

Need To Widen The Horizon Of Gender Budgeting: An Analysis Of Women Centric Expenditure In India

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Abstract

Since women make up more than half of the population, India must give them the consideration and involvement they merit. Citizens' active participation in politics is necessary and crucial in a democracy because it strengthens the democratic fabric and lends legitimacy to the system. Given the present discourse around the allocation of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State legislatures, political activists are presumably more cognizant of the need to provide women with greater possibilities in political institutions and decision-making bodies. According to the recently passed Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023, which will support inclusive governance and women-led development in India, there will be one third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. Additionally, the Indian government made inclusive development a priority and set aside a bigger share of its budget to help women, farmers, and the underprivileged. Improving the involvement of women in the economy is essential for overall social development as well as for reducing poverty and promoting economic growth. According to ILO estimates, by 2025, a ten-percentage point increase in women's labour force participation may boost India's GDP by \$770 billion. Given this, the current study looks on the gender budgeting situation in India as well as the trends in rising expenditure on women.

Keywords: Gender Budgeting, Women Centric Expenditure, Economic Growth, Social Development

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I. Introduction:

Gender equality and inclusive development with social justice and creation of equitable opportunity to everyone is important for holistic and overall development of nation. Women constitute about half of the human resources, however, development has by passed them as the development indicators demonstrate that there are gender gaps in social, economic and political arenas.

The second crucial element is involvement and inclusiveness. This implies that planning, policy, and implementation processes must adhere to a bottom to top paradigm and that women must have a voice at all levels of authority, from the lowest to the highest. The third facet of gender budgeting is the necessity of convergence. Participation in politics, asset-based marketing, technology, education and skill development, access to water and sanitation, health and nutrition, and credit are just a few of the many demands made by women. The convergence of development strategies, initiatives, schemes, and institutional resources is necessary to ensure equitable development. Revisions to the current urban development programmes and programmes are also required in order to appropriately address women's concerns and gender issues.

The two primary ideas that have defined and shaped many national and international discourses on women are gender equality and women's empowerment. The Beijing conference, in the opinion of Singh and Srivastava (2001), marked a sea change in the direction of gender parity and the advancement of practical knowledge on women's empowerment. Gender equality is necessary for the Sustainable Development Goals to be met. However, the majority of countries in the globe still allow discrimination against women in all spheres of life. In India, prejudice against women is engrained in the general societal framework. Gender discrimination is pervasive; women and girls are denied equal access to opportunities, resources, and political power everywhere in the world, despite differences in the degree and types of inequality. Examples of how girls and women are oppressed include the preference for boys over girls, the denial of fundamental human rights, the restriction of women's and girls' professional opportunities, and overt gender-based violence (UNICEF, 2007). The empowerment of women is the buzzword of the day. No advancement is possible without accounting for women, who comprise around half of a country's human resource pool. Giving women additional options is one way to empower them and give them control over their lives. Scholarly debate and analysis of the concept of empowerment is extensive. When women are given the freedom to make more decisions for themselves, they take ownership and control of their life. In light of this, it is the process of learning how to make sensible judgements in life when you haven't previously been able to. The core elements of empowerment are thought to be self-worth and confidence, knowledge of gendered power structures, and the ability to establish and meet objectives (Kabeer 2001). One can exercise power at many different hierarchical levels, such as the individual,

household, community, and societal (that is, the home, village, state, and nation). Empowerment can be facilitated by removing obstacles like a lack of money or expertise and by promoting elements like exposure to new activities that can enhance capacity. Gender equality is necessary to ensure the Sustainable Development Goals are met. Gender equality will enable women to escape poverty and improve their own lives as well as those of their families, communities, and countries. As such, gender equality benefits women and children in two ways. But in order to really remove gender-based discrimination and give women more power, we need to give them a bigger say in the decisions that ultimately affect their survival. Women themselves are the biggest change agents. However, overcoming discrimination against women in the workplace requires a multifaceted approach. Women can engage in productive work on an equal basis thanks to gender equality, which will advance both their personal development and the nation's economy. It can also increase women's access to employment, strengthen their ability to develop a living, provide them the right to work, enhance social protection, and give them a voice. Because it is linked to women's empowerment, gender equality is therefore seen as an essential element of economic growth (Singh, 2008). Women in India have been excluded from progress, despite the fact that they are respected and held in high regard in mythology and historical literature. There are significant differences in gender disparities across cultural, geographic, and historical contexts. India is a large country with significant regional differences in terms of socio-cultural and economic aspects. In a country the size of India, development concerns for women would not only seem out of place, but often outright misleading. Apart from protecting women's rights and interests from abuse, discrimination, and crimes, laws targeted specifically at women have also been enacted to prevent socially unacceptable behaviours. The Indian government has previously carried out a number of initiatives under several headings with the aim of supporting the socio-economic advancement of women.

