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Gender Responsive Budgeting for Women Empowerment and Social Inclusion in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to assess the relevance of sex-disaggregated budget information in reducing gender inequality and poverty among women in Nigeria, focusing on Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and its impact on women's educational and socio-economic empowerment, as well as its potential to enhance inclusiveness and peaceful co-existence. Using a qualitative methods approach, the research involved qualitative interviews with key stakeholders. Findings revealed that while efforts to integrate gender considerations into public budgets have been made, significant gaps remain in achieving full gender responsiveness. Budget allocations for critical sectors such as education, health, and social welfare showed improvements but were often insufficient, especially in rural areas. In terms of socio-economic empowerment, GRB facilitated women's access to vocational training, microfinance, and entrepreneurship support, leading to improved economic independence and household incomes. The study concludes that for GRB to be more effective, there needs to be stronger political commitment, enhanced capacity building, increased budget allocations for critical sectors, community engagement, improved infrastructure, and robust data collection.

INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality and social exclusion remained pervasive issues across the globe, with significant implications for economic development and social justice. In Nigeria, despite notable progress in various sectors, women continued to face substantial barriers to full participation in social, economic, and political spheres. These barriers manifested in lower educational attainment, limited access to healthcare, higher rates of poverty, and underrepresentation in decision-making positions. Addressing these disparities was critical not only for achieving gender equality but also for fostering sustainable development and inclusive growth.

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) emerged as a powerful tool to promote gender equality and empower women by ensuring that public resources were allocated in a manner that addressed the specific needs and challenges faced by different genders. GRB involved the systematic examination of budget processes and allocations through a gender lens, with the aim of promoting equitable resource distribution and enhancing the effectiveness of public spending (Budlender, 2005). By integrating gender considerations into all stages of the budget cycle, from planning and formulation to implementation and evaluation, GRB sought to create a more inclusive and equitable society.

The relevance of GRB in advancing women's empowerment and social inclusion was particularly significant in the context of Nigeria, a country characterized by significant gender disparities and diverse socio-economic conditions. Despite the country's commitment to various international and regional gender equality frameworks, the translation of these commitments into tangible outcomes had been slow (Okeke-Uzodike & Chitakunye, 2014). Structural and cultural barriers, coupled with insufficient political will and capacity, hindered the effective implementation of gender-sensitive policies and programs.

Nigeria's public budgeting process had traditionally overlooked the differential impacts of fiscal policies on men and women. This oversight contributed to the perpetuation of gender inequalities, as public investments in key sectors such as education, health, and economic empowerment did not adequately address the specific needs of women and girls (Nallari &

Griffith, 2011). Gender Responsive Budgeting sought to rectify this imbalance by ensuring that budgetary allocations were aligned with the goal of gender equality.

This study aimed to explore the role of Gender Responsive Budgeting in promoting women's empowerment and social inclusion in Nigeria. It assessed the extent to which public budgets were responsive to the needs of both men and women, examined the impact of GRB initiatives on women's educational and socio-economic empowerment, and explored the potential of GRB to reduce inequality and enhance peaceful coexistence. By providing a comprehensive analysis of GRB practices and their outcomes, this research sought to contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender equality and social inclusion, offering valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers.

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to provide a holistic understanding of GRB's impact. Surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions with a diverse range of stakeholders, including government officials, non-governmental organizations, community leaders, and women beneficiaries, formed the core of the data collection process. This approach ensured that the findings were grounded in the lived experiences of those directly affected by GRB initiatives, providing a nuanced perspective on the challenges and opportunities associated with gender-sensitive budgeting (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Quantitative data were collected through structured surveys distributed to a representative sample of stakeholders involved in or affected by GRB initiatives. These surveys captured detailed information on budget allocations, program outcomes, and perceived effectiveness of GRB practices. Qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, allowing for a deeper exploration of personal experiences, perceptions, and the socio-cultural context influencing GRB implementation (Patton, 2015).

Through this research, the aim was to highlight best practices and identify key barriers to the effective implementation of GRB in Nigeria. The findings were expected to inform the development of more robust and inclusive budgetary policies and

practices, contributing to the broader goal of gender equality and sustainable development. In doing so, this study underscored the critical importance of GRB as a strategic tool for advancing women's empowerment and fostering social inclusion in Nigeria.

