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**The Need for Effective Institutional Mechanisms for Gender  
Mainstreaming in the National Governance Structure:  
The Case of Gender  
Responsive Budgeting in Bangladesh**

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## **Abstract**

One of the main challenges of incorporating Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) into the national governance structure is the successful campaign, often political, of convincing the government to start the initiative and in situations where the initiative is present, the need to undertake effective mechanisms to institutionalize or implement it. This paper will examine the case of gender responsive budgeting (GRB) in Bangladesh, a relatively recent initiative, in light of the changes in the macro and meso-level policies. These changes were nascent in the long standing movement post-Beijing and gained momentum under the realms of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). An in-depth examination will be undertaken in the context of the Government of Bangladesh's recent Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), "Unlocking the Potential: National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction (NSAPR)". Since the establishment of NSAPR, the government's policies and development projects have been expressly aligned with the priorities highlighted in NSAPR. This national strategy introduced a concrete budgetary mechanism, the Medium Term Budget Framework (MTBF), which made way for GRB. Using Bangladesh as an example, this paper will argue that a precondition for successfully addressing gender concerns in a country is to effect policy instruments/institutional mechanisms (such as NSAPR) which facilitate the implementation of the necessary tools/processes (such as GRB) within the national governance structure.

Without the strong support of institutional mechanism and policies it is indeed difficult to incorporate or introduce new elements into the entrenched governance system. One of the hardest elements to incorporate is the element of gender sensitivity. Governance structures are made gender sensitive or gender responsive through the process of gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming refers to a series of activities which lead to positive concrete changes towards achieving gender equality. This paper looks into the case of how effective institutional mechanisms can lead to the creation of tools / processes that will ensure gender mainstreaming into the national governance structure. The tool/process discussed in this paper is called gender responsive budgeting (GRB).

### **What is Gender Responsive Budgeting and Why is it Important?**

Gender responsive budgeting (GRB) is imperative to ensuring that government policies/initiatives are not only gender sensitive but that appropriate financial allocations are rendered to achieve them. It is a unique analytical tool that enables governments to assess and differentiate the impact of their expenditures and revenue generating activities on both the sexes.<sup>1</sup> GRB is a mechanism to address and consequently mitigate the gender biases that are prevalent in society. It also encompasses a consideration of other biases resulting from an individual's vantage point, such as age, class, income or ethnicity.<sup>2</sup> In other words, GRB goes beyond the simple discussion of biological differences.

In the policy literature, there is a wide array of terms used to describe GRB including 'gender-sensitive budgets,' 'women's budgets' and 'applied gender budget analysis'.<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of this paper, the term "gender responsive budgeting" will be used.

Despite GRB's positive attributes and effects, it is not widespread. This is primarily due to the challenge of incorporating it into the national governance structure. Substantial campaigning, often a political challenge, is required to convince a government to start the initiative and in governments where the initiative is present, the will to undertake effective mechanisms to institutionalize it.

GRB also includes micro-, meso- and macro-level analysis. It is predicated on initially performing due diligence at the micro- and meso-levels to better understand the status quo of existing biases and then using this analysis to design effective macro-level policies and budgets to address them. Hence, in addressing prevalent biases, GRB also helps to improve the country's fiscal management and economic governance.<sup>4</sup> It enhances the government's accountability and commits it to gender equality, thereby lending the much needed focus on women's needs, rights and empowerment. Further, GRB is inherently a needs-based budgeting process and therefore, it is not surprising that it promotes equitability and fairness in resource allocation (that is, government revenues) by allocating resources to those who need it the most. This has wider, more positive macro-economic implications. For example, given that women in general have greater reproductive health needs than men, an allocation that is geared towards this need will necessarily contribute to a healthier and more productive labour force. A by-product of GRB is good governance, whose achievement is often a

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<sup>1</sup> Budlender, D and Hewitt, G. 2003. "Engendering Budgets: A Practitioners' Guide to Understanding and Implementing Gender-responsive Budgets", *New Gender Mainstreaming Series on Development Issues*, Commonwealth Secretariat, p.5.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Budlender, D and Hewitt, G. 2003. "Engendering Budgets: A Practitioners' Guide to Understanding and Implementing Gender-responsive Budgets", *New Gender Mainstreaming Series on Development Issues*, Commonwealth Secretariat, p.5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

prerequisite to securing loans and other financial assistance from international financial institutions as well as foreign governments and private donors.

