



POLICY BRIEF

Institutionalizing Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) at the Local Level: Key Imperatives for Inclusive Governance

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women across the Asia-Pacific region continue to face structural inequalities that restrict their participation in governance and limit equitable access to public resources. Although many countries have adopted Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) frameworks at the national level, implementation at the local level governance remains weak due to technical complexity, limited institutional capacity, and weak enforcement mechanisms. In 2025, the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), in partnership with Nepal's Local Development Training Academy (LDTA), piloted an initiative to institutionalize GRB within local governments. The program engaged 117 elected representatives and government officials, enhancing their understanding of GRB processes and practices and equipping them with practical knowledge and tools to apply GRB principles. Post-program evaluation revealed a marked improvement in participants' knowledge, with average test scores rising from 4.09 at the outset to 8.29 in the post-test. The pilot demonstrated that practical training, simplified tools, and institutional support can significantly enhance local governments' capacity to apply Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB). However, sustainable implementation requires systemic reforms. Clear and accessible guidelines, integration of GRB into mandatory budget procedures, performance-linked fiscal incentives, and permanent institutional mechanisms are essential to embed gender accountability into public financial management. The Nepal experience offers a scalable model for CIRDAP member countries. By adopting phased implementation strategies, anchoring GRB in local budget cycles, and fostering multi-stakeholder coordination, governments can ensure that gender equality commitments translate into measurable outcomes. Expanding GRB beyond government budgets- through engagement with NGOs, development partners, and CSR initiatives- will further reinforce inclusive governance and strengthen collective responsibility for gender-responsive development across the region.



INSTITUTIONALIZING GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING (GRB) AT THE LOCAL LEVEL





BACKGROUND

Across the Asia-Pacific region, women continue to face entrenched structural inequalities shaped by gender, socio-economic status, disability, ethnicity, and prevailing social norms. In many countries, their access to quality education, healthcare, productive employment, and leadership opportunities remains limited. Cultural and institutional barriers further constrain women's participation in decision-making processes at the household, community, and governance levels.

Despite strong national commitments to gender equality, public financial management systems often fall short in translating these commitments into effective budget allocations. Planning and budgeting processes frequently lack gender-disaggregated data and systematic gender impact assessments. As a result, gender priorities remain underfunded, and women's economic and social contributions continue to be undervalued.

To address these gaps, CIRDAP, in collaboration with Nepal's Local Development Training Academy (LDTA), launched a pilot action research project in 2025 titled "*Capacity Development of Elected Representatives and Officials to Implement Gender Responsive Budgeting at Local Governments in Nepal*". The initiative sought to strengthen both the institutional and technical capacities of local governments to effectively operationalize Nepal's GRB guidelines at the local level. A total of 117 participants- including elected representatives such as Municipality Mayors, Deputy Mayors, and Rural Municipalities' Chairpersons and Vice Chairs, Ward Chairs, and Executive Members, along with Chief Administrative Officers and technical officials from selected local governments- actively engaged in this initiative.

THE PILOT INITIATIVE GENERATED SEVERAL NOTABLE OUTCOMES:

Enhanced Knowledge and Skills: Participants demonstrated significant improvement in their understanding of GRB concepts and tools. Average test scores rose from 4.09 in the pre-test to 8.29 in the post-test.

Strengthened Institutional Coordination: The pilot fostered improved collaboration between thematic committees and finance sections within local governments.



Increased Technical Readiness: Participants gained practical knowledge of gender budget classification and coding systems outlined in Nepal's GRB guidelines.

Despite these advances, important challenges persist. Many local officials continue to find GRB classification systems complex, confidence levels among elected representatives remain uneven, and enforcement mechanisms for GRB implementation are still weak. Nevertheless, the pilot offered critical insights on how GRB processes and practices can be effectively institutionalized within local governments.

POLICY INSIGHTS

1. Simplify the Guidelines: The National GRB Frameworks should be streamlined to ensure accessibility and relevance for local governments. Developing concise manuals, practical templates, and simplified coding tools can enable local officials to apply GRB principles more effectively during budget preparation. Clear step-by-step guidance can reduce complexity and foster consistency across diverse local contexts. Avoiding overly complex coding systems is critical to ensure usability at the local level.

2. Institutionalize GRB in Local Budget Cycles: GRB must be embedded into mandatory budget procedures rather than treated as a voluntary exercise. Gender classification should be required before budget proposals are submitted to Local Assemblies, with compliance checkpoints integrated at key stages of planning, approval, and execution. This ensures GRB is not reduced to a procedural formality but linked to measurable outcomes.

3. Link GRB Compliance to Fiscal Incentives: Incorporating GRB indicators into Local Government Performance Assessment Systems can create strong incentives for compliance. Performance-based grants or conditional fiscal transfers can reward gender-responsive planning and budgeting. Linking financial resources to demonstrated GRB outcomes motivates accountability and ensures gender priorities are adequately funded.