The study's findings had significant implications for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. By demonstrating the tangible benefits of GRB, this research advocated for stronger political commitment and capacity building to support the adoption and institutionalization of GRB practices in Nigeria. Additionally, it provided a valuable framework for other countries facing similar challenges in gender budgeting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB)

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) is a strategy aimed at ensuring that public resources are allocated in ways that promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The integration of gender perspectives into budgeting processes is critical for addressing the specific needs of women and men, thereby fostering equitable development. This literature review explores the theoretical foundations, historical evolution, implementation strategies, and impacts of GRB, with a specific focus on its role in promoting women's empowerment and social inclusion in Nigeria.

Theoretical Foundations of Gender Responsive Budgeting

The theoretical basis for GRB is rooted in feminist economics, which critiques traditional economic frameworks for their gender-neutral assumptions. According to Elson (1998), traditional economic models often ignored the unpaid labor performed by women and the differential impacts of economic policies on men and women. GRB emerges from the recognition that budgets are not gender-neutral; they reflect and reinforce existing gender inequalities (Sharp, 2003). The feminist critique of economics posits that integrating a gender perspective into budgeting processes can reveal hidden biases and redistribute resources more equitably (Budlender & Hewitt, 2003).

Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organizations also provided a framework for

understanding how institutional practices, including budgeting, were embedded with gender biases. This theory highlights that organizations, including government institutions, often perpetuate gender inequalities through their formal and informal practices. GRB seeks to disrupt these entrenched biases by making gender an explicit consideration in budgetary decisions.

Historical Evolution of Gender Responsive Budgeting

The concept of GRB originated in Australia in the 1980s, driven by feminist economists and policymakers who advocated for the inclusion of gender considerations in the budget process (Sharp & Broomhill, 2002). The Australian experience inspired other countries and international organizations to adopt and adapt GRB practices. By the mid-1990s, the concept had gained significant traction, with countries like South Africa, Uganda, and Tanzania implementing GRB initiatives as part of their public financial management reforms (Budlender, 2002).

International organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have played pivotal roles in promoting GRB. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), now UN Women, has been instrumental in providing technical support and resources for GRB initiatives worldwide. The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, explicitly called for the integration of a gender perspective in budgetary processes (UN, 1995). This marked a significant milestone in the global recognition of GRB as a tool for gender equality.

Implementation Strategies of Gender Responsive Budgeting

Implementing GRB involves several key strategies, including gender analysis of budgets, capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and institutional reforms. Gender analysis of budgets is a critical step that involves assessing the differential impacts of budgetary allocations on men and women. This can be done through tools such as gender budget statements, gender audits, and gender-disaggregated benefit incidence analysis (Elson, 2006).

Capacity building is essential for the effective

implementation of GRB. This involves training government officials, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders on gender analysis and budgeting techniques. According to Budlender and Hewitt (2003), capacity building enhances the understanding and skills needed to integrate gender perspectives into budgeting processes effectively.

Stakeholder engagement is another crucial strategy. Engaging a broad range of stakeholders, including women's groups, civil society organizations, and community leaders, ensures that diverse perspectives are considered in the budgeting process. This participatory approach enhances the transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness of GRB initiatives (Holvoet, 2007).

Institutional reforms are necessary to create an enabling environment for GRB. This includes establishing gender budgeting units within finance ministries, integrating GRB into existing budget frameworks, and developing gender-sensitive indicators and monitoring systems (Stotsky, 2016). These reforms institutionalize GRB practices and ensure their sustainability over time.

Impact of Gender Responsive Budgeting

The impact of GRB on women's empowerment and social inclusion has been widely documented. Studies have shown that GRB can lead to more equitable resource allocation, improved access to services, and enhanced socio-economic outcomes for women (Sharp, 2003). For instance, in South Africa, GRB initiatives have contributed to increased funding for women's health programs, resulting in better health outcomes for women and girls (Budlender, 2002).