Good governance by definition means competent management of a country's resources and affairs in a manner that is open, transparent, accountable, equitable and responsive to both women and men's needs and interests.<sup>5</sup> Good governance is one of the essential prerequisites for addressing gender inequalities. The poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) of Bangladesh called, "Unlocking the Potential: National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction (NSAPR)" has indeed brought in most of the components of good governance in its fight against poverty and gender inequalities.

This paper will argue that an important precondition for successfully addressing gender concerns in a country is to effect institutional mechanisms and policies that support processes such as GRB for gender mainstreaming the national governance structure. Unless policies are enacted that require the budgeting to be carried out in a gender responsive manner, it would be extremely difficult to implement GRB. This is especially true of countries where to date the women's rights situation remains volatile.

In the following sections, this paper will use the case example of Bangladesh to establish the argument that with the implementation of NSAPR, GRB became an integral part of the budgetary process of the Government of Bangladesh. NSAPR is a national strategy document that requires government agencies and line ministries to follow objectives, programs and projects that promote gender equality and reduction of poverty. NSAPR provided the necessary institutional support required for GRB to be introduced into the governance system. Further, this paper will delve deeper into the process through which GRB is being carried out in Bangladesh along with a discussion on the existing gaps, challenges and the recommendations to counter them.

### **NSAPR at a Glimpse:**

In October 2005, the Government of Bangladesh for the first time formulated and adopted NSAPR. The stimulus for this strategy document came from the IMF, which required all borrowing low-income countries to prepare a PRSP.<sup>6</sup> The policy concerns and priorities under NSAPR have been drafted in line with the country's commitment towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA).<sup>7</sup> NSAPR has been designed with the intention of utilising it as a guideline and road-map for the overall development of the country. NSAPR documents the government's medium term strategy to make substantial progress in human and social advancement whilst maintaining economic growth as measured through economic indicators such as the level of employment. Further, it narrates the deployment of strategic programs targeted towards the poor in a bid to attain poverty reduction at the macro and sectoral levels. NSAPR also details four supporting strategies. These are (i) ensuring participation, social inclusion and empowerment of women, children, ethnic minorities, etc. (ii) promoting good governance,

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<sup>5</sup> Gupta, R.S. 2007. "Good Governance and Gender" (unpublished), p.1

<sup>6</sup> Government of Bangladesh. 2005. *Unlocking the Potention: National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction*, p-ii

<sup>7</sup> Bangladesh Ministry of Finance, "Implementing Gender-Responsive Budget in Bangladesh", a report prepared for the *Commonwealth Secretariat for Finance Ministers Meeting 2007 on Progress of Gender-Responsive Budgets*, Dhaka, February 2007, p-1

(iii) ensuring effective service delivery and (iv) caring for the environment and sustainable development.

NSAPR is a policy instrument that defines poverty in a multi-faceted manner, encompassing economic, social and political perspectives. Therefore, the impacts of poverty on all aspects of an individual's life have been adequately captured including food security, shelter, standard of living, health and social wellness. This definition has played a key role in recognizing and thereby bringing to the forefront the need to address poverty from a gender inequality perspective. This is because poverty is infused with gender biases given its discrimination and deprivation. It is selective in its gender treatment and thus, tends to worsen gender inequalities especially with respect to women.

NSAPR has lent a strong voice to issues pertaining to women, that is, their empowerment, rights and advancement of their status quo in society. This document has an explicit discourse on this topic highlighting its relevance in not only achieving efficient poverty reduction, sustainable economic and social development but also basic fundamental fairness in human rights. Further, its supporting strategy titled, "Ensuring Participation, Social Inclusion and Empowerment," also treats this topic with due consideration. Hence, the poignant achievement of NSAPR is its explicit recognition that poverty reduction initiatives will not be effective unless they are tackled from a gender-based perspective. It signals an awareness that poverty does impact women and girls differently, that is, more adversely than men and boys. It stipulates that gender-based discrimination is a hindrance to achieving an equitable society based on a sustainable development framework. NSAPR has in effect prioritized the need to resolve issues affecting women's rights and empowerment in realistically achieving its poverty reduction strategy.