4. Establish Permanent GRB Institutional Structures: Local governments should establish dedicated mechanisms for GRB implementation and monitoring. These structures should oversee gender budget classification, reporting, and compliance, ensuring continuity beyond individual training programs. Permanent institutional arrangements- such as GRB units or focal points- can safeguard sustainability and embed gender accountability into governance systems.



5. Build Sustained Capacity Systems: Continuous capacity development is essential for effective GRB. Governments should institutionalize periodic training programs for newly elected representatives and government officials to maintain institutional memory and skills. Establishing technical support platforms- such as GRB knowledge portals, helpdesks, or peer-learning networks- can provide ongoing assistance and foster a culture of gender-responsive governance.

6. Expand GRB Beyond Government Budgets: Gender accountability should extend beyond public finance. Encouraging NGOs, development partners, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives to align with GRB reporting frameworks can broaden the impact of gender-responsive practices. This multi-sectoral approach strengthens collective responsibility for gender equality and ensures that resources across society contribute to inclusive development.

7. Strengthen Multi-Stakeholder Coordination: Effective GRB requires collaboration beyond government institutions. Policymakers should encourage coordination with development partners, civil society organizations, and non-government actors to reinforce gender accountability. Partnerships can provide technical expertise, financial support, and monitoring capacity, ensuring that GRB implementation is both comprehensive and sustainable.

FUTURE DIRECTION

1. Phased Implementation Strategy: Governments should adopt a gradual approach, beginning with simplified gender budget classification systems that are easy for local officials to apply. As institutional capacity strengthens, more advanced GRB tools and methodologies can be introduced to ensure sustainability and scalability.

2. Performance-Based Incentive Mechanisms: A portion of fiscal transfers or conditional grants can be linked to GRB compliance. Embedding GRB indicators into performance assessment systems will encourage local governments to adopt gender-responsive practices and deliver measurable outcomes, rather than treating GRB as a procedural formality.

3. Institutional Anchoring: Each local government should establish a dedicated GRB implementation committee or focal unit. These structures should review and certify gender-coded budgets before approval, ensuring accountability and embedding GRB into the local budget cycle.



4. Digital and Technical Support Systems: Developing online GRB platforms with manuals, templates, coding libraries, and FAQs can provide continuous technical support. Such platforms should be designed to simplify processes, avoiding overly complex coding systems that hinder implementation.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms: Governments should establish measurable indicators- such as the proportion of gender-coded budget lines or allocations to gender-priority sectors. Annual GRB scorecards and public reporting can strengthen transparency, accountability, and citizen trust in the budgeting process.

6. Sustained Capacity Development: Periodic training programs for elected representatives and officials should be institutionalized to maintain knowledge and skills. Beyond one-time interventions, governments should create technical support platforms, peer-learning networks, and helpdesks to provide ongoing guidance and ensure institutional memory.

7. Multi-Stakeholder Coordination: Effective GRB requires collaboration beyond government institutions. Policymakers should encourage coordination with development partners, civil society organizations, and non-government actors to reinforce gender accountability. Partnerships can provide technical expertise, financial support, and monitoring capacity.

8. Extending GRB Beyond Government Budgets: Gender accountability should extend to NGOs, development partners, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Aligning these actors with GRB reporting frameworks will broaden the impact of gender-responsive practices and foster inclusive development across sectors.



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CONCLUSION

The Nepal pilot demonstrates that targeted training, simplified tools, and institutional support can substantially enhance local governments' capacity to implement Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB). By engaging elected representatives and officials, the initiative improved knowledge, strengthened institutional coordination, and increased technical readiness, offering a practical model for institutionalizing GRB at the local level.

Scaling this success into sustained practice, however, requires more than pilot interventions. Simplified guidelines, integration of GRB into mandatory budget procedures, performance-linked fiscal incentives, and permanent institutional mechanisms are essential to embed gender accountability into public financial management. Equally important are continuous capacity development systems, digital support platforms, and multi-stakeholder coordination to ensure that GRB is not reduced to a procedural exercise but delivers measurable outcomes.

The Nepal experience provides a scalable framework for CIRDAP member countries across Asia and the Pacific. With phased implementation strategies, performance-based incentives, institutional anchoring, and robust monitoring mechanisms, countries can adapt the model to their national contexts. Expanding GRB beyond government budgets -by engaging NGOs, development partners, and CSR initiatives- will further strengthen gender accountability across sectors.

With appropriate policy reforms, technical support, and regional collaboration, the Nepal pilot offers a practical pathway for advancing gender-responsive public financial management and ensuring that national commitments to gender equality translate into tangible outcomes for communities across the Asia-Pacific region.

