



TOWARDS  
MORE EQUITABLE  
GROWTH FOR  
MALAYSIA

# GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

Siti Kamariah Ahmad Subki  
November 2020

INSTITUTE *for* LEADERSHIP  
& DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Enabling Market Solutions



# **GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING**

Towards More Equitable Growth For Malaysia

Siti Kamariah Ahmad Subki

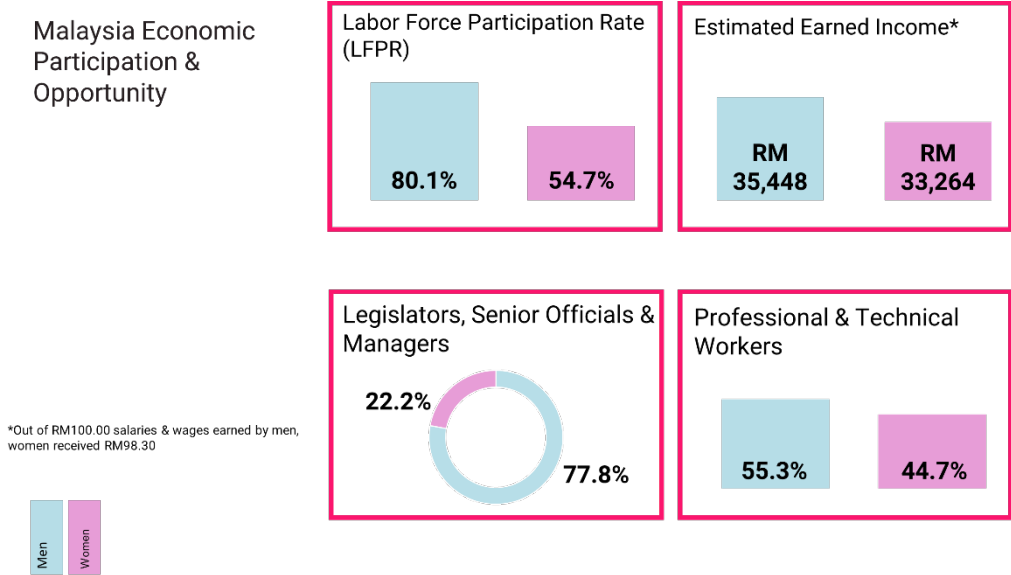
November 2020

# BACKGROUND

Gender equality, also called gender egalitarianism is defined as the state in which access to status, rights or opportunities, including economic participation and decision-making, is unaffected by gender. This also means that the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued and favoured as well as addressing the tendency to ascribe, in various levels and settings across societies, different roles and status to individuals on the basis of gender.

The issue is deep rooted in various cultures and societies and perpetuated by lack of female representation at all levels of policy and decision-making tables. As of October 2020, overall women representation in the Malaysian Parliament is still below the 30 percent target set by the United Nations (14.9% Lower House and 19% Upper House). In addition, as per Chart 1 below, overall women are still lagging on political, legislative, technical and professional fields.

Chart 1



Source: Department of Statistics 2019

Achieving equality between women and men requires institutionalizing a gender-responsive approach to all levels of decision making from grassroots to topmost structures, with a developmental concept referred to as Gender Mainstreaming. The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing endorsed gender mainstreaming as a critical and strategic approach for achieving gender equality commitments. The resulting Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action mandates all stakeholders in development policies and programmes, The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1971, during the UN Decade for Women, in which Malaysia also ratified, is a binding international instrument that mandates signatory parties to take all appropriate measures to facilitate the advancement of women and the upholding of their human rights. The Beijing Declaration of Action sets forth three objectives relating to the human rights of women: protecting women’s human rights through implementing rights-based instruments, ensuring quality and non-discrimination through the rule of law, and achieving legal literacy as a means to women’s political empowerment.

# GENDER EQUALITY AS AN ACCELERATOR FOR ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that achieving gender equality is a matter of human rights and is paramount to progress across all the goals and targets. Goal 5: Gender equality is a single goal that cuts across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals and is reflected in 45 targets and 54 indicators for the SDGs. Furthermore, gender equality can be a catalytic policy intervention that triggers positive multiplier effects across the spectrum of development, with actions required in the following key areas to accelerate progress:

- (i) ensuring equal rights, opportunities and outcomes for both women and men;
- (ii) enhancing women’s agency, capabilities and participation in decision-making processes;
- (iii) eliminating gender-based violence and discrimination;
- (iv) transforming power relations at all levels of society



## HOW GENDER MAINSTREAMING COULD ENSURE EQUITABLE RIGHTS FOR ALL

Gender responsive budgeting, which is a key component in the overall gender mainstreaming implementation ensures that financing and adequate investments are made to implement national plans and policies for gender equality and women’s empowerment. These include, among others, promoting decent work, ensuring access to resources, reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work and strengthening social protection for all. The systematic design and collection of and access to high-quality, reliable and timely gender-disaggregated data are essential to implementing effective and evidence-based policies.