In Uganda, GRB has been instrumental in increasing budgetary allocations for primary education, which has significantly improved girls' enrollment and retention rates in schools (Muwonge & Stotsky, 2014). Similarly, in India, the introduction of gender budgeting in the state of Kerala has led to substantial investments in women's economic empowerment programs, thereby enhancing women's livelihoods and economic independence (Khan & Burn, 2017).

A more recent study by the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2020) highlighted the positive effects of GRB on women's labor force participation in several African countries, including Nigeria. The study found that GRB initiatives that

focused on providing vocational training and microfinance opportunities for women significantly improved their economic status and reduced gender disparities in employment.

Challenges in Implementing Gender Responsive Budgeting

Despite its potential benefits, the implementation of GRB faces several challenges. One major challenge is the lack of political will and commitment from government leaders. Without strong political support, GRB initiatives are unlikely to receive the necessary resources and attention (Sharp & Broomhill, 2002). Additionally, the absence of sex-disaggregated data makes it difficult to conduct comprehensive gender analyses of budgets (Elson, 2006).

Capacity constraints also pose significant challenges. Many government officials lack the skills and knowledge required to implement GRB effectively. This highlights the need for ongoing training and capacity-building efforts (Budlender & Hewitt, 2003). Furthermore, the deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and gender biases within government institutions can impede the adoption and institutionalization of GRB practices (Acker, 1990).

In Nigeria, a study by Okeke-Uzodike and Chitakunye (2014) found that despite policy commitments to gender equality, practical implementation of GRB was hampered by bureaucratic inertia and insufficient technical capacity. Moreover, political instability and corruption were significant barriers to the effective implementation of gender-sensitive budgeting processes.

Gender Responsive Budgeting in Nigeria

Nigeria's experience with GRB has been mixed, with both successes and challenges. The Nigerian government has made several commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment, including the adoption of the National Gender Policy and the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (FMOWASD). However, the translation of these commitments into concrete GRB initiatives has been limited.

A study by Okeke-Uzodike and Chitakunye (2014) found that Nigeria's public budgets often

failed to address the specific needs of women and girls. The authors noted that gender considerations were rarely integrated into budgetary processes, resulting in resource allocations that perpetuated gender inequalities. This finding underscores the need for more robust and systematic GRB practices in Nigeria.

Despite these challenges, there have been some notable successes. For example, the Lagos State government has implemented several GRB initiatives aimed at improving women's access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. These initiatives have led to significant improvements in women's socio-economic outcomes and have been recognized as best practices in GRB (Odeyemi & Agunbiade, 2017).

More recently, the World Bank's (2019) Nigeria Gender Diagnostic Report highlighted successful GRB projects in the states of Anambra and Ekiti. These projects focused on improving maternal health services and increasing women's participation in agricultural programs, leading to measurable improvements in women's health outcomes and economic productivity.

The Role of International Organizations

International organizations have played a crucial role in promoting GRB in Nigeria. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in collaboration with the Nigerian government, has implemented several GRB projects aimed at enhancing gender equality and women's empowerment. These projects have focused on building the capacity of government officials, conducting gender analyses of budgets, and advocating for gender-sensitive policies and programs (UNDP, 2015).

The World Bank has also supported GRB initiatives in Nigeria through its various gender-focused projects and programs. These initiatives have aimed to improve women's access to economic opportunities, enhance their participation in decision-making processes, and address gender-based violence (World Bank, 2016). The support of international organizations has been instrumental in advancing GRB practices in Nigeria.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) (2018) has also contributed significantly to GRB efforts in Nigeria by providing technical assistance and funding for projects that integrate gender

considerations into economic planning and public financial management. Their support has been crucial in scaling up successful GRB initiatives and ensuring their sustainability.

Case Studies of Gender Responsive Budgeting

Several case studies highlight the impact of GRB on women's empowerment and social inclusion in Nigeria. One notable case is the implementation of the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program, which aimed to reduce poverty and improve health and education outcomes for women and girls. The CCT program integrated gender considerations into its design and implementation, resulting in significant improvements in women's access to healthcare and education (Holvoet, 2010).

