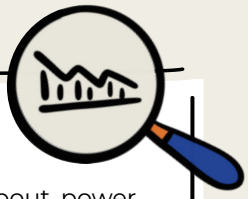
ACT COFEM

Advocacy, Coalition Building, and Transformative Feminist Action to End Violence against Women

Tipsheet 2

Tracking EVAWG financing in national budgets

A practical tip sheet for women's rights organisations and allies



Key points

- Budgets are political texts, not neutral technical documents. Tracking EVAWG financing is about power, priorities, and whose safety is treated as negotiable.
- Following the money is essential because EVAWG commitments are often dispersed across sectors and levels of government, which makes funding fragmented, difficult to see, and easy to dilute.
- The fiscal framework sets the overall spending envelope and the rules of affordability. It is never neutral, and it shapes which commitments are protected or squeezed when resources tighten.
- Division of revenue and intergovernmental transfers determine whether EVAWG services are funded where women live, especially where local governments carry delivery responsibilities.
- Medium-term plans and annual performance instruments are where EVAWG commitments either become costed, sustained investments or remain rhetorically strong but financially fragile.
- Budget engagement must track the full cycle, from formulation through approval, execution, and oversight, because commitments most often unravel during implementation, not approval.
- Shadow budgeting strengthens accountability by reconstructing a notional EVAWG or GBV budget from policy commitments and minimum standards, then using the gap with official allocations to influence real budget decisions.

Your budget roadmap at a glance

The tip sheet walks you through four practical steps, followed by a set of advocacy strategies and a red-flags checklist.

Read the fiscal framework: So that you are able to understand the revenue, borrowing and spending choices that set the budget boundaries.

Track priorities through medium-term and annual plans: See where political commitments harden into funding intentions (or don't).

Engage across the budget cycle: Show up at every stage, because each one redistributes power and opens a different window for influence. At *formulation*, priorities are shaped before they harden into numbers; at *approval*, legislatures can contest, amend or condition budgets; at *execution*, funds are released and services delivered (or not); and at *oversight*, audits and evaluations expose the gap between commitment and delivery, setting up the next cycle.

Put analysis into action: Here, we share eight advocacy strategies to influence EVAWG financing.

Background: budgets and the fiscal framework

Budgets sit inside a broader resource context called the **fiscal framework.** The fiscal framework sets the overall envelope for revenue (income), borrowing and spending over the medium term (usually three to five years) and is articulated through fiscal strategy papers, budget policy statements or similar instruments. [1]

Within that envelope, the **division of revenue,** usually codified in legislation or formal fiscal rules, allocates resources *vertically* between national and sub-national governments, and *horizontally* across sectors and institutions.

Medium-term plans translate political strategies into multi-year spending ceilings, while **annual budget and performance documents** specify programmes, outputs and indicators for a single year.[2]

Together, these instruments determine whether EVAWG commitments are strengthened, diluted wor lost, which is why each of them needs an EVAWG lens.

STEP 1:
Read the fiscal framework

Why it matters

For feminist activists and EVAWG practitioners, the fiscal framework should be read as a political document that defines government's financial priorities. It establishes how much the state expects to raise, how much it plans to spend, how much it plans to borrow, how much it will spend on servicing debt, and how large deficits can be over the medium term. Those choices determine which commitments are protected when resources are constrained and which are treated as discretionary.

When fiscal space[3] is defined narrowly, under-resourced issues such as violence prevention, survivor support and justice services, are often the first to be squeezed, deferred, or fragmented across institutions. Conversely, when EVAWG is recognised as a core obligation, it is more likely to be protected within expenditure ceilings and reflected in medium-term funding decisions.

COUNTRY EXAMPLE

FOWODE, Uganda[6]

The Forum for Women in Democracy's *Budgeting for Peace Report* (2021) dissects national fiscal choices to expose underfunding of violence prevention and response in conflict-affected districts. FOWODE uses the analysis in parliamentary briefings and district-level dialogues, linking macro-fiscal decisions to lived experiences of women and girls.