NSAPR's main framework embraces a gender-based approach to development and poverty reduction. It aims to achieve gender equality through a focus on women given that they have been and still are generally the most disadvantaged/vulnerable section of society. NSAPR addresses women's rights and empowerment issues from two perspectives. First, it deliberates on the issue itself. In this effort, it has created a policy matrix to address aspects of women's issues such as their employment, education, social well-being, economic empowerment, violence against them, etc. Second, it has done a sectoral deliberation, whereby women's rights and empowerment issues have been tackled in 17 policy matrices. These matrices clearly identify the actions required from different ministries in their respective fields to achieve gender equality. The gist of NSAPR's argument is that achieving gender equality, a development goal, will lead to positive externalities including reduction in poverty levels. Hence, its prominence in promoting sustainable development should not be underestimated.

### **The Link between NSAPR and GRB:**

NSAPR is the key strategy paper that is increasingly being referred to on a priority basis to implement development projects and programs within the country. Hence, its adoption has been critical in directing the focus of the government's development initiatives. The recent years have also witnessed substantial reforms in the budgetary processes. These have been carried out to improve the quality of planning and budgeting. In addition, since 2007, as part of its implementation strategy for NSAPR the country has been following the Medium-Term Budget Framework (MTBF). This framework covers a period of three-years---the budget year and the following two years. MTBF has a three-fold purpose. First, it enables the budget formulation at the macro level and at the ministry level to be aligned with the overall policy goals. Second, it ensures that budgets are designed and implemented 'against a realistic and

sustainable multi-year resource envelope’.<sup>8</sup> Third, it promotes efficiency in budgetary spending as available resources are ‘utilised more efficiently so that the quality of public services can be improved’.<sup>9</sup>

Initially, MTBF was introduced as a pilot process in 4 ministries, however, given its enabling nature, the number of ministries currently using it has increased to 16.<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that these 16 ministries are responsible for allocating almost 60 percent of the total national budget.<sup>11</sup> The ministries to name a few include the ministries of education, women and children affairs, health and agriculture. The goal is to progressively implement this new budgetary system in all ministries and government agencies of the country.<sup>12</sup>

Gender concerns have been integrated into the macroeconomic policies of the country through the MTBF approach.<sup>13</sup> This is because this approach puts a significant emphasis on the outcomes/impacts of the government policies and accompanying budgets on the populace. This very emphasis is at the heart of GRB. Under MTBF, all the line ministries are required to complete their individual divisional budget in a framework called the Budget Call Circular-1 (BCC-1). Budget Call Circular is an official notice from the Ministry of Finance instructing other ministries and government agencies on the format of submitting their budgets for the upcoming year to the Ministry of Finance. In terms of Bangladesh, BCC-1 is the strategic phase of the budgeting cycle that requires all the ministries functioning under MTBF to set their pace for the next 3 years. For the first time, under BCC-1, poverty and gender have been incorporated as specific items. This is largely attributed to NSAPR’s strategic focus on both these issues. The Ministry of Finance has prepared a number of guidelines with specific poverty and gender formats to facilitate the completion of the BCC-1 form by the 16 ministries. Section 3 of the BCC-1 form (attached as Annex 1) explicitly asks ministries following MTBF to state how their strategies impact poverty and gender. Form 4 of BCC-1 (attached as Annex 2) requires the ministries to consider the extent to which their or their agency’s programmes and projects will impact poverty and gender inequalities. Thus, BCC-1 enables the ministries to assess the performance of their programmes and projects in relation to the poverty and gender objectives of the NSAPR.

The fiscal year 2007 (FY07) was the first year for BCC-1 submissions for the 16 ministries following MTBF. This BCC-1 approach ensures that poverty and gender concerns are an integral part of the budget planning process for these ministries. Under MTBF, ministries will annually renew their commitment towards poverty reduction and gender equality through an analysis of related impacts of all strategies, programmes and projects in their budget proposals. Further, quantitative assessments are currently being carried out requiring ministries to score on a scale of 1-5 the impact on poverty and gender of their respective strategies, programmes and projects. This scoring is based on two criteria: a) the number of poor people and women who are being affected by the ministry’s strategies, and, b) the impact of the activities in relation to the strategy. This quantitative approach enables the ministries to critically evaluate the overall impact of their medium term strategic activity. It also enables

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<sup>8</sup> Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Finance, *The Medium Term Budget Framework 2007/08- 2009/10*, p.2

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Rahman, H. 2008. “Gender Budgeting in Bangladesh”, *Nari O Kannya Shishu Unnoyoner Biniyoge (Translated title: Investment in Women and Girl Children Development)*, p-3

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Bangladesh Ministry of Finance, “Implementing Gender-Responsive Budget in Bangladesh”, a report prepared for the *Commonwealth Secretariat for Finance Ministers Meeting 2007 on Progress of Gender-Responsive Budgets*, Dhaka, February 2007, p.1

them to delve into improvements focusing either ‘on increasing the number of people affected or on increasing the impact’.<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Finance has provided to the line ministries guidelines on what factors and indicators to use in scoring the impact of strategies, programmes and projects (attached as Annex 3).