Promoting empowerment can involve reducing barriers like a lack of money or skills and exposing people to new activities that can enhance capacity. Gender equality will enable women to escape poverty and improve their own lives as well as those of their families, communities, and countries. As such, gender equality benefits women and children in two ways. But in order to really remove gender-based discrimination and give women more power, we need to give them a bigger say in the decisions that ultimately affect their survival. Women themselves are the biggest change agents. However, overcoming discrimination against women in the workplace requires a multifaceted approach. Women can engage in productive work on an equal basis thanks to gender equality, which will advance both their personal development and the nation's economy. It can also increase women's access to employment, strengthen their ability to develop a living, provide them the right to work, enhance social protection, and give them a voice. Because it is linked to women's empowerment, gender equality is therefore seen as an essential element of economic growth (Singh, 2008). Women in India have been excluded from progress, despite the fact that they are respected and held in high regard in mythology and historical literature. There are significant differences in gender disparities across cultural, geographic, and historical contexts. India is a large country with significant regional differences in terms of socio cultural and economic aspects. In a country the size of India, development concerns for women would not only seem out of place, but often outright misleading. Apart from protecting women's rights and interests from abuse, discrimination, and crimes, laws targeted specifically at women have also been enacted to prevent socially unacceptable behaviours. The Indian government has previously carried out a number of initiatives under several headings with the aim of supporting the socio-economic advancement of women. Indian women find themselves at a crossroads in their lives. Every part of the nation has seen a significant increase in the awareness of citizens' rights among all social groups and segments. For women, the amount of developing activity has increased dramatically. The Indian national government has taken significant action to elevate the position of women. Globally, there has been a great deal of coordinated activity to support the realisation of the ideas of equal rights for men and women. There has undoubtedly been an increase in women's labour force participation due to education, entrepreneurial skills, financial inclusion, the introduction of government programmes for bettering access to educational development, entrepreneurship and skill building, employment, etc

II. Review Of Literature:

Budgets are the most important tool available to a government for policymaking and provide insight into its political priorities. Although the facts in the budget documents seem gender-neutral, real research shows that women and girls are impacted differently than men and boys by the way the government spends its money and collects taxes, sometimes to their cost. In their community, women usually hold a less powerful position than men, with less economic, social, and political clout. The gendered division of employment, the socially constructed roles that men and women play in society, and the disparities in the responsibilities and skills that men and women must deal with all contribute to this. Incorporating the gender viewpoint into the budgetary process at each stage is the aim of gender responsive budgeting. In general, gender responsive budgeting aims to examine the different impacts that a state's national and local expenditure as well as revenue plan have on men and boys and women and girls. Effect analyses and suggestions for rearranging income and expenses in

accordance with the different needs and priorities of men and women are included in gender responsive budgeting. Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), which allocates funds for gender-specific objectives in the Union Budget, allows policymakers to apply a gender lens to fiscal expenditure without the need for a separate budget.

Gender budgeting is the rigorous examination of budget initiatives and policies for their impact on women. Studies reveal that measures and plans targeted at improving women's economic opportunities accelerate economic growth. Gender budgeting has gained increasing recognition in policy circles in recent times. In light of the expanding significance of gender budgeting, this study attempts to critically evaluate plans, programmes, initiatives, and schemes as well as investigate union finances via a gender perspective. In 1984, Australia introduced the first gender budget. This ground-breaking investigation on how public finances affect gender relations was conducted with the knowledge that budgets are essential instruments for promoting gender equality. Since then, more than 90 countries have adopted gender budgeting as a tactic for empowering women and advancing development. Many state and local governments, corporations, and private agencies in India have also formed gender budgets and specialist policies, programmes, and strategies for gender mainstreaming. The process of applying a gender perspective to budgetary policy, budget preparation, and budgetary expenditures is known as gender budgeting. "Gender budget" does not refer to a separate budget for women in relation to the government at any level. Rather, it is an analytical tool that looks at the government budget to highlight how gender differences affect it and to push for higher priorities for programmes and schemes that address the disadvantages that women face because of their gender. In reality, gender budgeting is a technique that entails analysing various socio-economic policies from a gender perspective in addition to evaluating government budgets. Gender budgeting emphasises the consequences of gender-specific budgets and calls attention to the frequently subtle forms of financial discrimination against women. It so draws attention to the effects of public finance that are specific to gender. Public money affect all policy sectors, therefore tracking gender mainstreaming programmes requires this crucial tool. Gender budgeting also increases transparency and involvement in the budgetary process. It aims to democratise the budgetary process as well as budget policy in general. The growing trend of public participation and consultation in budget preparation, as well as in monitoring budgetary outcomes and impacts, can be bolstered by initiatives aimed at addressing gender issues in budgeting. Gender budgeting not only enhances the targeting of policy measures but also progresses the objective of effectiveness and efficiency. Gender budgeting can be viewed as an essential strategy to resolve imbalances, ensure equitable resource distribution, and reduce poverty. Gender-conscious budgets are thus a tool for bettering economic and financial governance. Gender responsive budgets acknowledge the gender norms that exist in society and provide funding for programmes and policies that will change these norms in a way that promotes the objective of greater gender equality. Gender perspective budget analysis, applied gender budget analysis, and gender sensitive budget are some of the words used to describe gender budget initiatives. Nevertheless, gender budgeting is the term that is most frequently employed. The implementation of gender budgeting is subject to various conditions, such as the presence of gender-disaggregated data, political will, accountability, the provision of specialised human and financial resources, and the coordination of information and training. Gender budgeting's core principles include transparency, cooperation, and involvement at every stage of the planning process. Gender budgeting is therefore an essential tool for women's empowerment.

