



WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL BUDGETING PROCESSES IN ZIMBABWE

Introduction

A national budget represents the preferences and priorities of the government in a given period and is an influential management tool for achieving development objectives. This explains why the budgetary process should be an inclusive one so that all the sections of the society are able to contribute to the final product. The trend for budget processes in Zimbabwe has been that the marginalised (women and youths) have not been fully participating. Women participation and contribution to national budget processes at national level in Zimbabwe is a key element in ensuring fiscal transparency and accountability. The constitutional and Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) accords all citizens the right to participate and contribute, however the situation on the ground reveal minimal participation of women in the budgetary processes. This has been revealed by 2019 Open Budget Survey (OBS) results. There are limited or no consultations which are extended to the marginalised communities especially women from the grassroots and as a result, the budgetary outcomes are top-down. The top-down budgeting programs and processes remain a privilege of the state and monetary authorities; and various parliamentary portfolios, elites and close cartels. To this effect, women' participation in budget consultations processes is mainly inclined to those in urban areas. This has resulted in the ministry responsible for women affairs allocated less than 1% of the total budget since 2016.

Rationale

The Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP) in Zimbabwe underscored the need to upholding transparency and accountability in the use of public resources under the governance pillar¹. This was further prioritised in both the 2018 and 2019 National Budgets which sought to improve budget transparency and accountability. The OBS results have direct implication on the eligibility of countries for International Development Assistance hence the rationale to improve the budget transparency and accountability. The International Budget Partnership (IBP) stresses the need to ensure transparency and accountability in the use of public resources through improved participation of women in the budgetary process and the ability to demand social accountability in the use of public resources by the marginalised women.² International investors and women's rights defenders also use these indices to gauge governance wherein good governance is characterized by fiscal transparency and accountability as well as security of investments. It is therefore imperative to determine the state of budget transparency and accountability on the basis of women participation in budgetary processes and proffer recommendations to improve the next ranking. ICODZIM is alive to the need to make national budget processes more accountable from a gender perspective, to ensure that policy and budget decisions take gender perspectives into account and that policies on gender equality are matched with adequate resource allocations. A related objective to the aforementioned is to increase women's participation in economic processes. The realization and the achievement of the goals of gender equality underscored in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals need to be supported by the allocation of necessary human, financial and material resources for specific and targeted activities to ensure gender equality at the local and national levels. It is important to note that women and men experience poverty in both similar and different ways. The processes through

¹ Transitional Stabilisation Programme 2018 - 2020

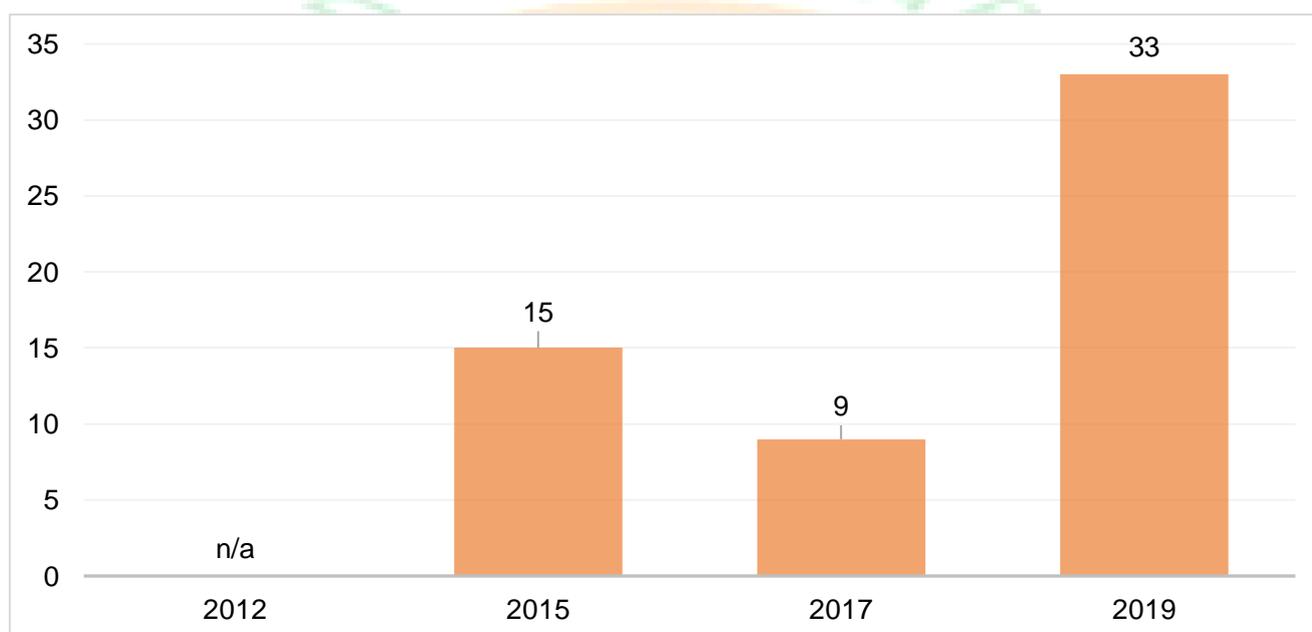
² The National Indicative Programme in Zimbabwe 2015 - 2020