Another case study is the implementation of the Women Empowerment and Livelihoods Project (WELP) in the Niger Delta region. The project aimed to enhance women's economic empowerment and social inclusion through the provision of skills training, microfinance, and business development services. The project's gender-sensitive approach ensured that women's specific needs and challenges were addressed, leading to substantial improvements in their socio-economic outcomes (Holvoet, 2010).

A recent evaluation by UN Women (2021) of the Women's Economic Empowerment Programme in Nigeria found that GRB practices within the program led to increased budget allocations for women's entrepreneurship and vocational training. This, in turn, resulted in higher incomes and improved living standards for participating women.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for this study is a qualitative research approaches, ensuring a robust analysis of the gender responsive budgeting in reducing gender inequality and poverty among women in Nigeria. The following sections detail the specific methodological steps taken. The study employed a qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive analysis. This design was chosen to capture the broad numerical trends and in-depth contextual insights necessary to understand the impact of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) on gender inequality and poverty.

The population for this study included a diverse range of stakeholders involved in or affected by GRB in Nigeria. This included: Government officials involved in budget planning and implementation; Representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focused on gender equality and poverty reduction; Community leaders from various regions of Nigeria and Women beneficiaries of GRB programs, including those involved in educational and economic empowerment initiatives. The sample size for the study was determined based on the need to achieve statistical power for quantitative analysis and sufficient depth for qualitative insights. The sample size include 10 in-depth interviews with key informants such as policymakers, budget officers, gender advocates, and educational administrators and 5 focus groups, each with 3-5 participants, consisting of women from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

A multi-stage sampling technique was used to ensure a representative and comprehensive sample. The population was stratified into different groups based on stakeholder categories (e.g., government officials, NGO representatives, community leaders, and beneficiaries). This ensured that all relevant groups were adequately represented. Within each stratum, purposive sampling was used to select individuals with specific knowledge or experience related to GRB. This was particularly important for selecting interview and focus group participants. Semi-structured interview guides were developed to facilitate in-depth discussions with key informants. The interviews were conducted face-to-face or over the phone, depending on the availability and preference of the participants. Focus group discussions were conducted in various communities to gather diverse perspectives. A trained facilitator guided the discussions using a structured discussion guide, ensuring that all relevant topics were covered. In addition, National and state budget documents from the past five years were analyzed to identify trends in GRB initiatives. **Also**, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and other relevant agencies were used to analyze trends in educational enrollment, literacy rates, employment, and income levels among men and women.

Qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed using thematic analysis. Transcripts of interviews and focus group

discussions were prepared. Transcripts were coded to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the implementation and impact of GRB. The coded data was analyzed to identify key themes and insights. NVivo software was employed to manage and organize the qualitative data, facilitating an in-depth analysis of stakeholders' perceptions and experiences.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data analyses and discussions section provides a comprehensive examination of the collected data, highlighting key findings in relation to the study's objectives. This section explores the role of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in enhancing women's educational and socio-economic empowerment and reducing inequality.

Responsiveness of Nigeria's Public Budgets to Gender Needs

- **Objective:** Assess the extent to which Nigeria's public budgets are responsive to the needs of both genders, male and female.
- **Analysis:** The analysis involved a review of national and state budget documents, focusing on allocations to sectors critical for gender equality, such as education, health, and social welfare. The data were disaggregated by gender to identify specific budget lines targeting women and girls.
- **Findings:**
 - **Education:** Budget allocations for girls' education were found to be insufficient compared to those for boys. While there have been increases in funding for girls' education, disparities still exist, particularly in rural areas.
 - **Health:** Funding for maternal and reproductive health services has improved, but access remains limited due to logistical challenges and inadequate infrastructure.
 - **Social Welfare:** Allocations for social welfare programs targeting women, such as microfinance schemes and vocational training, have increased but are not consistently implemented.
- **Discussion:** The data indicated that while there have been efforts to integrate gender considerations into public budgets, these

efforts are often uneven and insufficient. The need for more targeted and substantial allocations to sectors critical for women's empowerment was evident.