According to the World Economic Forum, gender inequality is inefficient and costs money to men, women, girls, and boys (Ratnasi, 2008). These expenses lead to decreased levels of production, well-being, and competitiveness. Diane Elson contends that "if women themselves have more control over resources there will be gains for society as a whole" (Elson, 2002) and that a national budget that is gender responsive acknowledges the underlying disparities between men and women and redresses them through the allocation of public resources. (2003, Helena). Furthermore, it views women as rights holders, not as "a vulnerable group who are beneficiaries of government assistance" (Noeleen, 2006), and believes that governments have an obligation to empower and defend them. Life expectancy, adult literacy rate, and labour force participation are only a few of the factors that affect women's lives, and understanding them is essential to understanding the significance of gender budgeting and the rationale behind it. In 1984, Australia introduced the first gender budget. More than 90 countries have embraced gender budgeting as a tool for women's empowerment and development since a ground breaking study on the impact of public budgets on gender relations was carried out. These countries view budgets as essential "Instruments for promoting gender equality." Several states, local governments, corporations, and private organisations have begun to advocate in India that comprehensive interventions in support of women are necessary, and that they must (i) grant women the rights that are fundamental to them. (ii) put an emphasis on economic empowerment to address the effects of globalisation and women's realities; (iii) ensure a safe environment free from all forms of violence against women; (iv) ensure women's participation and adequate representation at the highest policy levels; and (v) strengthen existing institutional mechanisms and create new ones to ensure gender mainstreaming and successful policy

implementation. Mainstreaming gender equality aims to ensure that men and women's concerns and experiences are fundamental to the planning, carrying out, overseeing, and evaluating of all projects in order to prevent gender inequality from continuing. The prevailing problem of "policy evaporation," in which policy commitments are not reflected in or have an impact on development projects, is attempted to be resolved (Helan, 2001). In the late 1990s, donor-supported development shifted its emphasis from particular project initiatives to the overall goal of ending poverty, which might provide the ideal setting for gender mainstreaming. There is currently a dearth of focus on the gender components of poverty reduction (Narayan & Petesch, 2002). The Millennium Declaration, which was signed during the 2000 United Nations Millennium Summit, contains the ten-year plan for the United Nations. The choices made at the several international conferences the UN hosted in the 1990s are the source of these goals. While accomplishing these goals won't be easy, they do offer standards that are observable (UNDP, 2003). The Beijing Platform for Action placed a strong emphasis on gender mainstreaming as a strategy for attaining gender equality. Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing how proposed actions, such as laws, policies, or programmes, will affect men and women equally in all situations and at all levels (Moser and Moser, 2006). All women and girls will be able to attain empowerment via sustainable development. Gender equality is a precondition for equitable resource distribution, which is necessary to ensure sustainable development. Gender equality is the process of providing men and women with equal access to programmes, resources, and decision-making opportunities without discriminating on the basis of sex. It also entails correcting any discrepancies in the benefits provided to men and women. In addition to public spending, gender budgeting takes into account how government revenue mobilisation affects gender disparities. Gender budgeting as a concept actually involves looking at various socio-economic policies from a gender perspective, in addition to government budgets. Gender sensitive budgeting, or gender budgeting, is a relatively recent concept. The concept was first presented in Australia in the 1980s, and several countries around the world are presently looking into it. Gender budgeting is now being used in about 90 countries, based on the most recent count (Mishra, 2011).

III. Objectives And Research Methods:

The goal of the current study is to investigate the state of gender budgeting as well as new trends and patterns in women-focused spending in India. The primary sources of data for the article are secondary data and relevant literature; nevertheless, for increased visibility and data clarity, data has been displayed in charts and digammas.

Economic Empowerment

The Indian government has previously carried out a number of initiatives under several headings with the aim of supporting the socio-economic advancement of women.

