



Latin America is leading the way in gender-responsive budgeting and is producing some insightful lessons for other regions of the world.

ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH THE BUDGET: LATIN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES WITH GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

SUMMARY

Gender inequality is particularly prevalent in developing regions where it prevents millions of women from exercising the basic human rights they are entitled to. In recent years, governments around the world have begun implementing gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in an attempt to reduce gender gaps. In the Latin America region, legal and administrative reforms have paved the way for the development of innovative GRB tools and participatory mechanisms that are helping to ensure that women's priorities and needs are incorporated into national and local budgets. Civil society has played a key role in this entire process by providing technical expertise, lobbying governments and monitoring GRB outcomes. This Brief begins by presenting an overview of gender inequality and the evolution of GRB in Latin America, before analysing four key features of the Latin American approach to GRB. Given the current lack of evidence on GRB impacts, this Brief outlines some initial outcomes in order to draw lessons for other regions, while also identifying the contextual elements that have helped to drive forward GRB across Latin America.



GENDER INEQUALITY PERSISTS

Although states worldwide have ratified international treaties on women's equality - the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women \(CEDAW\)](#) and the [Beijing Declaration](#) being the two most important¹ - gender inequality persists throughout the world. Figure 1 shows that according to the Global Gender Gap Index 2012, gender inequality is more prevalent in developing regions, with the Middle East and Northern Africa occupying last place. This was confirmed by the United Nations in 2013 after a review of progress towards the [Millennium Development Goals](#) (MDGs), which indicated that women continue to face discrimination in access to education and work, as well as in terms of economic assets and political participation, and that gender-based violence continues to undermine efforts to reach the MDGs.² In fact, "women and girls make up 70% of the 1 billion people living on less than a dollar a day."³

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

Gender-responsive budgeting is a long-term process as it implies changing the way in which public servants have budgeted for decades. Various Latin American experiences point to the importance of training public servants on gender and budgets, so that they are aware of how their work can contribute to achieving gender equality.

Civil society can drive forward the implementation of GRB in various ways, including by raising awareness of the issues, training public servants, developing budget analysis methodologies and tools, lobbying policymakers, and by tracking public spending.

GRB initiatives are more likely to succeed if they build on other on-going reforms and participatory mechanisms. In Latin America, many GRB initiatives have been strengthened by tapping into existing participatory budgeting schemes.

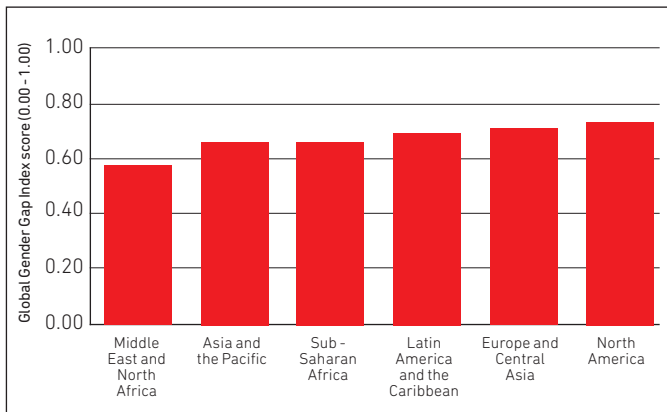
¹ CEDAW, adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is an international bill of rights for women. The Beijing Declaration was adopted in 1995 and summarises the commitments made by states to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women. By ratifying both international instruments, states assume certain obligations regarding the enforcement of gender equality and women's rights.

² United Nations. 2013. [Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women](#). United Nations. Online publication.

³ CARE. No date. [Ending Poverty: Why Empower Women and Girls?](#) CARE, Merrifield.



Figure 1: Global Gender Gap Index 2012 by Region



Source: Hausmann, R., Tyson, L. D. and Zahidi, S. 2012. [Global Gender Gap Index 2012](#). World Economic Forum, Geneva.

