

Abstract

Operation of the Gender Budgeting Council and the Gender Budgeting Evaluation Committee

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Since its introduction in Korea almost ten years ago, gender budgeting has generated many positive outcomes, including the strengthening of the legal and policy basis for the enhancement of gender equality. Despite these achievements, however, gender budgeting still has to deal with issues such as the concentration of resources on some projects or ministries and the poor management

of project performance. Also there is a call to innovate the national fiscal system to help realize the social value of gender equality in a more effective manner. Against this backdrop, the National Assembly has consistently argued that a performance evaluation and management system for gender budgeting projects and an IT infrastructure should be created. For instance, when overseeing the government's budget settlement for 2017, the National Assembly demanded the government to swiftly introduce practical measures to help meet the performance goals related to gender budgeting it had previously demanded. The National Assembly maintained that more than the creation of a regular consultative body or a pilot program or the initiation of a research project is needed. The establishment of a regular statutory body, like the government subsidy management committee or the sponsored project evaluation committee under the Ministry of Economy and Finance, is required to resolve the decade-long issues of the inappropriate selection of projects and the ineffectiveness of projects, it argued. The National Assembly also cited the need to launch an independent IT system for gender budgeting for quicker and deeper analysis of data to ensure a more efficient and effective utilization of data on gender budgeting that have consistently improved in terms of quality. These eventually led to the creation of the Gender Budgeting Council (under the directive of the Ministry of Economy and Finance) as a regular statutory consultation body aimed at improving the performance management of the gender budgeting system and promoting inter-agency discussions on issues related to the system as prescribed in Articles 26 and 57 of the National Finance Act.

The Gender Budgeting Council operates the Gender Budgeting Evaluation Committee under its umbrella to deal with what it delegates (Article 4 of the Operational Guidelines for the Gender

Budgeting Council). First and foremost, the operation of the Gender Budgeting Council and the Gender Budgeting Evaluation Committee is focused on reflecting the gender perspective into the budgeting cycle by helping the government prepare gender budgets and gender budget settlement reports—the statutory documents written for the budget settlement for the previous year, the execution of budget for the concerned year, and the preparation and deliberation of budget for the next year—and analyzing the documents. Second, the Gender Budgeting Council and the Gender Budgeting Evaluation Committee are aimed at executing matters related to the functioning and operation of the Council (Article 3 (1) of the Operational Guidelines) and matters related to the composition and operation of the Committee (Article 4 (1) of the Operational Guidelines). Also, the Council and the Committee are aimed at serving as an expert body with research capability to help improve the performance management of the gender budgeting system and promote inter-agency discussions and present policy proposals to further enhance the gender budgeting system.

Against this backdrop, the Council and the Evaluation Committee were operated throughout 2021. The results of the operation were reflected in the gender budget and the gender equality fund operation plan for 2022 and the gender budget settlement report for 2020, which were all submitted to the National Assembly as attachments to the budget plan for 2022 and the budget settlement report for 2020, respectively. During the process to prepare these documents, the Gender Budgeting Council, the Gender Budgeting Evaluation Committee, and the Gender Budgeting Evaluation Working Committee were convened, and they evaluated the appropriateness of the selection of projects for gender budgeting as well as the performance of the projects. The evaluation found that 2.4% of the target projects

were excellent in terms of their performance, 22.5% good, 68.8% moderate, 6.3% poor, and 0.0% bad. These findings will be considered by respective ministries when they prepare gender budgets for the next year.

The operation of the Council and the Evaluation Committee led to the identification of four major issues to be resolved as below. The first issue concerns gender budgeting projects and gender indicators. First, the designation schedule for priority projects for gender equality is not specified in the preparation guidelines for gender budgets. To ensure that the priority projects continue to move forward smoothly as planned, there should be measures such as the five-year term re-evaluation and renewal of the priority project status in harmony with the cycle of the Medium Term Fiscal Management Plan. Second, the classification of projects into direct and indirect impact projects should be more clarified and enhanced. The direct impact projects refer to what directly contribute to the concerned ministry's meeting of gender equality objectives. They include the projects implemented under the 2nd Master Plan for Gender Equality Policies. If a ministry does not include a project that qualifies as a direct impact project into the implementation plan of the Master Plan, the project will be considered not as a direct impact project but as an indirect impact project, and the ministry cannot prepare a gender budget for that project. Third, it is necessary to develop indicators that not only show the intrinsic nature of projects but characterize them from a gender perspective and figure out ways to measure the outcome indicators as well as the output indicators, which are mostly the beneficiary female ratio at present.