Two notable developments for gender equality in 2023 were the passing of the *Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam*, which guarantees women one-third of the seats in parliament and state legislatures, and India's G20 Presidency's commitment to women-led development. In comparison, India ranked 127th out of 146 countries in the World Economic Forum's 2023 Global Gender Gap Report. Despite recent upward trends, India still has some of the lowest rates of female labour force participation in the world. Gender wage gaps, women's insecure employment, their predominance in the informal economy, unfavourable working conditions, the absence of social insurance, and the disproportionate amount of unpaid and unrecorded work are all persistent challenges. In the run-up to the general elections, we highlight the crucial elements to keep an eye out for concerning women's empowerment and gender equality in the impending vote-on-account. This is in advance of the interim Union Budget 2024–25, which is set to be presented on February 1. Funding for these initiatives and programmes will be necessary in order to meet these goals (Bhatia, 2024). The UN Sustainable Development Goal No. 5, which aims to "ensure gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls," is why women-led development was given a lot of weight in the G20 declaration. A list of promises regarding socio-economic empowerment, gender parity in digital technologies, climate action, nutrition, food security, health, and overall well-being was included. As part of India's plan to showcase women-led development at the G20, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced during his Independence Day speech on the previous year that the government is working with women's self-help groups (SHGs) to create 20 million '*Lakhpati Didis*'. The program's objective is to provide women with training in the development of workforce-relevant skills. With an allocation of Rs 1,261 crore for the fiscal years 2024–2025 to 2025–2026, the Union cabinet approved the plan and provided drones to 15,000 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) across the states. The SHG women will receive drone pilot training, enabling them to provide rental services for farming. India's female labour market participation rate climbed from 23.3 percent in 2017–18 to 37 percent in 2022–2023 years, based on data from the annual Periodic Labour Market Surveys (PLFS). Women from rural areas led this increase. During the same period, women's unemployment fell from 5 percent to 2.9 percent. Research and data show that women have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 in terms of losing their jobs. In this specific context, an increase in

the percentage of employed women and a decline in the unemployment rate imply that women primarily picked low-quality, low-paying jobs due to hardship. Jawaharlal Nehru University Assistant Professor Himanshu claims that these features are indicative of previous economic crises. For the ten years before 2023–2024, women's participation in MGNREGS increased yearly with the exception of 2017–18 and 2020–21 (Bhatia, 2024). Delivering the final budget before the 2024 elections, India's Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, said that the Bhartiya Janata Party government's primary goal is inclusive development, the first of her seven "*saptarishis*," or guiding principles. As per Sitharaman's repeated references to women's empowerment during her ninety minute speech, the government recognises "the importance of *Nari Shakti* (women power) as the harbinger of our bright future and for women-led development during the *Amrit Kaal* (the 25-year-long lead-up to India @ 2047). About 81 million rural women were inspired to form Self Help Groups (SHGs) under the *Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Antyodaya Yojana*, National Rural Livelihood Mission, which Sitharam highlighted in her speech. Sitharaman further promised to assist these groups in reaching the next stage of empowerment by establishing larger producer enterprises or collectives, each with several thousand members, and supporting them in obtaining raw materials and in improving the quality, branding, and marketing of their products (Jaiswal and Ramchandran, 2024).

The budget allocated more over Rs. 2.25 lakh crore in financial help for small farmers under the *Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi*. About three crore women farmers benefited from this, and as part of the initiative, they will now have access to Rs. 54,000 crores. Furthermore, in recognition of women and in commemoration of *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav*, which commemorates India's 75th anniversary of independence, a brand-new one-time small savings programme has been launched. The program's two-year duration will expire in March 2025. Actually, a woman or girl would be able to deposit two lakhs for a two-year period under the Mahila Samman Savings Certificate, which offers a partial withdrawal option and a fixed interest rate of 7.5 percent. The government's primary department for women's and children's welfare, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD), even saw a 1.08 percent increase in funding, increasing from Rs. 25,172.28 crore in 2022–2023 to Rs. 25,448.75 crore in 2023–2024. It is important to keep in mind that the revised estimate for the previous year was Rs. 23,912 crores according to the government. The Union government has allocated a total of Rs. 2,23,219.75 crore to the gender budget for initiatives meant to lessen the current gender gap, based on the data that is currently available. This sum is 30% greater than the budgeted amount of Rs. 1,71,006.47 crore for the previous fiscal year and more than 2% of the revised estimate of Rs. 2.18 crore for 2022–2023. Actually, a woman or girl would be able to deposit two lakhs for a two-year period under the Mahila Samman Savings Certificate, which offers a partial withdrawal option and a fixed interest rate of 7.5 percent. The gender component of this year's fiscal budget accounts for nearly 5 percent of all government spending and 0.8 percent of India's GDP, despite the gender budget having not increased significantly over the previous 15 years (averaging 4.9 percent).