which they become poor are different yet related, and their response to poverty is different. To be just and effective poverty reduction strategies, policies and budgets should take these differences into account. This policy brief analyses on the existing trends of women participation in national budget processes and mid-term fiscal policy reviews in Zimbabwe.

Women participation in national budgets in Zimbabwe

This study which was conducted by Institute for Community Development (ICOD) and was anchored on the backdrop of a nose-diving economy characterised by everchanging monetary policy reforms associated with hyperinflation, liquidity crunch, foreign exchange and market distortions, high unemployment, current account deficit, low industrial capacity utilization and poor execution of the national budgets and policies. Transparency through publishing budget documents alone is insufficient for improving governance. Inclusive participation is crucial for realizing the positive outcomes associated with greater budget transparency. The 2019 Open Budget Survey results have revealed limited formal opportunities were offered to the public especially women for meaningful participation in different stages of the budget process.

Figure 1: Public Participation Score in Zimbabwe budgetary processes



Source: OBS Reports

As shown in figure 1, the ranking for public participation in 2019 was 33 out of 100, up from 9 out of 100 in 2017. The OBS has indicated limited opportunities and platforms for the people in rural areas to engage in the budget process and the demographic characteristics shows that men are outweighed by women in comparative terms. There is therefore need for the government to strengthen the budget consultative processes and also ensure participation of women during all phases of budget cycle. In 2019, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has established pre-budget deliberations during budget formulation but there has been no further effort made to strengthen women participation in the budget process such as mechanisms to monitor budget implementation. Also, there is need to expand mechanisms during budget formulation that engage any civil society

organization or member of the public who wishes to participate. This will enable government to actively engage with vulnerable and underrepresented communities, directly or through civil society organizations representing them.

Implications of the findings from this analysis

- Exclusion/marginalization of the women will continue to infringe their democratic rights in making binding decisions which benefits them through informing desired development path.
- Absence of women opinion in budgetary allocations will create sharply divided poverty scales and levels and increased inequalities between and amongst people of different social categories
- Some marginalized social groups with precarious conditions like women will remain invisible and underrepresented if their opinion is not sort in national budgeting.
- Lack of meaningful participation of women in the budgetary process has remained an affront to achieving gender budgeting in Zimbabwe.

Recommendations

1. The government of Zimbabwe should create an enabling environment for women to meaningfully participate in national budgeting.
2. Decentralisation of national budgeting should also be considered so as to allocate resources basing on the spatial and contextual needs of the diverse citizens.
3. The government should also conscientize the women about the knowledge on budgeting and the implications of attending and participating in the budgetary processes.
4. Development of budgets in simplified version which are easy to understand and in accessible formats.
5. Strengthen capacity of parliament and auditor general to effectively exercise the oversight role in the national budget cycle.
6. Establish mechanisms for women to exchange views on national budget matters at both, formulation of the national budget and the monitoring of its implementation.

Conclusion

It is critical for government to spearheading gender budgeting by ensuring meaningful participation of women in budgetary processes. This analysis of women's participation in budgetary processes has exhibited limited opportunities and platform created for women to effectively participate in budgetary processes. This, to a greater extent, has resulted in institutions responsible for women affairs failing to register progress in achieving women empowerment and gender equality. Low participation of women in budgetary processes could also exhibit underlying capacity gaps by CSOs and CBOs which result in these institutions failing to mobilise and empower women to improve their participation in budgetary processes. A more comprehensive analysis of contribution by women focussed CSOs in mobilising women in budgetary processes is therefore needed.

About Institute for Community Development in Zimbabwe

ICODZIM is a woman led and founded organisation for women. The organisation seeks to achieve gender equality by empowering women and strengthen their economic position. Our interventions

attempt to address gender norms and equality early in life, before gender stereotypes become deeply ingrained in marginalised women. ICODZIM therefore promotes women’s rights by creating platforms for women to amplify their voices and influence policies and decisions which affect them for socio-economic transformation of the lives of women.

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