

## **Gender Budgeting in Turkey: An Assessment of Local Practices from the Well-Being Perspective**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper introduces the basic framework of the research project entitled “Public Policies, Local Governments, Gender Budgeting: Women Friendly Cities, Case of Turkey”. The aim of the project was to find out the impact of public policies at the local level, of the services and expenditures of the municipalities in particular, on gender well-being. One of the main drivers of the research was the expectation of prevalence or, at least presence of some practices promoting gender mainstreaming in public policy design and in resource allocation in those pilot cities, which committed to the United Nations Joint Program-Women Friendly Cities Project (UNJP-WFCP). UNJP-WFCP has been implemented in Turkey since 2006, introduction of gender responsive budgeting being among the commitments of the municipalities. The main issue addressed in the project was whether inclusion in the UNJP-WFCP brought any significant difference in women’s well-being in comparison to those not included. Five WFCP cities in different geographical regions (Kars, Şanlıurfa, Nevşehir, İzmir, Samsun) were chosen and each was coupled with five neighbouring cities (Erzurum, Diyarbakır, Kayseri, Manisa, Ordu). Comparative analyses from the well being perspective were conducted by: 1. gender auditing of policy documents, 2. cross-checking of perceptions of local service providers with those of local women beneficiaries and 3. De-construction of municipality budgets on the basis of capabilities and functionings. Our well-being gender budgeting exercise did not provide full support for the UNJP-WFCP cities, revealing the multiplicity of issues (like administrative, economic, cultural, political) to be accounted for in assessments of current and prospective practices.

### **1. Introduction**

Gender budgeting that is incorporating gender perspective into the budget processes, rests on a tripod: gender mainstreaming in public policy design, its reflections on budget documents and implementation practice.<sup>1</sup> This tripod has two dimensions with respect to the level of government: central and local. The overarching or central tripod at national level rests upon a number of tripods at local level, depending on the public administration structure of the particular country. Thus each leg of the national tripod is linked to the corresponding legs at local level on one hand, and their interactions on the other hand. Ideally, as in any specific public policy design, the integration of concurrent top to bottom and bottom up processes produces the outcomes for assessment. This paper assesses the present situation of these

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<sup>1</sup>Its significance notwithstanding, our reference to gender mainstreaming activities will be limited in this paper, except where relevant in particular.

interactions for gender budgeting in Turkey and introduces our recent research which incorporates these dimensions with the well-being perspective. The paper is organised as follows. Background information on the state of gender budgeting in Turkey is provided in the next section. Section 3 presents the outlines of the research we undertook. An overall assessment is given in the Final Section.

## 2. An Overview of the Gender Budgeting Agenda in Turkey

The very first public introduction of the context of gender budgeting to the economics academia and bureaucracy was at a conference Ankara, in September 2006, due to the presentation of a paper entitled “Promoting Gender Sensitive Budgeting: A Case of Applied Feminist Economics” by the invited speaker Ailsa McKay.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly a couple of months later in November 2006, gender budgeting rhetoric entered in the official documents for the first time due to the Ministerial Conclusions of the EUROMED Conference on “Strengthening the Role of Women in Society”.<sup>3</sup> The only single item (11.g) in the resolutions referring to gender budgeting is:

*“Pursue the establishment of gender responsive budget initiatives and ensure more effective anti-poverty strategies at both national and local levels.”*

Note that gender budgeting is not a policy target *per se*, is not associated with gender mainstreaming but solely with poverty alleviation. This context signals the future perspective for policy making in sharp contrast to Ailsa McKay’s approach.

Being a signatory of the “Agreed Conclusions” (and in particular item 21) for the priority theme “Financing for gender equality and empowerment of women” of the 52<sup>nd</sup> session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (2008), the Turkish government, like all others, has committed to undertake gender budgeting initiatives. Statements in central government policy documents like “*activities will be made so as to increase awareness on making gender equality sensitive budgeting*” or tasks like “*carrying out preparatory work for the implementation of gender sensitive budgeting*” are reflections of such international soft law commitments (Günlük-Şenesen, 2013). The General Directorate on the Status of Women (now under the Ministry of Women and Social Policies) and women NGOs have organised many training/awareness sessions

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<sup>2</sup> Session on “Gender Budgeting: Theory and Experience”, (organized by Gülay Günlük-Şenesen and Şemsa Özar), Turkish Economic Association International Conference on Economics, Ankara, 11-13 September 2006. <http://www.tek.org.tr/dosyalar/PROGRAM-ICE-TEA2006.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Euro-Mediterranean (EUROMED) Ministerial Conference on “Strengthening the Role of Women in Society”, Istanbul, 14-15 November 2006. [http://eeas.europa.eu/euromed/women/docs/conclusions\\_1106.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/euromed/women/docs/conclusions_1106.pdf)

since 2006 with leading international experts (M. Boeker, D. Budlender, E. Klatzer, A. McKay, S. Quinn, A. Varbanova, E. Villagomez) as trainers, financed by UN bodies or international NGOs. There have been many publications, mostly being extensive surveys of the international gender budgeting literature.