THE BUDGET AS A TOOL TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY: GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETS

The budget is one of the government’s most powerful instruments for safeguarding human rights and promoting development. This is because public policies and programmes cannot work if insufficient budget resources are allocated to their implementation. Budget allocations therefore provide some evidence of the level of government commitment to achieving development and human rights goals. After the Beijing Platform in 1995, it was increasingly argued that governments were designing and allocating budgets in ways that either a) did not necessarily help women overcome gender inequality; or b) might worsen gender gaps.⁴ Since then, governments, civil society, donors, and international and regional organisations have recognised the potential for using the budget as a tool to promote gender equality and advance women’s rights.⁵

The rights-based approach, which argues that the budget can be used by states to meet commitments set out in international and regional human rights treaties and national law, has become the theoretical foundation for GRB initiatives.⁶ Literature on GRB produced since the end of the nineties has asserted that, by using the budget to transform the cultural, political, social, and economic

structures and norms which perpetuate gender inequality, governments can guarantee and advance women’s rights.⁷

Progress on GRB has been made at various levels by diverse actors, such as civil society organisations, national and local governments and academics. Government efforts have focused on designing and allocating budgets with a gender approach, reporting on the gender impacts of budget allocations and creating spaces for public participation as a means of incorporating women’s needs and priorities into public spending.⁸ Civil society and academia, on the other hand, have focused on advocating for GRB, on working with governments to develop tools for budgeting with a gender approach, and on assessing whether government’s are addressing gender equality with these tools.

Box 1: What is GRB?

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is the name given to initiatives that promote linking state budget allocations and revenue to the legal obligations they are bound to through international treaties, national constitutions or secondary laws regarding women’s rights. GRB initiatives do not suggest that budgets be divided so that 50% is targeted at men and 50% at women, rather they analyse the entire public budget to determine whether public spending takes into account gender differences (women and men have different needs) and whether budget allocations actually address gender inequalities or worsen them. In this way, GRB enables states to assess whether their policies and programmes are fulfilling and advancing women’s rights. For non-governmental actors (such as community-based and civil society organisations, academics, the private sector), GRB provides a mechanism for overseeing government commitment to and progress towards closing gender gaps and guaranteeing women’s rights.

Sources: Budlender and Hewitt. 2003, see n5 below; Sharp. 2007, see n7 below; UNIFEM. 2010. [UNIFEM’s Work on Gender-Responsive Budgeting: Overview](#). UNIFEM, New York; The Basque Government, UN Volunteers, UNIFEM and AECID. 2008. *Programa Regional de Presupuestos Sensibles al Género en América Latina (Regional Programme for Gender Sensitive Budgeting in Latin America)*. The Basque Government, UN Volunteers, UNIFEM and AECID.

⁴ An interesting exception is the Australian government which has conducted assessments of the impact of expenditure on women since the 1980s. See Hofbauer Balmori, H.2003. [Gender and Budgets Overview Report](#). Bridge Institute of Development Studies, London.

⁵ Although this Brief explores the way the budget can be used to promote gender equality, it is worth mentioning that there is another approach – the macroeconomic one – which argues that macroeconomic economic policies can also narrow or widen gender gaps and thus there is a need to integrate gender concerns into economic policy as well. This approach highlights how gender inequality constrains national growth and living standards. See Budlender, D. & Hewitt, G. 2003. [Engendering Budgets: A Practitioners’ Guide to Understanding and Implementing Gender-Responsive Budgets](#). The Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

⁶ For more information on the implementation of the rights-based approach in Latin America read the ELLA Briefs [Mexico City’s Innovation: Budgeting with a Human Rights Approach](#) and [Making Human Rights Real: Two Latin American Experiences in the Rights Based Approach to Policymaking](#).

⁷ Budlender and Hewitt. 2003, see n6 above. Sharp, R. 2007. [Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women](#). United Nations, New York.

⁸ Hofbauer Balmori. 2003, see n4 above.



The purpose of this Brief is to present and analyse progress made with regards to GRB in Latin American countries to highlight useful lessons for other regions facing similar issues of gender inequality. In order to gather information on the various experiences of GRB from across Latin America, the author reviewed publicly available publications, handbooks and reports on regional, national and local GRB initiatives. Documents produced by international development agencies, such as UN-Women⁹ and the Commonwealth Secretariat were also consulted. Likewise, a review was conducted of theoretical papers on GRB in order to define the analytical framework of the Brief.¹⁰

It is worth noting that even though GRB has been implemented for more than 10 years in some Latin American countries, there is no systematic evidence available on its direct impacts on gender equality. Rather than reporting the degree to which GRB is closing the gender gap, national and local governments and donors tend to document outputs, such as a) the public funds that are now allocated using gender analysis tools; b) the budget allocations going to programmes and services focused on achieving gender equality; and c) the increase of women’s involvement in defining budget priorities. It is important to note as well that GRB has been designed, implemented and adapted differently in each Latin American country, making it difficult to identify clear trends and to gather and compare data. Despite this, the author of this Brief has organised the information in such a way that the reader can get a fair picture of GRB development, strengths and on-going challenges in Latin America.