The second issue concerns the evaluation of the appropriateness of the selection of gender budgeting projects (in April). First, the process to submit the list of target projects and relevant documents

should be enhanced. A process was run to receive ministries' requests to eliminate projects from the scope of gender budgeting projects and enter new projects into the scope. In doing so, some ministries skipped the new entry application process or fill in the application form the reason for not preparing a gender budget, creating confusion. Ministries should prepare their gender budgets for the next year by referring to the results of performance evaluation conducted by the Council and the list of new gender budgeting projects finalized by the Council. They should also submit project-related documents and reference materials along with the list of old projects, the request for the exclusion of old projects, and the list of new entries. Second, given the timing of the preparation of gender budgets, the review of the appropriateness of project selection should occur in March so as for the results of review to be notified together with the detailed guidelines for the preparation of the budget in May after going through the discussion by the Evaluation Committee and the deliberation by the Council in April. The work schedules of the Evaluation Committee and the Evaluation Working Committee should be arranged accordingly. Third, in the case of projects found in need of improvement in gender impact assessment, which is carried out in relation to gender budgeting, the reports should be completed and provided before March. Fourth, although the Evaluation Committee and the Council did their job (for approximately 350 projects), their work was not based on the classification of projects by characteristics (approximately 8,000 specific projects in total), and therefore has a limitation. Going forward, the characteristics of gender budgeting projects should be further investigated, and the evaluation data accumulated based on the Evaluation Committee meetings so as to supplement the classification criteria for gender budgeting projects. There is also a

need to discuss whether to make public the results of evaluation and deliberation in addition to notifying them to concerned ministries. Fifth, to strike a balance between ministries in terms of the number of gender budgeting projects and such, the evaluation should be conducted at the ministry level. Doing so will help identify new projects appropriate for gender budgeting.

The third issue is about the performance evaluation of gender budgeting projects (in September). First, since documentary evaluation alone is not sufficient in relating the evaluation to budgetary conditions, in-person interview was suggested as a supplementary tool. Second, at present, the Evaluation Committee discusses the results of evaluation conducted by the Evaluation Working Committee to adjust priorities or standards. Going forward, the discussion should be conducted after the directions and objectives of evaluation for the concerned year are determined. It is important to set the priorities for the evaluation regarding gender equality projects and budgeting, which should provide the basis for common understanding among the evaluators. Third, when not only publicly available data but ministries' internal materials are needed to score projects, it is critical to communicate directly with the official in charge within the concerned ministry. It is also necessary to have a way for each ministry's responsible official to check the acceptance of the evaluation results and deliver the ministry's opinions. Fourth, the results of the pilot evaluation for 2021 that the Council finalized will be notified to the respective ministries (in February 2022) and reflected into the gender budget settlement statement for 2021 and the gender budget for 2023 at each ministry's discretion. The results of evaluation for 2021 will provide the basis for discussion on how to utilize evaluation results (e.g. decisions on whether to keep a project, exclude a project from evaluation, and so on)—this is being

discussed by ministries involved in the Council. It is necessary to specify the improvements made to the way the results are reflected in gender budgets. Fifth, to strike a balance between ministries in terms of the number of gender budgeting projects and such, the evaluation should be conducted at the ministry level.

The last issue is about the operation of the evaluation system. First, although the evaluation results determined by the Council and the Evaluation Committee are expected to be reported to the Cabinet and the Gender Equality Council, there should be more than that. An institutional measure should be in place to ensure that the evaluation results are reflected into the respective projects of each ministry. Second, gender budgets and gender budget settlement reports are prepared under the National Finance Act while the evaluation of projects is conducted by the Council and the Evaluation Committee under the Operational Guidelines for the Council. To settle the issue raised by the non-existence of legal provisions on the delegation of duties, relevant laws and regulations should be revised. Third, the workforce of the Council and the Evaluation Committee, which remains contracted due to socioeconomic issues and in the aftermath of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, is not sufficient for the operation of the evaluation system and the effective implementation of research activities. It is necessary to reinforce the workforce and increase the budget.

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