The Ministry of Finance has not undertaken any notable capacity building task in this course. The Committee on “Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men” of the Turkish Parliament appointed a gender budgeting sub-committee in November 2012, which submitted its report in July 2014. The report contains minutes of consultation meetings with academicians, activists, policy makers at central and local level and offers general recommendations for integrating gender mainstreaming into the budgeting process, with an emphasis on the urgency of gender sensitive data production.

At the local administration level, introduction of gender budgeting rhetoric has been through projects funded by the UN and or EU since 2006, focusing on gender mainstreaming activities and/or local administration reform.<sup>4</sup> The UN Joint Program (UNJP) (2006-2009, budget: USD 1,521,880) “to promote and protect human rights of women and girls” engaged 6 pilot cities under the Women Friendly Cities Project (WFCP): İzmir, Kars, Nevşehir, Şanlıurfa, Trabzon, and Van, in collaboration with UNFPA and local NGOs.<sup>5</sup> Their Local Equality Action Plans (LEAPs) included among its targets

*“Preparing a gender-sensitive local budget and training of the local administrators for gender-sensitive budgeting, incorporating feedback from women's NGOs during the preparation of the budgets and inclusion of expenditure for women's NGOs with limited resources into the budgets.”* (Senol et al., 2010: 39).

Previous work assessing the gender budgeting experience in Turkey reported that there was not a single case of a local administration –whether WFCP or not- with a budget re-designed like some international examples, which would be considered as gender budgeting, despite the rhetoric (Günlük-Şenesen, 2012; 2013; Yakar Önal, 2011). Then an intriguing question would be “what difference do WFCP cities make for gender well being?” – an issue to be addressed from several channels: policy making, policy implementation and resource allocation with the well-being perspective. Our research was shaped on the basis of those questions, given the

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<sup>4</sup> The central government in general and the Ministry of Interior Affairs in particular is a partner in this type of projects, so local participation and performance is not solely based on local initiative.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.tr.undp.org/content/dam/turkey/docs/projectdocuments/DemGov/project\\_00077573/UNDP-TR-Sabanci%20Funded%20UNJP%20Document%20June%202012.pdf](http://www.tr.undp.org/content/dam/turkey/docs/projectdocuments/DemGov/project_00077573/UNDP-TR-Sabanci%20Funded%20UNJP%20Document%20June%202012.pdf)

[http://www.tr.undp.org/content/turkey/en/home/operations/projects/democratic\\_governance/UN\\_joint\\_programme\\_on\\_promoting\\_gender\\_equality\\_at\\_local\\_level.html](http://www.tr.undp.org/content/turkey/en/home/operations/projects/democratic_governance/UN_joint_programme_on_promoting_gender_equality_at_local_level.html)

<http://www.kadindostukentler.com/kdk-taahhutname.php>

considerable experience in Turkey in both gender budgeting and WFCP implementation since 2006.

### **3. Well-being Gender Budgeting:**

#### **Outline of Research on Comparative Analysis of WFCP and non-WFCP Cities**

The aim of our research was to find out the impact of public policies at the local level, of municipality services and expenditures in particular, on gender well-being.<sup>6</sup> One of the main drivers was the expectation of prevalence or, at least presence of some practices promoting gender mainstreaming in public policy design and in resource allocation in those pilot cities, which committed to WFCP. The main issue addressed in the project was whether inclusion in the WFCP brought any significant difference in women's well-being in comparison to those not engaged. This assessment required a comparative study of WFCP and non-WPCF cities.

In order to account for regional development variations we chose five WFCP cities (Kars, Şanlıurfa, Nevşehir, İzmir, Samsun) in different geographical regions. We coupled these WFCP cities with five neighboring cities (Erzurum, Diyarbakır, Kayseri, Manisa, Ordu) to control for social, economic and cultural disparities to some extent.

The three stages of our comparative analysis from the well being perspective for all 10 cities were gender auditing of: policy documents, policy implementation, and municipality budgets. All three sub-analyses were undertaken with respect to women's capabilities and functionings. We employed both quantitative and qualitative methodologies for data collection and analysis.