THE LATIN AMERICAN APPROACH TO GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETS

By 2009, there were 52 GRB initiatives being implemented in 17 Latin American countries.¹¹ Although these initiatives vary greatly in design and scope, UN Women has identified two

distinctive features. First, the region has developed innovative GRB budget analysis and allocation tools thanks to strong research capacities. Second, the region has implemented GRB initiatives at the local level, taking advantage of the participatory budgeting processes already in place in many municipalities.¹² This Brief analyses these two features, plus two additional GRB trends from Latin America. The first of these relates to governments enacting and adopting legal and administrative reforms to promote the implementation of GRB. The second trend is associated with the key role that civil society is playing in lobbying for GRB and working with governments to design, test, and assess gender budget tools.

1) Legal and Administrative Reforms Mandating GRB

Some national and local governments in Latin America are carrying out legal and administrative reforms to ensure the adoption and implementation of GRB. These reforms are important since they provide the basis for transforming the way the budget has been designed and allocated for decades,¹³ for making GRB a mandatory component of government planning and spending, and for ensuring that new governments coming into power will continue to implement GRB.¹⁴

The incorporation of GRB into legal frameworks has occurred at three different levels in the region. Ecuador has given GRB the highest possible level of legal recognition by including a requirement in the 2008 Constitution for budgets to reduce gender inequality. With gender budgeting a constitutionally protected right, Ecuadorian citizens can make a stronger appeal to the government when this right is being violated. The governments of Mexico City, Guatemala, Peru, and Venezuela have formally acknowledged GRB in secondary laws which mandate public servants to consider gender differences when planning budgets or to allocate budget funds to tackling gender inequalities.¹⁵ Finally, Bolivia has mandated GRB through some administrative regulations. In 2006, for example, an article was added to the Bolivian Ministry of Finance’s

⁹ UN Women (or UNIFEM) is the organisation that has analysed GRB initiatives in Latin America most extensively, specifically in the eight countries where it works, namely Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Honduras, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. Consequently, much of the existing literature is based on experiences from these countries.

¹⁰ Research for ELLA is based entirely on a review of existing evidence, therefore no primary research or fieldwork was conducted for this Brief, except for some direct communications with a public officer to get more in-depth information on the Costa Rican experience.

¹¹ Coello Cremades, R. 2009. *Experiencias de Presupuestos con Enfoque de Género en América Latina: Una Mirada desde la Economía Feminista (Experiences of Gender Approach Budgets in Latin America: A Feminist Economics View)*. Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid.

¹² UNIFEM. 2008. *UNIFEM’s Work in Support of Gender Responsive Budgeting*. UNIFEM, New York.

¹³ Government budgets tend to be allocated in an incremental way taking into account the previous year’s allocation. This is to say, the budget for one year tends to be very similar to the one from a previous year with a small increment.

¹⁴ The Basque Government, UN Volunteers, UNIFEM and AECID. 2008. *Programa Regional de Presupuestos Sensibles al Género en América Latina (Regional Programme for Gender Sensitive Budgeting in Latin America)*. The Basque Government, UN Volunteers, UNIFEM and AECID.

¹⁵ In Mexico City and Peru, these secondary laws are Mexico City’s Budget and Spending Law, the Peruvian Sasieta Law and the Venezuelan Budget Law. Roeder, M., Takayama, C., Fuertes, P. and Hurtado, I. 2009. ‘Peru’ In: *Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting into the Aid Effectiveness Agenda: Country Summaries*. UNIFEM, New York; Article 10 of Mexico City’s *Budget and Spending Law (Ley de Presupuesto y Gasto Eficiente del Distrito Federal)*. United Nations, New York; and UNIFEM. 2010. *UNIFEM’s Work on Gender-Responsive Budgeting: Overview*. UNIFEM, New York.



regulations requiring municipal governments to allocate public spending to improve gender equality.¹⁶ Since then, 327 Bolivian municipalities have made specific allocations for gender policies. In Turco, Oruro, for example, gender equality budget allocations increased from 7,000 to 415,000 Bolivian pesos (USD\$1,000 to \$60,000) between 2007 and 2008.¹⁷