## Gender Responsive Budgeting is a Key Component in the Overall Gender Mainstreaming Nationwide Implementation

### 01 Structure and mechanism

Political Will and institutionalization of GM. E.g.:

- Establishment of Gender Committee (at all level)
- Appointment of Gender Focal Point
- Distribution of circular (gender)
- Gender responsive research
- Gender Analysis & Gender Audit
- Gender Action Plan & Key Performance Indicator (KPIs)

### 02 Capacity Building

Critical to support this strategy. Gender awareness and gender sensitivity training, which assists policy makers and implementation staff to identify and address gender issues, also for equal opportunity for promotion

### 03 Gender Responsive Budgeting

Agencies mandated to verify the quality of proposed budgets, and the State Treasury would integrate the inclusion of **gender impact assessments** as a requirement within any stage of quality control.

It should show tangible results in terms of **resource re-prioritization and re-allocation decisions across sectors**, and ultimately result in better public spending, for the benefit of both men and women

### 04 Sex-Disaggregated Data (SDD)

Quality of Sex-Disaggregated Data to support evidence-based policy making at relevant state agencies

## Why Do Gender Budgeting?

Government spending and taxation impacts women and men differently due to their different situations, needs and priorities. Some policies which appear neutral superficially may have the unintended consequences of increasing gender inequality or may not yield the intended effects due to the varying scenarios both genders face. One case in point is the recent statistics announced that men accounted for 78%<sup>1</sup> of suicides during the COVID-19 Movement Control Order (18 March 2020 to 30 October 2020). Utilising gender lens in budgeting would then suggest allocating specific funds to tackle this issue.

The process of gender budget analysis can highlight these gender needs differences and thus improve the effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and transparency of government policy, as well as making significant contributions towards gender equality and the realisation of human rights. Analysing any form of public expenditure, or method of raising public money, from a gender perspective would benefit not only women, but men and society overall. It is certainly not a separate budget for women, and what we need is to apply a gender lens for each expense item of an existing community, council, state and federal budgets. i.e. all forms of public expenditures.

Truly, when analytical attention is focused on the individual as well as the family level, with serious considerations for the longer-term consequences of a policy, everyone benefits. One of the best examples for this is the results focused narrative provided by the UK Women’s Budget Group back in 2016 to lobby the government to spend more on childcare: “Investing in the Care Economy: Investing 2% of GDP in care industries could create 1.5 million jobs”. In

<sup>1</sup> <https://astroulagam.com.my/news/article/171785/an-average-of-one-suicide-a-day-during-mco-shocking-pdrm-statistics-show>

addition, simulation results from seven OECD countries showed that investing 2% of GDP in public services of care would create almost as many jobs for men as investing in construction industries in the UK, US, Germany and Australia but would create up to four times as many jobs for women.<sup>2</sup>

There are challenges at hand. At the federal level, various efforts had been put in place to institutionalize gender mainstreaming since the early 2000 by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and various civil society actors. Nevertheless, reforms have not been sustained, largely attributed to the various changes in Ministers and leadership structures. Change in government in 2018 saw gender mainstreaming making a big comeback,<sup>3</sup> albeit short-lived due to another change in government in February 2020.

At state levels both Penang and Selangor have implemented this policy with ongoing efforts to ensure the efforts are sustainable at all levels of government.

Cooperation across government agencies and across the policy processes is key in sustaining this developmental approach. Availability of sex-disaggregated data and indicators are important so that not only gender-responsive budgets can be formulated, but more importantly so the impact of a budget, for women, men, girls and boys, can be monitored and evaluated. In addition, sensitivity to gender segregation, cultural practices and gender norms and awareness on the impact that policies have on these social constructs is critical towards ensuring sustainable development is achieved with no one left behind.

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://wbg.org.uk/analysis/investing-2-of-gdp-in-care-industries-could-create-1-5-million-jobs/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/493521> 27 Sept 2020 and <https://www.nst.com.my/news/government-public-policy/2019/09/525066/msia-roll-out-gender-mainstreaming-framework-soon-says> , 27 Sept 2020





INSTITUTE *for* LEADERSHIP  
& DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

---

Enabling Market Solutions