The main aim of GRB is to ensure that the gender dimensions are being mainstreamed into all stages of the budget cycle. GRB entails analyzing and assessing the different impacts of public expenditures on the various groups of citizens, that is, on women, men, girls and boys. Fundamentally, the overarching goal is to elevate the welfare of the poor and to render a meaningful change in the gender status quo. Hence, GRB fits well with the MTBF approach and under its umbrella the BCC-1 strategic budgeting phase. Both are designed to fulfill NSAPR’s priorities related to poverty and gender concerns. NSAPR is the national strategy paper stating the priorities of the government whereas GRB is the process in place to ensure that these priorities are addressed. NSAPR clearly states that gender mainstreaming is addressed through core sector and programme budgets and that priority will be given to initiatives promoting gender equity in: (i) access to education and health facilities, (ii) women’s participation in mainstream market-oriented economic activities, (iii) access to job opportunities and terms and conditions of employment, (iv) access to banking and credit services on a preferential basis, (v) allocation of public housing, (vi) easy access to transport and communication mediums and (vii) social protection for women.<sup>15</sup> Priority will also be given to initiatives that will: (i) reduce violence against women, (ii) reduce burden on women’s daily work-hours, (iii) enhance women’s political empowerment and participation in decision-making and (iv) strengthen monitoring and evaluation of gender equality issues.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, NSAPR also includes a small number of targeted programmes that will provide direct women-focused support. These will include facilities providing small-scale loans to women, female stipend programmes in secondary and tertiary education, and maternal and reproductive health programmes etc.<sup>17</sup>

Broadly speaking, GRB includes 5 steps/components. First, it considers the situation of women, men, girls and boys, then checks whether the policies in place are gender sensitive and whether there is adequate budget allocations to implement gender sensitive policies and activities. Fourth, it checks whether the expenditure is spent as planned and finally it examines the impact of the policy expenditure.<sup>18</sup> Hence, given that the national strategy document, that is NSAPR, has such a strong focus on most of these components to reduce poverty and achieve women’s advancement, GRB by default became a necessity to achieve NSAPR’s objectives and priorities. Although previous discussions may have been prevalent on the need for GRB, however, it is the establishment of NSAPR that was monumental in creating an enabling environment for GRB to be adopted and function as an effective tool.

### **GRB---A New Process and Capacity Building/Human Resource Management:**

Indeed, the Government of Bangladesh has been quite successful in institutionalising the coordination of NSAPR and GRB in the form of MTBF. As mentioned earlier, MTBF was introduced in the FY 07 and hence, it is still a relatively new process and tool for many who are working in the 16 ministries and are responsible for complying with the new budget cycle

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p.2.

<sup>15</sup> Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Finance, *The Medium Term Budget Framework 2007/08- 2009/10*, p.9

<sup>16</sup> Bangladesh Ministry of Finance, “Implementing Gender-Responsive Budget in Bangladesh”, a report prepared for the *Commonwealth Secretariat for Finance Ministers Meeting 2007 on Progress of Gender-Responsive Budgets*, Dhaka, February 2007, p.1

<sup>17</sup> Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Finance, *The Medium Term Budget Framework 2007/08- 2009/10*, p.9

<sup>18</sup> Budlender, Debbie.2005. *Gender Responsive Budgeting: Manual for Trainers.*, UNDP. p.12

mechanisms. As a result, it has become increasingly crucial for the government to engage in capacity building as well as awareness raising campaigns to educate government employees and the general public about this new budget mechanism. Hence, the Ministry of Finance has undertaken an extensive capacity building programme spanning all 16 ministries following the introduction of MTBF. However, despite receiving capacity building training, government employees still feel the need to acquire more knowledge on identifying gender and poverty sensitive strategies that would fulfill the NSAPR priorities of their ministries with the greatest impact.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, given that GRB is a recent innovation in the Bangladesh government structure, there is an inadequate number of local trainers who can successfully impart detailed knowledge on GRB related issues particularly in the context of Bangladesh. Many development partners in Bangladesh, such as the UK Department of International Development (DFID), the Royal Netherlands Embassy, and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) are undertaking initiatives complementary to GRB knowledge augmentation, such as providing gender training to strengthen the capacity of the officials from the line ministries complying with MTBF as well as the officials from the Ministry of Finance.