2) Developing Tools for Allocating and Reporting GRB

Equally important to the formal recognition of GRB in national constitutions, laws and administrative regulations has been its practical implementation. Ministries of Finance, Planning, Gender and Women’s Development in Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru and the Government of Mexico City have developed two types of GRB tool for the public sector; the first for allocating the budget and the second for monitoring expenditure. It is worth noting that since GRB is still a very innovative approach, the tools created in these countries are very context-specific and thus vary a great deal. Three examples of GRB tools for allocating budgets are:

- In Ecuador, the gender budgeting tool (*Clasificador Presupuestario de Género*) has been developed based on eight gender equality indicators such as women’s political participation, gender violence and access to resources. Public agencies can choose which of these indicators they will target, specify how they will do it, and with what amount of public funds. In addition, a Gender Unit has been created within the Ecuadorian Ministry of Finance; a good sign for the future sustainability of GRB in the country.¹⁸
- In Mexico City, the Ministry of Finance created “Outcome 13: Reduction of the Gap Between Men and Women” within its institutional budget, which earmarks public funds for 40 institutional activities aiming to improve gender equality. Since the implementation of this GRB initiative, the budget funds allocated to gender in Mexico City have increased 9.4% in the period 2008–2010, from 1,234 million pesos (US\$95 million) to 1,355 million pesos (US\$104 million).¹⁹

- In Guatemala, a numeric code with various categories was created within the national gender budgeting tool (*Clasificador Presupuestario de Género*). This code allows public servants to classify their budget allocations according to the degree to which these benefit women. For example, there is a category for budget funds exclusively benefiting women, or another category for funds that benefit target groups significant to women, such as children and the elderly.²⁰

In terms of monitoring expenditure, GRB tracking systems have been implemented in Brazil, Chile and Costa Rica to track the amount of public funding spent on initiatives aimed at improving gender equality. In Brazil, for example, the Public Budget Information System (SIGA BRASIL) tracks expenditure on gender equality and women’s rights programmes. The Brazilian Ministry of Health and the Public Agency for Women have also made extensive budget information available for tracking expenditure on gender equality.²¹

Box 2: GRB Implementation in Costa Rica

Work on GRB in Costa Rica started back in 2005. The National Women’s Institute led the process from the outset, working with key government ministries such as the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy and the National Audit Office in the design and implementation of GRB. GRB forms part of the national equity programme (*Programa Equitativos*), which promotes the adoption of a gender approach in the Costa Rican budget via three main activities:

1. Development of guidelines, frameworks and methodologies for GRB. In recent years, these tools have focused on supporting government agencies to disaggregate information and data by gender, in an attempt to get a better understanding of existing gender inequalities.
2. Training and capacity building for 300 public servants (to date) on how to incorporate GRB into their work, including integrating a gender approach into the planning processes for any public service, project or good; disaggregating data; identifying gender gaps; designing appropriate response mechanisms; redistributing the budget; and producing

¹⁶ UNIFEM. 2010, see n15 above.

¹⁷ The Basque Government *et al.* 2008, see n14 above.

¹⁸ The Basque Government *et al.* 2008, see n14 above; UNIFEM. 2010, see n15 above.

¹⁹ Mexican Ministry of Finance. 2013. [Proceso de Incorporación de la Perspectiva de Género en el Presupuesto del Distrito Federal \(Process for Incorporating a Gender Perspective in Mexico City’s Budget\)](#), Ministry of Finance, Online publications.

²⁰ The Presidential Secretariat for Women. 2011. [Clasificador Presupuestario de Género \(Gender Budget Classifier\)](#). The Presidential Secretariat for Women, Guatemala City.

²¹ Raes, F. 2006. [What Can We Expect From Gender Sensitive Budgets? Strategies in Brazil and in Chile in a Comparative Perspective](#). Online publication.



gender indicators. Two institutions that have launched pilot programmes to incorporate GRB into budgeting processes are the Supreme Electoral Court and the Ministry of Housing.

3. Creation of a Women’s Network for Fiscal Oversight, which brings together women leaders from civil society to monitor national GRB processes. The network has only recently been created and its members are currently being trained on financial and gender monitoring.