What to do

- ☑ Read fiscal strategy papers, budget policy statements and division-of-revenue legislation with an EVAWG lens. For practical guidance, see UN Women Europe and Central Asia's Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) Resource Packs and Training Manuals, which offer structured training modules and tools to help public officials, NGOs, and practitioners integrate GRB into planning and budgeting processes.
- ☑ Pay attention to **intergovernmental transfers**.[4] In many contexts, national governments set policy while sub-national governments deliver services like shelters, legal aid, police response and psychosocial support for survivors. Transfers shape whether EVAWG prevention and response are funded where women actually live.
- ☑ In decentralised or federal systems, fragmentation may lead to gaps in shelters, policing, courts and social services.[5] Identify where these gaps appear in your context.
- ☑ Use the fiscal framework to challenge claims that commitments cannot be financed, identify where resources are absorbed, and locate pressure points where reallocation, protection or new revenue can strengthen sustained investment in EVAWG.

STEP 2:

Track priorities through medium-term and annual plans

Why it matters

Medium-term plans and annual performance instruments are where political commitments are translated into structured funding intentions, or quietly diluted. These tools set spending ceilings for ministries, departments and agencies over a defined horizon, signalling which priorities are sustained rather than treated as one-off initiatives. Annual budgets and performance plans operationalise those intentions for a single year.

This is a critical pressure point for EVAWG. Strategies and policy documents frequently name violence against women and girls (VAWG) as a priority, yet planning and budgeting instruments often fail to operationalise those commitments with interventions left uncosted, institutional responsibilities unclear, and performance measures too vague to verify. As a result, EVAWG commitments appear *rhetorically strong but financially fragile.*[7]

What to look for

- ☑ How and when EVAWG priorities enter the planning process.
- ☑ Whether interventions are costed, with clear institutional responsibilities and performance indicators that can be independently verified.
- ☑ Whether macroeconomic choices[8] sectoral allocations and institutional design align with commitments to prevent violence and support survivors.

A gender-responsive approach does not stop at programmes labelled for women or EVAWG. It examines how the whole planning and budgeting environment shapes risk, access to services, and the conditions that enable or prevent violence. **EVAWG analysis must therefore look beyond earmarked spending to assess whether entire budgets align with commitments to prevent violence and support survivors.**

COUNTRY EXAMPLES - Tracking labelled and unlabelled spend

Mexico: Anexo 13 [9]

The federal budget includes an annexed statement (Anexo 13) tracking spending allocated to gender equality, including violence prevention. WROs use it to compare year-on-year allocations, flag underspending, and press for clearer performance indicators.

India: Gender Budget Statement[10]

Since 2005, India's central budget includes a Gender Budget Statement. Feminist coalitions analyse both Part A (100% women-targeted) and Part B (at least 30% women-targeted) to locate EVAWG programmes and expose cases where labelled spend masks weak delivery.

Rwanda: Gender Budget Statements[11]

Since 2008, Rwanda's Organic Budget Law has required line ministries to produce annual Gender Budget Statements (GBS) alongside their budget submissions, reviewed by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning together with the Gender Monitoring Office. While the framework is not EVAWG-specific, it provides an entry point for tracking allocations to ministries delivering prevention and response (health, justice, local government) and has been used by civil society to scrutinise gender-related spend in a lower-income context. Rwanda has used these findings in engagements with parliamentarians and district-level dialogues to press for budget reforms that better reflect the lived experiences and priorities of women and girls.



STEP 3:

Engage across the budget cycle

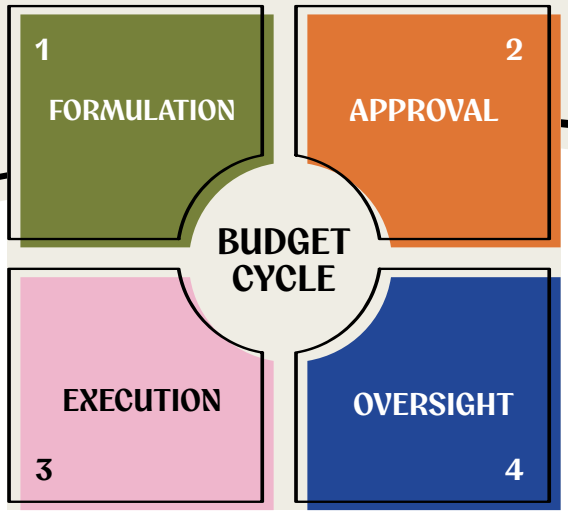
Why it matters

Plans and budgets are produced, authorised, implemented and reviewed through a budget cycle with four stages: **formulation, approval, execution, and oversight**. Each stage redistributes power between the executive, the legislature, and implementing institutions, offering multiple opportunities for EVAWG commitments to be advanced, diluted, or suspended.Increasingly, feminist coalitions and WROs are drawing on open budget data and digital transparency tools such as World Bank BOOST portals, open procurement platforms based on the Open Contracting Data Standard, and the International Budget Partnership's Open Budget Survey[6] to monitor execution and accountability in real time across the cycle, rather than waiting for end-of-year audit reports. In South Africa, for example, the open budget portal Vulekamali (developed by National Treasury with the International Budget Partnership) has been used by feminist coalitions to track allocations and execution against the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF), testing whether commitments are being implemented in practice and holding departments to account for under-execution.

Whether EVAWG commitments translate into delivery depends on who holds power at each stage, when decisions are locked in, and where accountability can be exercised. In decentralised or federal systems, much EVAWG delivery such as shelters, legal aid, police response, psychosocial support for survivors, sits at sub-national level, making intergovernmental transfers and local execution critical sites of accountability.

Across the cycle, **legislative oversight** remains a cornerstone of democratic control. Where legislatures lack time, information, amendment powers or technical support, budget processes tend to favour executive priorities and cross-sectoral issues like EVAWG suffer.[12]

THE FOUR STAGES AT A GLANCE



1. Formulation

Priorities are shaped before they harden into numbers. Finance ministries issue budget guidelines or spending ceilings, line ministries prepare funding bids, and negotiations reconcile sector demands with macro-fiscal constraints before tabling a draft budget. *Exclusion at this stage is most consequential.*

2. Approval

Finance and sector committees examine, debate, contest, amend, or condition budgets. Even where formal amendment powers are limited, this phase offers feminist activists a critical political moment.

3. Execution

Commitments most often unravel in this stage. Once legislators approve budgets, funds must be released, procured, and translated into services by national and sub-national agencies. Underspending, delayed procurement, staffing freezes, and the shifting of programmatic funds can *hollow out EVAWG services without altering headline allocations.*[13]

4. Oversight

This stage closes the loop and shapes future cycles. Financial and performance audits, evaluation reports and legislative follow-up can expose gaps between commitment and delivery.

COUNTRY EXAMPLES

Engaging across the cycle

South Africa: Women's Budget Initiative [14]

The Women's Budget Initiative (1995–2002), a collaboration between Parliament and research NGOs, produced gender analyses of sectoral budgets that directly informed parliamentary debates. Its methodology, disaggregating allocations and assessing implementation, is still used by feminist budget groups globally.

Kenya: County-level engagement [15]

Following devolution in 2013, Kenyan WROs and budget coalitions have tracked county allocations for gender-based violence recovery centres, using public participation forums and the Controller of Budget's implementation reports to challenge underspending at the sub-national level.

Background: feminist "shadow" budget processes

Alongside formal processes, **parallel or "shadow" budget initiatives** play an important role. They mirror government cycles but tell a different story, consolidating dispersed EVAWG allocations, tracking execution, modelling alternative priorities, and connecting national budget engagement to global financing commitments.[16]

In practice, shadow budgets look like: the South African Women's Budget Initiative's[17] sectoral analyses; the UK Women's Budget Group's pre- and post-Budget briefings on Treasury announcements; FOWODE's gender and peace budget tracking in Uganda; and Oxfam-supported gender-responsive budget coalitions across sub-Saharan Africa.



Capacity matters

Budget analysis is a specialised skill, and that can hinder scrutiny. Build relationships with parliamentary researchers, audit institutions, budget offices and independent fiscal analysts. Where formal budget offices are absent, shared expertise, training and coalition-based analysis become essential.

STEP 4:

Put analysis into action — eight advocacy strategies

These strategies turn the analysis above into influence across the budget cycle.

Establish who holds power over EVAWG financing.

Before analysing numbers, map formal mandates and decision-making authority across ministries, agencies and levels of government. Identify who sets ceilings, who bids for funds, who approves allocations, and who controls execution.

Use your budget analysis to intervene where decisions are made.

Apply technical clarity with political timing. Present EVAWG budget analysis directly to parliamentary finance and sector committees during budget hearings, mid-term reviews and oversight sessions. Instead of general critique, tailor analysis to each committee's mandate, highlighting trade-offs, underspending, and consequences for inadequate service delivery.

Track commitments across the budget chain and expose weak links.

