their budgets this year. The reflections have been observed not only in the budgetary allocations but also in the process of budget formulation which was participated significantly by women. It is expected that the other two UPs will also be able to reflect similar gender sensitiveness in their process of budget making.

2. What were the key factors for success or failure?

The successes that have already been observed were due to the awareness and capacity building initiative undertaken in the training program mentioned above. The training was an ice-breaker for the UP cabinets who never before thought that they can play a very important role in making their own budget gender-sensitive. The training also provided them with the initial technical know-how of gender budgeting at the local government level. As a result, they were not only motivated, but also got the knowledge to implement the idea of gender budgeting at their levels.

3. What are the major lessons learned?

The project is still in its first year and it may be premature to comment on the lessons learned at this stage.