### **Other Initiatives and Contributions that are Helping to Institutionalise GRB in Bangladesh:**

Currently, there are two projects in Bangladesh that are sustaining the progress and implementation of the GRB initiative. These two projects are: a) Financial Management and Reform Program (FMRP) supported by DFID and (b) Policy Leadership and Advocacy for Gender Equality (PLAGE) Phase II supported by CIDA. The projects have contributed significantly to the gender-related reform in the fiscal management process along with strengthening the capacity of the government officials in implementing GRB.<sup>20</sup> Some of the major contributions of these two projects to the GRB initiative are listed below:<sup>21</sup>

- Developed the guidelines for integrating the issues of poverty and gender into BCC-1.
- Built capacity of the budget desk officers of the Ministry of Finance who are helping the 16 line ministries to carry out MTBF and fulfill its documentation requirements (including the completion of the BCC-1 form).
- Designed gender sensitive and pro-poor budget training modules for the Financial Management Academy (FIMA) of the government.
- Imparted training to the officials of the various ministries following MTBF on conceptual clarification of gender issues and their link to development. The aim was to support officials in translating their learning and understanding into GRB preparation.
- Provide ongoing capacity building support to the committees, namely, the Budget Management Committee (BMC) and the Budget Working Group (BWG) under each of the 16 ministries.
- Developed the Recurrent, Capital, Gender and Poverty (RCGP) model to calculate budget shares allocated to poverty and gender.
- Prepared the guidelines for the project titled “Performance Audit of the Management of Social Programs”. Further, also implemented a social performance audit with a

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<sup>19</sup> Personal Interview with Dr. Kaniz N. Siddiqe, International Consultant, Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh on January 9, 2008, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Also, telephone interview with Mr. Habibur Rahman, Senior Assistant Secretary, Finance Division, Ministry of Finance on January 8, 2008 in Dhaka Bangladesh.

<sup>20</sup> Bangladesh Ministry of Finance, “Implementing Gender-Responsive Budget in Bangladesh”, a report prepared for the Commonwealth Secretariat for Finance Ministers Meeting 2007 on Progress of Gender-Responsive Budgets, Dhaka, February 2007, p.4

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

particular focus on gender and poverty. This later audit was titled, “Reaching the Ultra Poor: Poverty Reduction through Micro-Credit for Women”.

- Prepared and published two booklets. One was a user-friendly, easy to interpret version of the NSAPR and the other was an informative booklet illustrating core gender concepts essential for implementing GRB in the context of NSAPR.

### **Gaps in NSAPR and Corresponding Recommendations to Address them :**

NSAPR is popularly seen as one of the pioneering documents in Bangladesh that explicitly addresses the issues of gender and poverty along with its linkages. However, it still does have its skeptics/critics, who believe that NSAPR does not fully address all gender concerns. The resulting policy gaps are being seen as opportunities for improvement. Some of these gaps are listed below:

#### **Limited analysis of the prevailing gender inequalities:**

Although NSAPR mentions that gender inequality is prevalent in many spheres of the Bangladeshi society, it does not provide sex-segregated data quantifying the extent of this gender inequality. For example, had sector specific data of the prevalence of gender inequality been detailed, then it would have immensely facilitated the design of interventions in every sector.

#### **Did not incorporate women’s economic contribution to society:**

In the current societal structure, women and girls are predominantly viewed as economic burdens. Hence, it is important for a national strategy document to reflect the contributions of women and girls to the national economy. They not only provide care giver services, but also actively participate in income-generating activities. Specifically, there are many small scale women entrepreneurs making significant economic contributions. Unfortunately, in its present form, NSAPR does not mention these contributions. This gap seems especially counterintuitive given the presence of a chapter titled, “Ensuring Participation, Social Inclusion and Empowerment”. Further, it also overlooks the pivotal role of women in the agricultural sector particularly in terms of seed storage. No economic value is attributed to this activity and hence, it is not counted in the GDP calculation. It is of utmost importance to reflect these contributions in NSAPR. This will in turn enable policy makers to accurately design policies that provide the appropriate incentives to encourage these women to contribute more and help start contribution from those who are not contributing at the moment.