#### **3.1 Gender auditing of policy documents**

The strategic plans of the municipalities are almost of a standard format and reflect the local specific economic, political and social priorities in policy design, as well as the local cultural background. There are in addition LEAPs for WFCP cities, roadmaps for gender equality. LEAPS include re-organisation in the municipality structure towards establishing equality or women units. Women's empowerment related activities (e.g. vocational training on handcraft,

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<sup>6</sup> The research was undertaken by Gülay Günlük-Şenesen, Nuray Ergüneş, Aysegül Yakar Önal, Burcu Yakut Çakar and Yelda Yücel during April 2013-July 2014. The research project "Public Policies, Local Governments, Gender Budgeting: Women Friendly Cities, Case of Turkey" (no. 112K481) was funded by TUBİTAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey). We owe many thanks to İpek Gümüşcan and Mustafa Kahveci for their devoted assistance during the research. We are indebted to Ailsa McKay, Angela O'Hagan, Christine Faerber and in particular to Tindara Addabo for the motivation and intellectual support. We thank our co-researchers for their consent in dissemination.

accounting, computer; literacy courses; shelters; lectures on human rights, entrepreneurship; care centers, community centers) for target achievement are also specified in the LEAPs.

We note that the extent of incorporation of LEAPs into the strategic plans of WFCP is rather low. One reason is the time lags between these documents. Yet for both WFCP and non-WFCP cities, in most cases women's empowerment is referred to mainly in the context of social risk aversion (women's poverty) and the dominating approach in strategic plans is emphasis on women's traditional roles in the society and family. Pro-women policies are preferred to be contained in the domain of pro-family policies.

### **3.2 Gender auditing of policy implementation: local service providers and beneficiaries**

We tried to gain insight into the policy implementation practice by conducting interviews and/or group meetings with leading officials at the municipalities, the mayors inclusive if available. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured style, focusing on women's well-being issues. For example we asked how (if) the transportation unit supports women's mobility during the day and the night. These interactions provided crucial information on the current agenda of the local community at large and on gender awareness of local administrations. This stage also equipped us for better observations during our stay.

A complementary component of gender auditing of implementation is the policy outreach to the beneficiaries, women in particular in our case. This provides us cross-checking of perceptions of local service providers with those of local women beneficiaries with respect to their capabilities. In each city, we conducted around 25 interviews with women (snowball sample) of different socio-economic status.

### **3.3 Gender auditing of municipality budgets: De-construction of municipality budgets on the basis of capabilities and functionings**

Since there is no gender budget available, we developed a methodology to gender audit the current budgets, accounting for the Turkish municipality budget classification codes and organisation structure.<sup>7</sup> Needless to say, our methodology is based on the recent well-being gender budget literature (Addabbo et al. 2008a; Addabbo et al., 2008b; Addabbo et al., 2010, 2011). Our attempt is a de-construction of the municipality budgets in the light of the municipality performance programs rather than producing an alternative budget. Therefore ours is an attempt to allocate the budget focusing on the transformation/upgrading of women's capabilities potentials of municipality services. We achieved this in three mapping stages:

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<sup>7</sup> For details of our methodology see Yücel and Günlük-Şenesen (2014)

capabilities with municipality functions, capabilities with responsible units and responsible units with municipality functions. Note that the performance programs provide expenditure information on both municipality functions and responsible units, but in very varied formats.

#### **4. Major Findings for Gender Well-Being Budgeting: WFCP cities vs others in Turkey**

Our well-being gender budgeting exercise did not provide full support for the WFCP cities, revealing the multiplicity of issues (e.g. administrative, economic, cultural, and political) to be accounted for in assessments of current and prospective practices. Infrastructure (road, sewage, water supply) dominate other expenditure items in all 10 cities. Those funds, if any, explicitly allocated for women are usually shuffled under social transfers classified under the budgets of public relations, culture works and publications departments, implying that the finance department has no leading role in initiating gender budgeting.

In terms of budget allocations for women's well-being, the WFCP cities do not form a homogeneous group. Furthermore, a non-WFCP city municipality could design gender responsive policies and allocate funds in accordance, while the neighboring WFCP city would fail to do so. The implication is that societal cum political atmosphere is the determining (encouraging or discouraging women's empowerment) factor and the effectiveness of projects like UNJP-WFCP are subject to these constraints.

Another notable issue in the Turkish case is the highly centralized public administration structure, despite recent reforms, in public administration. The financial dependence of municipalities on the central government allocations restricts introduction and sustenance of novel local government initiatives. Note that the current ruling party is conservative and promotes women's traditional roles. This also holds true for some of the WFCP cities in our sample and hinders some benefits if the local ruling party is different from the government party.

Financing of gender mainstreaming activities in Turkey has been through international sources, the WFCP inclusive. We observed that gender awareness (at least rhetoric) of policy makers (mostly men) was significantly much higher due to such involvement. Yet, since these activities mostly target women only, the role of men in improving women's capabilities (e.g. freedom from violence) is usually overlooked. This leads to the perception that gender budgeting is "expenditures for women" rather than "expenditures on eliminating gender imbalances".

The last but not the least, capability priorities of the beneficiaries of municipality services differ depending on the socio-economic status and location in all cities in our sample. High and middle income group women living in the center demand services and spending on mobility and

recreation, while for those in the periphery with low income, security and basic needs capabilities are vital. This might suggest another line of research on gender well-being budgeting.

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