Funds are distributed among 30 union ministries and departments as well as the five Union Territories. Actually, Part A of the gender budget climbed by a staggering 70% this year, from Rs. 26,772.89 crore to Rs. 88,044.21 crore. The majority of funding for the rural housing project came from the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, which has an allocation of Rs. 54,487 crore and aims to improve women's access to land and resources. In the 2022–2023 amended budget, funds allocated to the Safe City Project—which includes surveillance measures including installing cameras and supporting other government resources to deter gender-based violence—increased eightfold, from Rs. 165 crores to Rs. 1300 crore. Similarly, compared to the updated estimates of the 2022–2023 budget, 33 percent additional funds were allocated to the MoWCD's Samarthyaa umbrella plan, which was introduced in 2021. Initiatives for women's empowerment such as the *Pradhan Mantri Vandana Yojana* and *Swadhar Greh* are part of this strategy. The Union government has also included the Rs. 25,000 crore Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in the gender budget. Other programmes included in the gender budget include the Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan, the Flexible Pool for RCH and Health System Strengthening, the National Health Programmes and Nation Urban Health Missions, the *Samagra Shiksha* scheme, the Samarthyaa scheme for women empowerment, and the Swachh Bharat Mission. When added together, these programmes cost about Rs. 45,000 crores. The Union government has also included the Rs. 25,000 crore Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in the gender budget. For example, the National Commission for Women, the Central Adoption Resource Agency, and the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights have all seen increases in their budgets, which went from Rs. 162 crores in the previous budget to Rs. 168 crores in the current fiscal year. A greater percentage of current government spending is going towards addressing issues affecting women than was the case in previous budgets, which, putting vote-bank politics aside, clearly indicates that India has acknowledged the importance of women's empowerment and gender equality in all facets of its developmental agenda (Nilore, 2024). Therefore, the goal of this budget is to move India away from the paradigm of women's development and towards women-led development so that it can compete with the largest economies in the world. India's gross

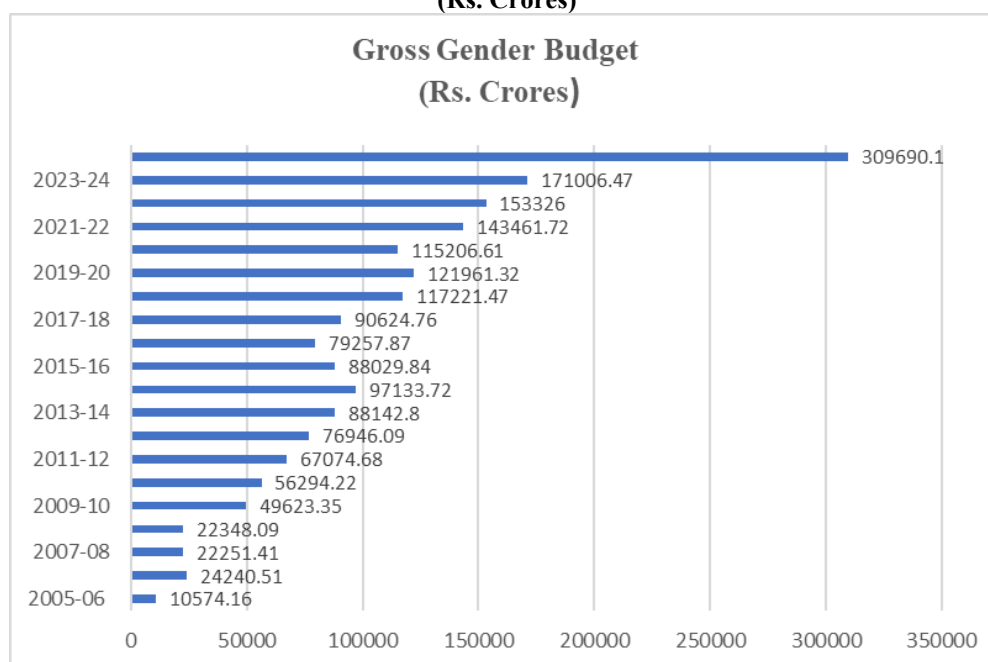
gender budget has shown rise between 2005–26 and 2024–25. However, it still accounts for less than 1% of GDP (Chart 1).

Table 1: Gross Gender Budget in India

Year	Gross Gender Budget (Rs. Crores)	Percentage of GDP	Percentage of National Budget
2005-06	10574.16	0.47	4.8
2006-07	24240.51	.052	3.8
2007-08	22251.41	0.46	3.2
2008-09	22348.09	0.09	5.5
2009-10	49623.35	0.88	5.5
2010-11	56294.22	0.88	5.5
2011-12	67074.68	0.88	5.8
2012-13	76946.09	0.79	5.5
2013-14	88142.80	0.76	5.4
2014-15	97133.72	0.66	5.9
2015-16	88029.84	0.59	4.6
2016-17	79257.87	0.63	4.8
2017-18	90624.76	0.54	4.3
2018-19	117221.47	0.61	5.0
2019-20	121961.32	0.62	4.7
2020-21	115206.61	0.77	4.3
2021-22	143461.72	0.72	4.4
2022-23	153326.00	0.84	5.5
2023-24	171006.47	0.88	5.8
2024-25	309690.10	0.94	6.5