#### **Weak recommendations:**

Two of NSAPR’s focus areas with respect to women’s advancement issues relate to enhancing women’s political participation and eliminating violence against them. The recommendations made under these two categories are not satisfactory to such an extent that implementing them will not achieve the desired objectives. For instance, weak attempts to reduce violence have been witnessed but no concrete action plan has been indicated in NSAPR to step up the efforts to eliminate violence against women. Similarly, NSAPR encourages women’s political participation but does not have corresponding realistic recommendations to follow through on this issue as well. The current recommendations in this category are weak and overly ambitious. Short, medium and long term strategies need to be undertaken to address both the issues of reducing violence and increasing political participation.

### **Gender perspective is missing from the discussion of service delivery:**

Government service delivery is an essential element of NSAPR in its aim to reduce poverty whilst achieving gender equality. However, there is no clear strategy provided in NSAPR to ensure that the objectives of this element are met. There is no stipulation on how the service delivery model will target the disadvantaged/poorer segments of society, especially women, neither is there a discussion on how to make services more accessible to the poor and the vulnerable. Hence, there need to be more discussions and concrete strategies to address the issue of service delivery from a gender perspective.

### **Challenges:**

GRB has been in place approximately for 2 years and therefore, it is of no surprise that officials are encountering functional difficulties. Proverbially change is difficult even when it is for the better and so is the adjustment process to the new budgeting and reporting systems. For many years, ministries followed a welfare approach for ensuring women's advancement. Hence, the more recent, rights based approach to women's advancement is a concept that is still difficult for many to grasp. Performing tasks such as filling out BCC-1 and scoring their activities often require substantial effort from the officials as these are relatively new concepts that require increased conceptual clarity and training to execute. Further, a fundamental change in the mind-set of officials (the change being towards increasing gender-sensitivity) is needed to realize the full potential of NSAPR. Hence, a critical challenge for the next few years would be to build the capacity of officials both in knowledge and mindset to enable them to effectively manage and adapt the GRB process to the societal needs. This in turn will sustain and propagate the progress that has been initiated under the current GRB process.

A tracking system needs to be implemented in the near future to monitor expenditures and verify that they are in accordance with the approved budget.

Furthermore, the gaps identified in the previous section, such as attaining sex-segregated data, including women's economic contribution and so forth represent important challenges that should be addressed in the next PRSP document.

The lessons learned from the present GRB procedures along with the gaps identified in the NSAPR can be used to further strengthen both the strategy document as well as the current GRB process. For instance, once the officials are fully skilled in following the budgetary process using a gender responsive perspective, many of the issues which are presently unclear as it is only the first year, might become much clearer with experience and rigorous training.

### **Conclusion:**

NSAPR, the national strategy paper has created an enabling institutional mechanism in which GRB is thriving. Many of the priorities and objectives detailed in NSAPR are in line with the objectives of MDGs, CEDAW and PFA.

All in all, NSAPR explicitly recognises the fact that poverty reduction initiatives have an inherent linkage with women's rights and empowerment issues. The emphasis on elevating women's status quo transverses this strategy paper. It does so with the aim of highlighting gender sensitive initiatives as productive mechanisms for poverty reduction.

Despite its gaps and challenges, it remains a powerful document to reckon with. It has revolutionized the budgetary process in Bangladesh and is transforming mindsets to actualize an agenda for gender equality. Poverty reduction remains a stark reality towards which 16 ministries in Bangladesh are currently strategically committed to tackling. Good governance

has been part and parcel of the GRB process embedded in the MTBF. This has significantly facilitated its implementation at the various governance levels and its outreach in society.

The long-term aim of the Government of Bangladesh is to ensure that this process achieves government-wide compliance.<sup>22</sup> MTBF and all its complementary requirements such as BCC-1 have ensured a strong emphasis on the GRB process in Bangladesh. Hence, it suffices to state that the precondition for successfully addressing gender concerns in a country is to effect institutional mechanisms (such as NSAPR), which facilitate the implementation of the necessary tools/processes (such as Gender Responsive Budgeting) within the national governance structure. Unless, there is an enabling national policy or strategy it is difficult to diffuse a new practice such as GRB. However, the future success of NSAPR will depend on how effectively it manages to address the existing gap areas that have been discussed in this paper.