Role of GRB in Enhancing Women's Educational Empowerment

- **Objective:** Explore the role of GRB in enhancing women's educational empowerment in Nigeria.
- **Analysis:** This analysis utilized data from educational programs and initiatives funded through GRB. It examined enrollment rates, retention rates, and academic performance of girls compared to boys.
- **Findings:**
 - **Enrollment and Retention:** GRB initiatives have contributed to increased enrollment and retention rates of girls in primary and secondary education. Programs such as AGILE, BESDA and conditional cash transfers for girls' education have shown positive impacts.
 - **Academic Performance:** There were improvements in academic performance among girls in regions where GRB initiatives were implemented, particularly in mathematics and science subjects (UNDP, 2015).
- **Discussion:** GRB has played a significant role in enhancing girls' access to education and improving their academic performance. However, challenges such as cultural barriers and inadequate school facilities continue to impede progress. Sustained investment and community engagement are necessary to further enhance educational outcomes for girls.

Role of GRB in Enhancing Women's Socio-Economic Empowerment

- **Objective:** Determine the role of GRB in enhancing women's socio-economic empowerment in Nigeria.
- **Analysis:** The analysis examined budget allocations for economic empowerment programs, including vocational training, microfinance schemes, and entrepreneurship support. Data were collected on the participation rates of women and the outcomes of these programs.

Findings:

- **Vocational Training and Employment:** GRB initiatives have increased the availability of vocational training programs for women, leading to higher employment rates and better incomes
- **Entrepreneurship Support:** Programs supporting women entrepreneurs have seen success in increasing women's participation in the formal economy (World Bank, 2016).
- **Discussion:** GRB has been effective in enhancing women's socio-economic empowerment by providing them with the skills, resources, and opportunities needed to improve their economic status. However, limited access to credit, markets, and support services remains a barrier for many women. More comprehensive and integrated approaches are needed to address these challenges.

Potentials of GRB in Reducing Inequality and Enhancing Inclusiveness

- **Objective:** Explore the potentials of GRB in reducing inequality, enhancing inclusiveness, and fostering peaceful co-existence in Nigeria.
- **Analysis:** This analysis focused on the broader societal impacts of GRB, including measures of inequality, social inclusion, and conflict reduction. It utilized data from national surveys and reports from international organizations.
- **Findings:**
 - **Inequality Reduction:** GRB initiatives have contributed to reducing gender inequalities in education, health, and economic opportunities. There has been a noticeable decrease in gender gaps in these areas.
 - **Social Inclusion:** GRB has promoted social inclusion by ensuring that budget allocations address the needs of marginalized groups, including women in rural and conflict-affected areas (African Development Bank, 2018).
 - **Peaceful Co-existence:** Programs funded through GRB have helped to foster peaceful co-existence by addressing the root causes of gender-based violence and promoting women's participation in

peacebuilding processes (UN Women, 2021).

- **Discussion:** The analysis demonstrated that GRB has significant potential to reduce gender inequalities and promote social inclusion. By addressing the specific needs of women and marginalized groups, GRB can contribute to more equitable and peaceful societies. However, sustained commitment and comprehensive strategies are essential to realize these potentials fully.

CONCLUSION

This study provided a comprehensive assessment of the relevance and significant role of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in promoting women's educational and socio-economic empowerment, reducing inequality, and enhancing inclusiveness and peaceful co-existence.

The findings demonstrated that while Nigeria has made strides in incorporating gender considerations into public budgets, there are still substantial gaps in achieving full gender responsiveness. Budget allocations for sectors

critical to women's empowerment, such as education, health, and social welfare, showed improvements but remain inadequate in many regions, particularly rural areas. GRB initiatives have positively impacted girls' enrollment and retention in education, improved academic performance, and enhanced women's access to vocational training, microfinance, and entrepreneurship support. These initiatives have contributed to reducing gender inequalities and promoting social inclusion. However, persistent challenges such as cultural barriers, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to credit, and inconsistent implementation of programs continue to hinder progress.

To maximize the potential of GRB in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Nigeria, a sustained and comprehensive approach is necessary. This requires strong political commitment, effective capacity building, robust institutional frameworks, and active stakeholder engagement. Addressing these challenges will ensure that GRB initiatives are more effective and far-reaching, contributing to the achievement of inclusive and equitable development.

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