Source: www.indiabudget.gov.in

**Chart 1: Increasing Gross Gender Budget in India
(Rs. Crores)**

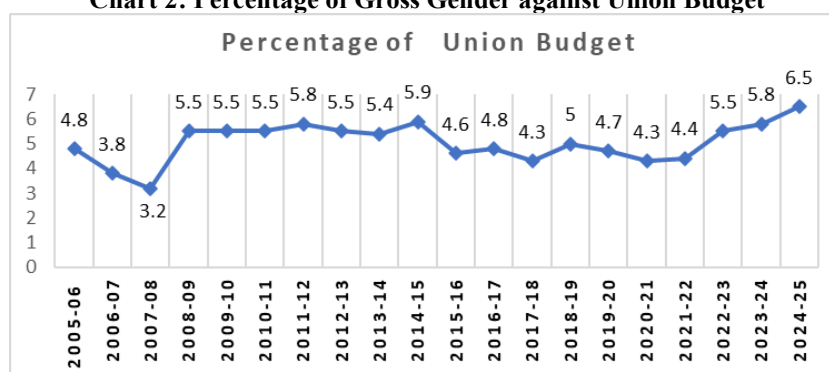


Source: www.indiabudget.gov.in

The Indian government has previously carried out a number of initiatives under several headings with the aim of supporting the socioeconomic advancement of women.

The amount given to gender budgeting in India has not changed since its inception; it currently represents between 3 and 6 percent of the Union budget as a whole. The total amount allotted for Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in 2023–2024 was just 2% more than that of the Revised Estimates (RE) for 2022–2023. The epidemic of 2021–2022 marked the top of the real budgetary allotment to gender as a percentage of the union budget. However, it has been deteriorating ever since. In 2022–2023 the Union Budget allocated 5.2 percent to gender equality. The Budget Estimate (BE) of the Gender Budget accounts for just percent of the Union Budget for 2023–2024 (Chart 2).

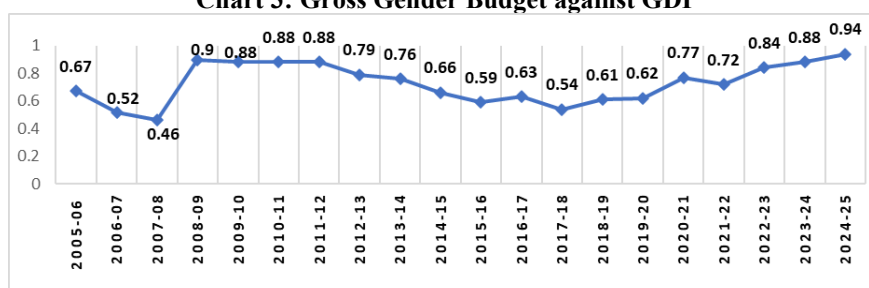
Chart 2: Percentage of Gross Gender against Union Budget



Source: www.indiabudget.gov.in

Gross gender budget as against of GDP has no doubt has increased over the period of 2005-06 to 2024-25, however, it is still less than one percent of GDP.. However, it has shown increasing trend since 2017-18 to 2024-25 (Chart 3).

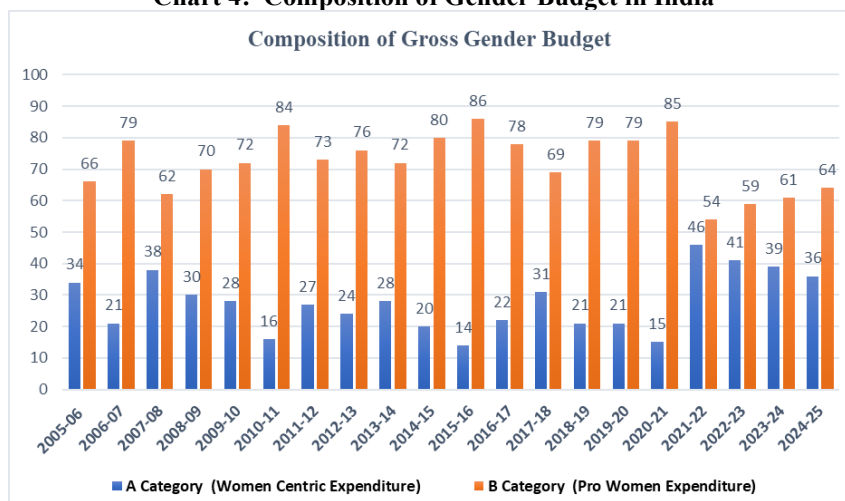
Chart 3: Gross Gender Budget against GDP



Source: www.indiabudget.gov.in

The gender budget in India is split into two categories: Part A plans allocate all funds, or Women Centric Expenditure, to women only. Part B programmes dedicate at least thirty percent of funding to women's issues (pro women expenditure). Since its beginning, Part B has dominated the gender budget. Part A and Part B accounted for almost percent and 65 percent of the GRB respectively. Since its inception, Part B allocations—which cover 85 percent of the budget for the pandemic in 2020–2021—have had an outsized impact on the Gender Budget. In 2021–2022, the share of Part A of the Gender Budget as a whole hit a record high of 46 percent. However, it has been decreasing ever since. In 2022–2023 Part B received 59% of the gender budget, while Part A received 41%. Part B of India's gender-responsive budget, however, increased to nearly 61 percent in 2023–2024, while Part A fell even more to 39 percent. This implies that the gender budget does not now consist mostly of programming for women (Chart 4).