The Costa Rican experience is already producing some important lessons on GRB that are relevant to other countries and regions:

- A multi-sectoral approach that coordinates activities between government institutions provides an effective model for mainstreaming GRB (design of guidelines at the central level; training public servants on how to incorporate GRB into institutional processes; and strengthening civil society to monitor the process).
- It is important for key national ministries to be involved – such as the Ministry of Finance or the Ministry of Planning – since they play a fundamental role in guiding national budgeting processes.
- Producing disaggregated budget information by gender is a prerequisite for GRB as it allows existing gender gaps to be identified.
- GRB initiatives entail important cultural and administrative changes, hence the need to train public servants on gender budget analysis and tools.
- It is important that a single agency, in this case the Ministry of Women, leads and coordinates the process over time, as this will help to ensure its continuation.

Source: Interview with Lauren Palma, Coordinator of the Equity Programme, National Women’s Institute, Costa Rica.

3) Using Participatory Budgeting to Support GRB at the Local Level

Since 1989, Latin American countries have been implementing participatory budgeting (PB) as a way of incorporating citizens’ needs and priorities into budget designation, particularly at the local/municipal level.²² Since then, PB has spread throughout the region and is now implemented by more than 2,500 local governments in 15 different countries. Since GRB proposes taking gender differentiated needs into account

when budgeting, PB is considered an appropriate and effective mechanism for collecting and integrating women’s needs and demands into local budgets. That is to say, the inclusion of women in budget planning can increase the gender-responsiveness of public spending. For this reason, many municipalities in countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador Peru and Uruguay use PB as a strategy for carrying out GRB at the local level.

Three experiences from Latin America which illustrate the use and implementation of PB by local governments as a means to incorporate women’s needs into GRB are:²³

- In Cuenca, Ecuador, the municipal council established a PB process in rural areas to include women’s priorities into the local budget. This was because although in some rural areas more than 50% of households are headed by women (men have migrated away in search of other income-generating opportunities), their needs were not reflected in local government spending. Capacity building was provided by the local government to groups of rural women and local boards (*juntas parroquiales*) to define, prioritise and present their demands and needs in local PB processes. Partly as a result of this initiative, specific funds for improving gender equality have been included in municipal budgets since 2003.²⁴
- In Recife, Brazil and Rosario, Argentina, local municipalities created the post of Women’s Coordinator. This has encouraged women and helped to increase their participation in PB, and has assisted with the mainstreaming of gender in local government.²⁵ In Recife, the government has implemented various measures to encourage and facilitate women’s attendance at PB meetings, including providing childcare during PB meetings, disseminating brochures highlighting the relevance of women’s participation in PB in places close to where budget meetings take place, and holding meetings with civil society organisations (CSOs) to discuss innovative ways of promoting greater participation by women in PB.²⁶ In Rosario, as a result of women’s participation in the budget designation process, funding is increasingly being allocated to gender equality

²² A To learn more about participatory budgeting in Latin America, read the [ELLA Brief: Participatory Budgeting: Citizen Participation for Better Public Policies](#) and the [ELLA Spotlight on Publications: Participatory Budgeting](#).

²³ As mentioned previously, evidence available on GRB in the region tends to be anecdotal and focused on outputs, rather than on impacts or outcomes. The examples provided in this section reflect these limitations.

²⁴ UNIFEM Andean Region. 2007. *Construcción de Presupuestos Sensibles al Género en el Municipio de Cuenca, Ecuador (Designing Gender Sensitive Budgets in the Municipality of Cuenca, Ecuador)*. UNIFEM-Región Andina, Quito.

²⁵ UNIFEM. 2008, see n12 above.

²⁶ Reeves, H., Sever, C. 2002. *Issue 12: Gender and Budgets*. Institute of Development Studies, Brighton.



initiatives, such as play centres, nurseries, nursing homes for the elderly, programmes for training women in trades, and workshops for preventing gender violence.

4) Civil Society Driving Forward GRB

A final trend from the Latin America region relates to the role of civil society groups in lobbying for and supporting the design and implementation of GRB. Civil society has worked on many different issues surrounding GRB, and this Brief focuses on four key areas of activity.

