

Embargo: 00.01 Wednesday 19 September 2018

UK Government lagging behind in making budgets work for women– Women's Budget Group

The Women's Budget Group will urge the UK Government to follow the example of the Scottish Government in analysing economic policies for their equality impact at a meeting at City Hall this evening.

The Scottish Government has established the Equality Budget Advisory Group to ensure that equality and human rights are considered when budgetary decisions are made¹. Dr Angela O'Hagan, a member of the Women's Budget Group management committee and formerly Convenor of the Scottish Women's Budget Group has been appointed as EBAG's first external chair.

Other countries are starting to analyse their budgets for their gender impact in order to promote equality between women and men². Within the G7 Canada, France and Japan publish a gender budget statement while non G7 countries including Australia, Austria, Belgium, Finland, Iceland, Korea, Spain and Sweden all have some gender budgeting initiatives³.

WBG will warn the UK Government that it is in danger of lagging behind at a reception to launch *Women Count: A Casebook for Gender Responsive Budgeting*. This brings together lessons learned from WBG's work since 1989 and is aimed as a resource for organisations wanting to do similar work in other countries.

The Women's Budget Group is recognised internationally for its work on gender budgeting. WBG members have advised the UN, G7 governments and civil society organisations.

Speaking at the launch of the Casebook, Dr Angela O'Hagan said *'Budget processes have increasingly become the conduit for discriminatory policies, such as the UK government's rape clause and the cumulative attacks on welfare income especially among poorer women and women of colour. It is essential that external voices such as UK Women's Budget Group are engaged and heard, and that government's budget processes are opened up to closer scrutiny for their impact on equalities groups and their potential to advance equality through more effective allocation of public finances and more equitable means of raising government revenue. Scotland set out on this process many years ago and still has a long way to go. In common with a number of other governments and sub-national governments, Scotland is continuing to make an effort to create a more progressive budget process.'*

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson, Director of the Women's Budget Group said:

'The Scottish Government and Governments around the world and international bodies like the UN have recognised that it is important to analyse how economic policies may impact differently on women and

¹ <https://news.gov.scot/news/promoting-equality>

² See for example <https://www.internationalbudget.org/2017/10/gender-budgeting-in-2017/>

<http://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Policy-Papers/Issues/2017/05/12/pp041917gender-budgeting-in-g7-countries>³

men in order to promote gender equality. It is time for the UK to join them.

'WBG has been analysing the impact of government economic policy on gender equality since 1989 and working to promote gender budgeting. We are often asked how we do what we do, and what lessons we have learned. Our new casebook Women Count, funded by OSF, draws on our experience to provide a resource for civil society organisations wanting to carry out similar work in their own countries'.

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Women Count is available at www.womencount.wbg.org.uk

What is Gender Responsive Budgeting?

Gender responsive budgeting (GRB) is a tool to assess the impact of government budgets (and other economic policies) on inequalities between women and men in order to promote policies that will lead to greater equality.

It does not mean a specific 'budget for women': reducing inequalities between women and men requires analysis of how *all* policy affects both women and men. Nor does it mean dividing expenditure equally between women and men, because that doesn't necessarily result in reducing inequalities.

GRB looks at budgets to see how they meet the needs of women and men, girls and boys. It can also involve assessing how budgets meet the needs of different groups of women and men, depending on their income, ethnicity, age or whether they live in rural or urban contexts.

GBR includes looking at the impact of economic policy not only on equalities in the paid economy (e.g. income, assets, pay and employment opportunities), but also on inequalities in unpaid work (such as care and domestic work) and other inequalities such as violence against women and girls, participation in decision making and so on.

One of the most important elements of gender responsive budgeting is gender impact assessment (sometimes called gender impact analysis), which is a tool to evaluate the potential impact of policies. Gender responsive budgeting uses this analysis to develop policies to promote equality.

Some principles of gender impact assessment

- Look at impacts on individuals as well as households.
 - Interests within households may differ, so policies that benefit a household's decision-maker may not benefit all household members.
 - Policy may affect decision-making power within households.
- Take a life time perspective wherever possible.
 - Policies' long-term effects may outweigh current impacts – for example policies that make it easier for women to stay doing unpaid care may have negative impacts on women's life time earnings and pensions in old age.
- Take account of effects on unpaid care economy.
 - For example, recognise that the fiscal benefits of encouraging women into employment are not 'free' but may have an impact on unpaid care.
- Look at differences within particular groups of women and men, wherever relevant.
 - For example, differences by race, income, disability and so on.

- Focus on the least advantaged.
- Quantify gender differences in effects where possible.
 - But don't assume no gender effect if it isn't possible to quantify, most policies have some gender effect.
 - Even where they can't be measured, qualitative arguments about such effects need to be taken into account.