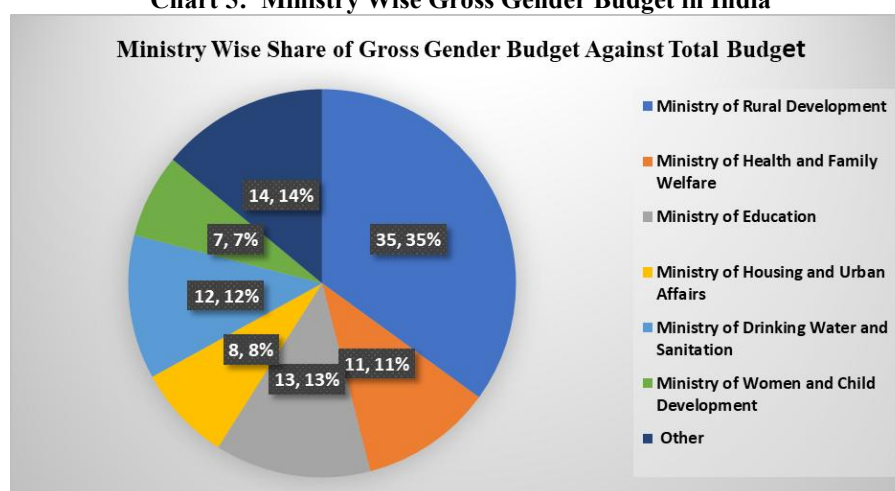
Chart 4: Composition of Gender Budget in India



Source: www.indiabudget.gov.in

Recognising some systemic issues related to gender budgeting in India is essential. The first is the set of standards by which projects are added or removed. First off, the gender budget does not contain a number of important projects that support women. For instance, as a result of the Jal Jeevan Mission, all rural dwellings must have household tap connections by 2024 (JJM). Since most women and girls gather water in their homes without regular access, having tap water available to them can greatly improve their quality of life. However, none of the JJM's allocations have been made public by the gender budget. Currently, the budget is divided into sections A (which is 100percent) and B (which is 30 percent to 99 percent). This suggests that projects that fund women at a rate lower than 30 percent are not included in the gender budget. Furthermore, how programmes allocate at least thirty percent of their financing to women is unclear. One example of a scheme that was part of the GRB and accounted for 24 percent of the gender budget in 2023–2024 is the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G). The goal of the programme is to assist women by promoting home ownership. Nevertheless, just 27 percent of the funds allocated under the programme accounted for Part B of the GRB, despite the fact that women make up 55 percent of MGNREGS workers. In terms of methodology, the lack of a transparent mechanism that details weights attributable to various schemes for furthering gender equality could be one explanation for this paradoxical allocation—part B contains a scheme that clearly targets and benefits women (MGNREGS), while part A contains a gender-neutral scheme. Therefore, it seems that the gender budgeting exercise is not very accurate and does not take into consideration the gender characteristics that are common in society. An effective GRB is further hindered by a significant gap in the availability of gender-segregated data. Without such information, reporting Part B allocations becomes difficult in particular. Because of this, the procedure has become an aggregation exercise rather than a potent tool, according to a number of scholars (Chart 5).