First, civil society (academics and non-governmental organisations) in countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil and Mexico have developed innovative budget analysis and monitoring tools to assess the amount of funds governments are allocating to achieve gender equality. One example is the Women’s Group of Rosario for a Gender Sensitive Budget (*Mujeres de Rosario por un Presupuesto Sensible al Género*) in Argentina which requests budget information from the municipality to assess whether it is allocating significant budget resources to achieve gender equality²⁷ Another example is the Pernambuco State Forum for Urban Reform (*Foro Estatal de Reforma Urbana de Pernambuco*) in Brazil, which is formed by 60 CSOs and has developed a methodology to monitor if housing budget allocations work towards promoting gender equality.²⁸

Second, some CSOs act as watch-dog organisations and monitor governments to ensure they meet the GRB commitments mandated in laws and regulations. By doing so, these CSOs have been able to highlight problems in implementation processes. For example, in some municipalities in Bolivia and Ecuador, groups of citizens check that projects approved through PB are indeed implemented. Women’s CSOs in Brazil have also tracked government expenditure on activities to reduce violence against women and on health programmes, and have reported problems such as low implementation and limited impact.²⁹

Third, civil society groups in countries such as Mexico and Peru have worked with governments to develop budget allocation tools and training materials. In Mexico, [Fundar, Center for Analysis and Research](#), the CSO Gender Equality, Citizenship, Labour and Family ([Equidad de Género,](#)

[Ciudadanía, Trabajo y Familia](#)) and the Ministry of Health developed a [handbook on gender and health budgets](#). The Peruvian CSO, the Manuela Ramos Movement ([Movimiento Manuela Ramos](#)) has developed indicators to track gender outcomes for the priorities included in the government’s results-based budgeting framework and has shared these with the Ministry for Women. The Manuela Ramos Movement also assisted a parliamentary committee with monitoring the implementation of Peru’s Equal Implementation Law. At the local level, Network Peru ([Red Peru](#)) has developed strategies to incorporate a gender approach into the PB process.³⁰ In El Salvador, the CSO El Salvador Association for Women’s Entrepreneurial Education and Organisation ([Asociación para la Organización y Educación Empresarial Femenina de El Salvador](#)) developed a methodology for assisting the Attorney General’s Office with GRB.³¹ Finally, in Brazil, the Ministry of Health and women’s organisations jointly developed a methodology for monitoring budgets with a gender approach.³²

Fourth, civil society groups in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Peru are playing an important role by advocating for GRB within the government. In Mexico, for example, [Fundar, Center for Analysis and Research](#) has been monitoring the amount of federal funds allocated to reducing maternal mortality and has lobbied for the inclusion of [emergency obstetric care](#) within the Popular Health Insurance (*Seguro Popular*), a public health scheme that aims to provide universal health services to every Mexican citizen. Fundar, and the coalition on maternal mortality it belongs to, calculated how much it would cost to include emergency obstetric care in the scheme and showed that this service was crucial for preventing maternal deaths, particularly among vulnerable groups, indigenous people and poor women.³³ Thanks to this lobbying work, the Mexican government has now incorporated some services and interventions related to emergency obstetric care into the insurance scheme.³⁴ Another example of this type of work comes from Brazil where, as a result of CSO advocacy efforts, a programme for women’s health was included again (the government was planning on cancelling it) in the Brazilian annual budget for 2003.³⁵

²⁷ The Basque Government *et al.* 2008, see n15 above.

²⁸ Ibid. Barrig, M., Vargas, V. 2008. [Fortaleciendo la Gobernabilidad Democrática a Nivel Local: Iniciativas de Presupuestos Sensibles al Género en América Latina \(Strengthening Democratic Governance at the Local Level: Gender Sensitive Budget Initiatives in Latin America\)](#). UNIFEM-AECID, Lima.

²⁹ Raes. 2006, see n21 above.

³⁰ Roeder *et al.* 2009, see n15 above.

³¹ USAID and Asociación para la Organización y Educación Empresarial Femenina de El Salvador. 2007. [Lineamientos Esenciales que Facilitan la Construcción del Presupuesto Sensible al Género de la Procuraduría General de la República \(Essential Guidelines Facilitating the Design of a Gender-Sensitive Budget in the Attorney’s Office in El Salvador\)](#). USAID and Asociación para la Organización y Educación Empresarial Femenina de El Salvador, San Salvador.

³² Raes. 2006, see n21 above.

³³ Hofbauer, H., Garza, M. 2009. [The Missing Link: Applied Budget Work as a Tool to Hold Governments Accountable for Maternal Mortality Reduction Commitments](#). International Budget Partnership and the International Initiative on Maternal Mortality and Human Rights, Geneva.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Visit the [Presupuesto y Género \(Budget and Gender\)](#) website to learn about a wide range of government and civil society GRB initiatives and tools in Latin America.



