

Rajasthan State Girl Child Policy 2013: A brief analysis from GRB Perspective

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In the beginning of the year 2013, the Government of Rajasthan declared State Girl Child Policy, which is perhaps the first Girl Child Policy in the country. The draft of the Policy was prepared by the Gender Cell¹ of the Department of Women and Child Development, which is also responsible for promoting Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) process in the state. The draft of the Policy was uploaded on the Department's website and public comments and views were invited. Now the final version of the Policy² is available on the website.

Here we attempt an analysis of this Policy document from the GRB perspective. GRB is a process of analyzing the impact of the public budget from the gender perspective. A gender responsive budget is a budget that acknowledges the gender patterns in society and allocates money to implement policies and programmes that will change these patterns in a way that moves towards a more gender just and equal society. There are various tools which are used in the GRB process. One of the tools is Gender Budget Statement (GBS) prepared by the governments, which shows the government allocations going towards women and girls. In India, the union government started presenting the GBS from the year 2005-06 with the union budget. Later on many state governments also started presenting the GBS with the state budget. The GBS has its own limitations. At times it is difficult to disaggregate allocations by sex of the beneficiaries³. Therefore, there are other GRB tools which are advocated for alongside GBS. One important contribution to GRB process has been made by Debbie Budlender⁴ in form of Five Step Framework. According to this framework, a gender responsive budgeting process should include following five steps:

- Step 1: Analysis of the situation of women, men, girls and boys in a given sector;
- Step 2: Assessment of the extent to which policies address the gendered situation;
- Step 3: Assessment as to whether budget allocations are adequate, in order to implement gender responsive policies;
- Step 4: Assessment of short-term outputs of expenditure, in order to evaluate how resources are actually spent, and policies and programmes implemented;
- Step 5: Assessment of the long-term outcomes or impact expenditures might have

¹ <http://wcd.rajasthan.gov.in/GenderCell.aspx>

² <http://wcd.rajasthan.gov.in/Docs/state-girl-child-policy.pdf>

³ Mishra, Yamini and Sinha, Navnita, 2012, 'Gender Responsive Budgeting in India: What has gone wrong', EPW, April 28, 2012.

⁴ Budlender, Debbie, et al, 2002, Gender Budget Makes Cents: Understanding Gender Budget, London

According to this framework, the GRB process should start with a situation analysis of women and men and girls and boys in a given sector, which should be followed by the assessment of the policies; to what extent these policies are able to address the gendered situation. Obviously if the policies are not adequate, there is a need to amend the policies to make them gender responsive. Only after this, should the budget allocation be looked into and made according to the needs and requirement of men and women and girls and boys so that gender responsive policies can be implemented.

On applying this framework to analyze the Rajasthan State Girl Child Policy 2013, we find that the Policy starts with introducing (Section 1) some of the pressing problems which the girl children (0 to 18 years of age) are facing in the state. One of the most important of which is the declining sex ratio in the state, which is caused by both higher Infant Mortality Rate among the girls compared to boys as well as by sex selective abortions which are illegal, yet prevalent in most parts of Rajasthan (and the country). This extremely skewed sex ratio (883 girls for 1000 boys among 0-6 years age of children in 2011) in favour of boys provides the rationale (Section 2) to the government to come out with a state Girl Child Policy and not just a Child Policy. (The state already has a Child Policy for all Children⁵)

The Policy, then, conducts a situation analysis (Section 3) of girl children in the state, which exactly is the first step of the Five Step Framework of GRB, discussed above. The Policy analyses the situation declining sex ratio, differences in health indicators for girls and boys, mean age of marriage for girls, differences in educational indicators for girls and boys, discrimination in intra household distribution of food, the incidences of violence against women and girls, sexual assault faced by adolescent girls, etc.

The Policy then identifies the priority issues for girl children of various age groups, starting from pre-birth (Section 4). The most important priority issues are then dealt with separately in the Policy. These are:

- A. Declining child sex ratio
- B. Health and education services and family support
- C. Protection from violence, abuse and neglect
- D. Agency and empowerment

The Policy also outlines the steps which the state government should be taking to address each of the above issues. Then it outlines the Implementation Strategy (section 5) and Arrangements for Coordination and Action (section 6), before suggesting a State Action Plan (Section 7). The last section deals with monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Policy (Section 8).

⁵ http://wcd.rajasthan.gov.in/Docs/Child_Policy.pdf

The Policy states that the Action Plan will evolve during the coming years. In an yearly meeting chaired by the Chief Minister, **all the departments** of the state government are supposed to present their action plans to implement towards achieving the vision of girl child, focusing on the priority areas of action as stated in the Policy. The Policy, however, has also proposed the detailed Action Plan for five departments of the state government, for various age groups of girl children. The action plan identifies the issues of concern for different age groups related to the given department, presents interventions, presents gaps and proposed interventions and schemes and indicators for monitoring the progress in setting the target for the identified indicators in coming three years and five years. Either both need to be numbers or both need to be spelled out,

If we compare this with the Five Step Framework of GRB, we find that the Policy follows the process of the Five Step Framework step by step. It also outlines the proposed actions, and schemes and programmes for five of the departments of the state government. What remains to be done, however, is identifying the need for changes in budget allocation patterns. In Section 6 (Arrangement for Institutional Coordination and Action), the Policy mentions the Pooling of resources required for the implementation of the Policy. It states:

All duty bearers and stakeholders are expected to generate and pool together the financial, human and technical resources required for the implementation of this policy framework and strategic action plan. The government shall draw upon the resources made available by the 12th Five Year Plan to various government departments on dealing with the issues concerning the girl child.

The Policy, therefore, has taken the first two steps of the Five Step Framework, for the girl children (0-18 years) but not for all women in the state. The departments are expected to use the Policy as a guideline to allocate budget accordingly to implement the Policy.

This Policy, however, focuses mostly on the issues of health, education and protection. It does talk about issues like empowerment as well. The issues of higher education, skill development and other means of economic empowerment just get a passing reference. The Policy, can however provide a model for all the departments to analyse the situation of girls and women in the sectors concerning their department and make the budget allocations accordingly.

The budget allocation for the children in the state, however, is not showing any significant increase during the year 2013-14, the first budget presented after the declaration of the State Girl Child Policy. According to the assessment made by BARC, the total allocation towards children in the state has increased by 16 % in 2013-14 compared to 2012-13 (RE). According to the revised estimates (RE) during 2012-13, the year the Policy was made, the total budget towards children declined from Rs. 16688 crore (2012-13 BE) to Rs. 16421 crore (2012-13 RE).

The Policy also outlines monitoring and evaluation process for the implementation of the Policy. The task of monitoring the progress has been entrusted to the State Task Force for Care and Protection of Girls which will be led by the Chief Secretary and has various additional chief secretaries and principal secretaries as its members. This committee will conduct quarterly progress reviews of the Policy. Monthly reviews will be conducted by the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights. It also talks about community based implementation planning and monitoring as well as creating the framework to collect relevant data for research and interpretation. In this way the last two steps of the Five Step Framework, which talk about short term and long term assessment of outcomes, are also included in the Policy.

As this policy includes four out of five steps of the Five Step Framework of GRB, it can be used as a model to initiate gender responsive budget process in all the departments of the government.

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