Chart 5: Ministry Wise Gross Gender Budget in India

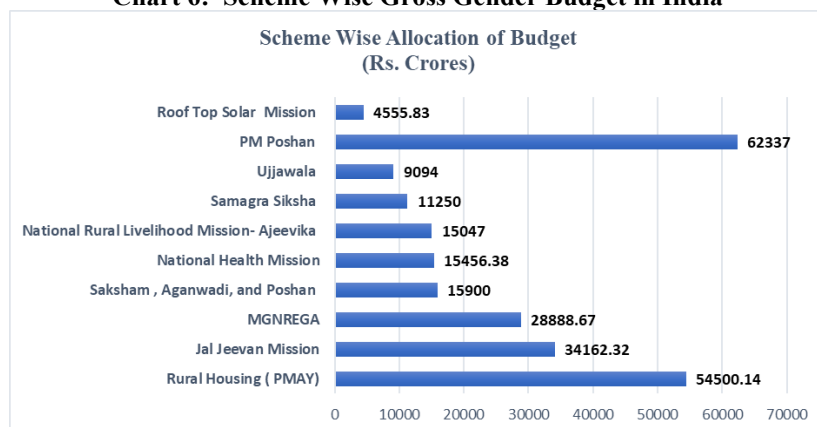


Source: www.indiabudget.gov.in

About half of the gender budget is devoted to helping women become financially independent. This includes funding for asset ownership, employment, skill development, and education. The PMAY programme accounts for over 26% of the entire gender budget in both rural and urban areas. Its goal is to provide women with property ownership so they may become more financially independent and have a place to live in case of emergency. Programmes for livelihood and entrepreneurship, such as the MGNREGS, the National Rural Livelihood Mission, and efforts to encourage women's entrepreneurship in the MSME sector, get about 15 percent of the gender budget. Education and skill training initiatives like Samagra Shiksha, which seeks to enhance learning outcomes and educational access, the Skill India Mission, which offers short-term skilling, and Namo Drone Didi, a recently introduced programme that teaches women SHG members how to operate drones, primarily for crop management and irrigation, receive an additional 14% of the gender budget. There is an increasing focus on gender mainstreaming in the sector of green energy. About Rs. 4,500 crores, or over half of the total financing for the rooftop solar scheme—which intends to install solar panels in over a crore home nationwide—goes towards the women budget. This implies that women-owned properties will be given priority under the programme. Additionally, under the PM Kusum plan, which aims to provide solar-powered agricultural pumps to encourage the use of solar energy for farming, roughly Rs 2,000 crore has been set aside for the gender budget. This suggests that a key focus area for this plan would be women farmers. There is still a need for greater innovation in the gender budget. Five significant ministries and departments have received equal distribution of India's gender budget, following trends observed over the previous 20 years. The top five

ministries—education, health and family welfare, housing and urban affairs, drinking water and sanitation, and rural development—received roughly 80% of the gender budget even in 2024–2025. Following COVID-19, several new topics pertaining to the gender gap have emerged and require prompt action. These include social safety, computer literacy, skill development, safe and inclusive public transportation, the avoidance of domestic abuse, unpaid care, and assistance with domestic work. Analysis shows that the total cash allocated for these initiatives accounted for only 5% of the gender budget; in 2024–2025, budget cuts will be made to critical areas including safe cities and digital literacy (Chart 6).

Chart 6: Scheme Wise Gross Gender Budget in India

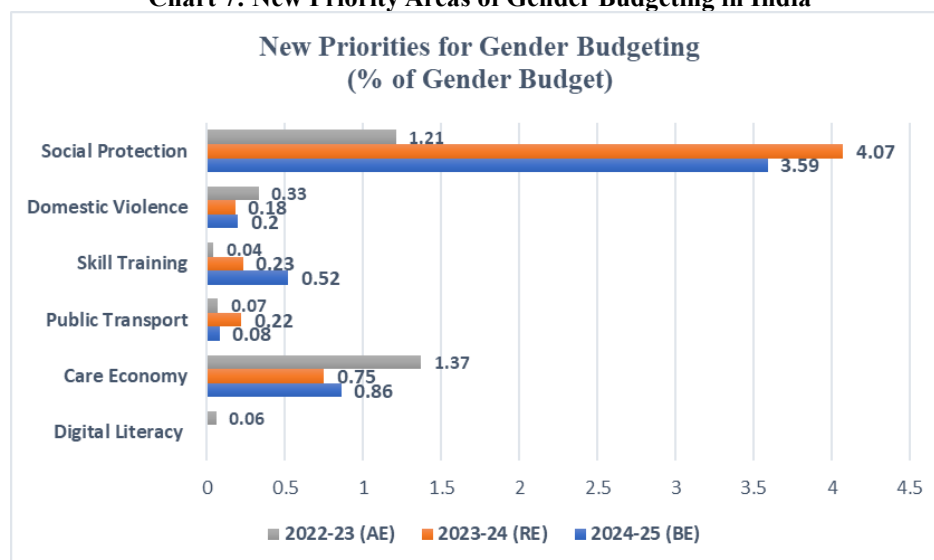


Source: www.indiabudget.gov.in

Government is shifting its priorities for women development in the context of changing global development agenda.

The new priority areas for women development are social protection, care economy, women safety, and prevention from violence, skill training, digital empowerment, and public transport (Chart 7).

Chart 7: New Priority Areas of Gender Budgeting in India



Source: Gender Budget Statement, 2024, Ministry of Finance, Government of India

IV. Conclusion:

Gender budgeting has acquired international recognition as a crucial tool for empowering women because it incorporates the gender viewpoint and concerns at all levels and phases of development planning, policy, programmes, and delivery mechanisms. We look at how the government funds the specific initiatives that use gender budgeting to empower women. As everyone knows, women make up almost half of the country's population. While India's total gender budget has undoubtedly been increasing, budgetary expenditures for women's development are still relatively modest as compared to their share of human resources. In order to effectively address the growing demands of women, gender audits are also required for

social development programmes, schemes, and projects in general as well as Mission mode initiatives and programmes in particular. In her Interim Budget speech, Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, to reduce the gender gap, more money must be allocated to women's development. Funding is needed for the development of services and infrastructure that is inclusive of all genders. Finance Minister announced Rs 3.1 trillion for schemes and programmes that address issues involving women for 2024-25. Women have started participating in large numbers in sectors such as STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) as well as skill building programmes, supported by government. Besides conducive environment and policy incentives, labour reforms, financial inclusion, credit accessibility etc. has enabled women to get access the emerging employment opportunities. In addition to access to education and health care, the issue of their economic independence of women has been well recognised in the policy circle. It has given top priority to creating opportunities for women. It is therefore, necessary to revisit some of the existing schemes to ensure a larger portion of the monies can be earmarked for women's empowerment

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