Follow EVAWG commitments from strategy or policy, through medium-term plans, into annual budgets, and then into in-year and year-end spending reports. Document where ambition narrows, timelines slip, or funding disappears. These leak points provide advocacy hooks for questioning credibility and exercising accountability.

Distinguish political will from paper promises.

In every budget cycle, compare approved allocations with actual spending of EVAWG-related functions. Highlight persistent underspending, delayed releases, or mid-year reallocations. Variance analysis is a powerful tool for challenging governments that claim commitment while failing to deliver.

Name the red flags early and publicly.

Watch for EVAWG referenced in speeches but not costed; "cross-cutting" commitments without a lead institution or budget holder; chronic underspending in frontline services; vague performance indicators that cannot be independently verified. Surface these patterns before the next cycle locks in new ceilings. (See the red-flags checklist below.)

Shape the public narrative around money, not intention.

Use op-eds, briefings and media engagement strategically at key budget moments: tabling, mid-year reviews, audit releases. Link EVAWG outcomes directly to funding choices, showing how underinvestment translates into unsafe shelters, delayed justice or inaccessible services. Public narrative pressure helps shift what is politically defensible.

Build coalitions that can sustain pressure across cycles.

Coordinate advocacy with women's organisations, service providers, budget-justice coalitions and research institutions. Shared analysis strengthens credibility and collective action increases the political cost of ignoring EVAWG financing gaps.

Offer realistic fixes, not abstract demands.

Pair critique with feasible proposals: protect EVAWG allocations within expenditure ceilings, introduce budget tags, improve intergovernmental transfers for services, or strengthen reporting requirements.



Watch for these red flags

Red-flag checklist

Warning signs to surface early in any budget cycle:

- EVAWG referenced in speeches but not costed.
- "Cross-cutting" commitments without a lead institution or budget holder.
- Chronic underspending in frontline services such as shelters, legal aid and psychosocial support.
- Vague performance indicators that cannot be independently verified.
- Mid-year reallocations away from EVAWG programmes.
- Persistent gaps between national EVAWG policy and sub-national delivery.



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[1] IMF (2024) How to Develop and Implement a Medium-Term Fiscal Framework,

[2] IMF (2018) Fiscal Transparency Handbook.

[3] Fiscal space is the room in a government's budget that allows it to provide resources for a desired purpose without jeopardising the sustainability of its financial position or the stability of the economy. See Heller, P. (2005) Understanding Fiscal Space, IMF Policy Discussion Paper PDP/05/4.

[4] An intergovernmental transfer is a transfer of funds from one level of government to another, typically from central government to subnational governments (provinces, states, districts, or municipalities) to finance the delivery of public services.

[5] Evidence on decentralisation and gendered service delivery is mixed. See Oxfam (2017) *A Guide to Gender Responsive Budgeting*; UN Women (2025) *Gender Responsive Budgeting for Public Officials and Practitioners*.

[6] Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE). (2021). Budgeting for Peace : Analyse coûts-avantages de la violence faite aux femmes et aux filles en Ouganda. Kampala : FOWODE.

[7] On consolidating and costing commitments, see UN Women (2025) Gender Responsive Budgeting Resource Pack and Oxfam (2017).

[8] By this we mean assessing whether the overall size and composition of the budget (macroeconomic choices), the share of resources directed to relevant sectors such as health, justice, social protection and education (sectoral allocations), and the mandates, staffing and coordination arrangements of responsible agencies (institutional design) are consistent with what is needed to prevent VAWG and respond to survivors.

[9] Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público. (annual). Presupuesto de Egresos de la Federación: Anexo 13 — Erogaciones para la Igualdad entre Mujeres y Hombres. Mexico City: Government of Mexico.

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[13] On corruption and leakage risks in execution, see Transparency International (2014) *The Budget Process and Corruption Topic Guide*.

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[15] Office of the Controller of Budget, Republic of Kenya. (annual). *County Governments Budget Implementation Review Reports*. Available at: https://cob.go.ke

[16] Examples of feminist "parallel budgeting" processes include the South African Women's Budget Initiative (1995-2002); the pre- and post-budget analyses of the Women's Budget Group in the UK; FOWODE's work on budgeting, gender and peace in Uganda; and gender-sensitive budget analyses conducted by Oxfam across sub-Saharan Africa.

[17] Budlender, D. (Ed.). (1996–1998)