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<sup>22</sup> Rahman, H. 2008. "Gender Budgeting in Bangladesh", *Nari O Kanya Shishu Unmoyoner Biniyoge (Translated title: Investment in Women and Girl Children Development)*, p-2

**Annex 1:**

**Budget Framework- Section 3 from BCC-1: Impact on Poverty Reduction and Women's Advancement**

Briefly summarize (in no more than 50 words) the poverty and gender impacts of the ministry's strategic objectives, making note of the following:

- linkage to the gender-related strategic objectives of PRSP/NSAPR (e.g. Policy Matrix of NSAPR);
- where available, the numbers and percentages of poor people and specifically poor women, who are affected by the strategy, either directly or indirectly;
- whether the impact is expected to be short-term (e.g. benefits under social safety net programs) or long-term (e.g. capacity building, training, micro-credit, investment in public resources which will benefit the poor/women).

**Poverty and Gender Impact**

Column 1: This column refers to the strategic objectives that were identified in section 2.

Column 2: Describe how the strategic objectives and associated activities relate and contribute to the government's wider poverty reduction objective.

Column 3: Describe how the strategic objectives and associated activities relate and contribute to the government's wider objective of women's advancement.

<b>Strategic Objectives (1)</b>	<b>Impact on Poverty Reduction (2)</b>	<b>Impact on Women's Advancement (3)</b>

**Annex 2:**

**Form 4**

**Department/Agency Preliminary Expenditure Estimate and Projection**

**Ministry/Division:**

**Department/Agency:**

Department/Agency	Priority Ranking*	In lakh Taka					Impact on Poverty Reduction**	Impact on Women's Advancement**	Explanatory Comments
		Budget 2006-07	Estimate		Projection				
			Revised 2006-07	Budget 2007-08	2008-09	2009-10			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Department/Agency Expenditure Ceiling									
<b>1-Non-Development Expenditure***</b>									
<b>2- Development Program financed from Revenue Budget</b>									
<b>Approved Programs</b>									
Program-A									
Program-B									
Sub-Total									
<b>Processing of Programs for Approval/New Programs</b>									
Program-A									
Program-B									
Sub-Total									
<b>Total Non-Development Expenditure (1 + 2)</b>									
<b>3-Development Expenditure</b>									
Approved/On-going Projects									
Project-A									

Project-B									
Sub-Total									
<b>Processing of Projects for Approval/New Projects</b>									
Project-A									
Project-B									
Sub-Total									
<b>Total Development Expenditure</b>									
<b>Grand Total</b>									

\* Development programs financed from revenue budget and projects under development budget should be ranked according to the priority.

\*\* Probable impact on poverty reduction and gender should be graded as follows: "Negative," "Zero," "Low," "Medium," "High" or "Targeted"

\*\*\* Allocation against each operation unit should be shown separately.

### Annex 3

#### Factors to estimate impact of strategies on poverty reduction/women's advancement

Grading impact on poverty reduction/women's advancement	Qualitative Guidelines
The impact is <i>negative</i>	Projects/programs which reduce the well-being, employment, productivity, access to resources of the poor/women
The impact is <i>neutral</i>	Projects/programs which do not improve the well-being, employment, productivity, access to resources of the poor/women, either directly or indirectly
The impact is <i>low</i>	Projects/programs which have a minimal and/or short-term impact on the well-being, employment, productivity, access to resources of the poor/women, either directly or indirectly
The impact is <i>medium</i>	Projects/programs which may moderately improve the well-being, employment, productivity, access to resources of the poor/women, either directly or indirectly
The impact is <i>high</i>	Projects/programs which make a significant and sustainable improvement to the well-being, employment, productivity, access to resources of the poor/women, either directly or indirectly
The activity is <i>targeted</i> to the poor/women	Projects/programs which have the specific aim of promoting poverty reduction/women's advancement. Women/different categories of poor people are explicitly named as beneficiaries

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*Personal Interview with Dr. Kaniz N. Siddiqe, International Consultant, Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh on January 9, 2008, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Also, telephone interview with Mr. Habibur Rahman, Senior Assistant Secretary, Finance Division, Ministry of Fianance on January 8, 2008 in Dhaka Bangladesh.*