The existence of international and regional treaties and conventions on women's rights – notably the CEDAW, the Beijing Platform and the [Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence Against Women](#), ratified by most Latin American states, provided the legal foundation for civil society groups to demand the use of the budget as a tool for reducing gender inequality and for governments to enact GRB laws and guidelines. National laws aimed at achieving gender equality and eradicating gender violence also provided a powerful legal basis for GRB implementation. At the same time, transition to democracy across Latin America has made governments more responsive and open to citizen participation in budgeting processes, with various countries such as Bolivia, Brazil, Mexico and Peru enacting citizen participation laws or budget laws that mandate the implementation of PB at the local level.

Decentralisation reforms, which transferred many responsibilities and financial resources to local governments, also facilitated the development of GRB initiatives at the local level. In fact, many local governments were willing to use on-going PB processes as a platform for incorporating the gender approach into budget allocation.³⁶ Likewise, public management and financial reforms such as results-orientated budgeting in Chile, Mexico City and Peru or budget expenditure tracking in Brazil provided a useful foundation on which to build GRB.

Citizen participation has been crucial for getting governments to create gender responsive budgets in Latin America. On the one hand, women themselves have participated actively in local PB processes in countries such as Argentina,

Bolivia and Brazil. On the other hand, CSOs, networks and academia have also played a major role by influencing policymakers, producing gender budget analysis research and innovative tools, and by monitoring budget allocations.³⁷

The creation of ministries for women and women's agencies has also played a major role in the implementation of GRBs. Importantly, these new agencies have collaborated with ministries of finance and/or planning and development to develop budget tools, train public servants and monitor budget allocation and spending processes.

International donors such as [UN Women](#), the [International Development Research Centre](#), the [Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development](#), the [United Nations Population Fund](#), the German Technical Cooperation, the Heinrich Boll Foundation and UKAid (formerly the [Department for International Development](#)) have all supported GRB in Latin America.³⁸ Notably, UN Women has been raising awareness and providing financial and technical support to GRB initiatives in at least eight Latin American countries since 1997.³⁹

The implementation of GRB has also been possible in Latin America because, since the nineties, gender and budget practitioners and academics⁴⁰ - many Latin American - have developed theoretical and practical approaches and methodologies for incorporating a gender approach into government budgets. First used by civil society organisations, these approaches and methodologies were later adopted and implemented by governments and regional organisations.

LESSONS LEARNED

- 1 Experience from Latin America shows that political will from policymakers, particularly within the congress and the ministries of finance, planning and development, is crucial since implementing GRBs in practice requires legal and administrative reforms such as changes in budget laws and the development and implementation of new budget tools.
- 2 Gender-responsive budgeting is a long-term process as it implies changing the way in which public servants have budgeted for decades. Various Latin American experiences show the relevance of training public servants on gender and budgets so that they are aware of how their work can contribute to achieving gender equality.⁴¹
- 3 Civil society can drive forward the implementation of GRB in various ways, including by raising awareness of the issues, training public servants, developing budget analysis methodologies and tools, lobbying policymakers, and by tracking public spending.
- 4 GRB initiatives are more likely to succeed if they build on other on-going reforms and participatory mechanisms. In Latin America, many GRB initiatives have been strengthened by tapping into existing participatory budgeting schemes.
- 5 Systematic evaluations by governments, donors and civil society of the impacts of different GRB initiatives are needed, as they provide the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of each intervention for improving gender equality. So far, Latin America has made progress on developing GRB initiatives, and must now begin to assess their impacts on key gender indicators.

³⁶ The Basque Government *et al.* 2008, see n15 above.

³⁷ UNIFEM. 2010, see n15 above.

³⁸ Martínez Medina, M. C., Méndez Narváez, A. 2006. [Construyendo Presupuestos Nacionales con Equidad de Género en El Salvador: El Camino Recorrido \(Building National Budgets with a Gender Approach in El Salvador: Ground Covered\)](#), United Nations Development Programme El Salvador, San Salvador.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Some of the first theorists on gender and budgets were Helena Hofbauer, Rhonda Sharp, Diane Elson, Guy Hewitt and Debbie Budlender.

⁴¹ UNIFEM. 2010, see n15 above.

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