

**Highlights of Best Practice from Morocco, March 2007**

***Overview:***

More than forty countries have now undertaken some form of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB). The approaches, technical tools, main actors, ownership, and even the objectives of such exercises vary widely. The Government of Morocco has, over the past five years, developed a model for institutionalizing an approach to GRB that demonstrates how it can become an essential component of public sector reform and a tool for more accurately assessing financial resources and requirements for fulfilling commitments to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment.

The GRB initiative in Morocco is led by the Ministry of Finance and supported with technical assistance from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), with financial support from the Government of Belgium. The initiative is particularly timely. Morocco now has one of the most progressive Family Codes in the Arab States and a national human development strategy that prioritizes poverty reduction with a specific focus on women. At the same time, it confronts the challenge of a 45% illiteracy rate amongst women, high maternal mortality rates, and a ranking of 107 out of 115 countries in the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap index.

A systematic process, since 2002, of building capacity and ownership of GRB within the Ministry of Finance is now yielding concrete change: The Budget circular issued by the Prime Minister for the year 2007 called upon line ministries to include gender indicators in the performance budgeting indicators and the budget reform process specifically identifies gender indicators as part of the expenditure control mechanisms, performance audit, and the budgetary information system. The extent to which Morocco is entrenching GRB as a backbone of the entire budgeting process is unparalleled and a critical example of using a gender mainstreaming strategy to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

***Highlights:***

■ *Capacity-development:* The initiative is systematically expanding capacity in GRB in critical government departments. Capacity development within the Ministry of Finance led to a wholly-owned process of creating a Moroccan guidebook on "Results-based Budgeting Integrating Gender" and a manual on gender responsive budgeting for budget officers in other ministries. Sixty budget and planning officials in 12 line ministries have received practical training and ongoing technical support in GRB.

■ *Linking GRB and MDGs:* The results of a multi-stakeholder process to devise gender indicators that were endorsed at the national level for the country's work on MDGs were closely linked to the GRB initiative. The initiative is targeting specific sectoral budgets of the Ministries of Education and Training, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The initiative has also tested a gender-responsive costing methodology related to work on MDGs.

■ *Closing the data gap:* The Ministry of Finance launched a survey at local level for generating gender-sensitive data and indicators to contribute to a better understanding of local development needs of women and men in relation to public services and policies.

### **Results Achieved:**

■ **National ownership:** GRB is becoming a permanent fixture in the performance-based budgeting process. A gender report was annexed to the Economic and Financial Report that accompanied the Financial Bill for 2006 and 2007. The Budget circular issued by the Prime Minister for the year 2007 called upon line ministries to include gender indicators in the performance budgeting indicators.

■ **Enhanced Accountability:** Baseline data on 2005 programmes and budgets benefiting women is now available in four key ministries (agriculture and rural development, education, health and finance) and was expanded in 2006 to the Department of Justice and Ministries of Labour, Transport, Energy and Housing, and the Secretariat for Family Affairs.

■ **Changes in allocations:** Information on concrete changes in allocations to support gender equality in key sectors is just beginning to emerge. The analysis of the programmes and budgets of the Ministry of Agriculture showed that the budget line allocated towards targeted livelihood activities for women has been increased from 5 million dirhams in 2002 to 6.3 million dirhams in 2006. An analysis of agricultural extension activities showed that women represented only 9% of the beneficiaries of these services in 2004 despite the fact that representation of women in rural economic activity is 39%. Changes in practices and resource allocations and expenditures that respond to these deficits are being planned.

### **Lessons Learnt for Replication/Scaling Up**

■ **Finding and investing in the right entry point:** A critical success factor in Morocco was the ownership that the Ministry Finance has taken of this initiative and the time spent in building the capacity of Ministry staff. The Ministry offered a strategic entry point. This can vary from country to country; the key point is that the identification of the 'engine' for the GRB initiative is a critical first step.

■ **Ensuring broad involvement and ownership over the long term** is also critical. The leaders of the Moroccan initiative acknowledge that the next challenge is to bring a broader array of partners into this work, including other Ministries, parliamentarians and gender equality advocates and networks

■ **Honing in on high-leverage sectoral priorities for achieving gender equality:** While integrating the GRB initiative in the overall budget process is important, concrete results can more quickly be achieved and recognized through analysis and action taken on sectoral budgets. Identifying critical sectors for enhancing gender equality and women's empowerment – and bringing key actors from sectoral ministries and programmes into the initiative at an early stage – must be a key part of the strategy.

For further information:

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