
Gender-sensitive analysis of government social welfare projects and ways to improve their efficiency

Young-Sook Kim

Hyo-Joo Kim

Nam-Hui Hwang

Ju-Yeon Jeong

Since the Korean government introduced gender budgeting in 2009, the largest number of gender budget statements has been submitted in the social welfare sector. Among the 398 projects that are part of gender budgeting in 2017, 140 projects belong to the social welfare sector; this sector accounts for 72.6% of total budget of 2017 gender budget projects.

We conduct a gender-sensitive analysis of the Korean government's social welfare projects in order to examine whether gender budgeting contributes to not only gender equality, but also project efficiency.

This research consists of two parts. First, we conduct a literature review and an econometric analysis with the structured numeric data from the national gender budget statements for 2017 and the gender performance reports for 2015.

Project performance data assessed during the most recent three years are also used to measure project efficiency.

Second, we discuss four case studies about social welfare projects that were undertaken. We interviewed experts and government officials in order to incorporate diverse views into the case studies. Also, the opinions of experts in the social welfare sector were collected using delphi survey method.

Our main findings are presented below; first, in terms of gender equality, we find that there tend to be more women than men in the number of project targets and beneficiaries in the social welfare projects. It could be interpreted that women are more susceptible to unemployment or poverty due to gender gaps in labor force participation and education. Regarding the project efficiency of social welfare projects, it was found to be worse than other sectors, when other characteristics of the projects were controlled for.

Second, we find that there is a possibility that a gender-sensitive approach, including gender budgeting, could improve the efficiency of social welfare projects, as well as their gender equality. The gender-sensitive approach could make it possible to identify project targets and reduce the possibility that someone who should receive benefits would be left out. This approach could result in the improvement of efficiency among social welfare projects.

Third, most projects in social welfare sector were carried out by individual households. Hence, the project benefits should be measured by household data, including the gender of a head of each household.

Based on these findings, a gender-sensitive approach regarding government projects needs to cover all sectors because structural barriers and discrimination related to gender can be compounded by multiple and intersecting inequalities. To do so, it is necessary to incorporate the concept of gender equality into the existing national finance plans and modify national finance operating system to reflect gender perspective.