Notions to improve gender budget strategy with special reference to Right to Pee

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Right to Pee: free, clean, safe, public urinals for women in Mumbai Metropolitan Region & 27 wards of Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) is a long standing demand of working women. Profile of women in public domain reveals that Mumbai has a 4th generation of working women who have been performing valuable economic activities in manufacturing, service and industrial sector as wage workers, salaried employees and self employed hawkers and vendors. In India, Mumbai has the largest number of working women making valuable contribution to economic growth. As per 2011 census and NSSO rounds in all sectors of economy work participation of women has increased. Number of girls and women going out for long hours and regularly travel long-distance, far from home for education has increased exponentially. Working class Women in informal sector are away from home for more than 16 hours a day. All of them complain about no safe & clean place to pee.

Rationale for properly managed rest rooms/urinals/toilets

Women have to use the toilets/restroom more frequently. Men have a larger bladder capacity. Women also have to use the restroom for changing sanitary pads during menstruation. It takes women longer to use the toilets. Women have to sit down. Also, women have to make greater adjustments with their clothing. Although zippers conveniently facilitate a quick pee for boys/men, it’s not that simple for women. Many women (still) have greater care-giving roles. There are more kids in the women’s toilets. Facility of separate urinals for women in the offices as well as public places is not available and it results in the saturation of urine, women do not drink water when they are out of their houses which lead to major health disorders. All the above mentioned causes put women at a greater risk for abdominal pain and reproductive tract infections. Women tend to get more bladder infection than men because women have shorter urethras. Cystitis is also most common in women.

Gender inequality in public toilets

In spite of galloping urbanisation, Mumbai, like all cities in India, has had less number of toilets for women in public places like railway station, bus stations/depots, highways, industrial estates, educational institutions, public parks, 43 tourist spots, public hospitals, market places, community. Deplorable condition of ‘ladies toilets’ due to no deployment of cleaning staff has remained a perennial problem. We have noticed that most of the toilets for women are clogged, unusable, stinking and without running water. This lack of a basic facility to pee strips so many women of their basic dignity. HENCE, Right to Pee campaign started in Mumbai 18 months back demands “POTTY PARITY”.

Right to Pee Campaign initiated by 40 community based organizations has begun a campaign against gender Bias in “Pay and Use toilets” as most of the urinals by private players are
provided to males and are not available for women and girls. Moreover they are men and Charge differential ‘user fees’ from men and women. Women commuters on Central and Western Railway allege that the ‘pay-and-use’ toilets on stations are gender biased. They complain that while attendants allow men to use the toilets for free, they are charged Rs 2 each for the same. As per the official admission, currently ‘Pay and use toilets’ stations are in Central Railway: CST, Masjid, Sandhusrt Road, Currey Road, Parel, Ghatkopar, Kurla, Byculla, LTT, Bhandup, Karjat, Dombivli, Kalyan, Mumbra, Nahur, Sewri, Panvel, Wadala, Lonavla and in Western Railway: Churchgate, Marine Lines, Mumbai Central (main and local) Charni Road, Mahalaxmi, Elphinstone Road.

**Disturbing Reality**

‘Right to Pee Campaign’ in Mumbai is a united front of 40 voluntary organisations which surveyed 129 toilet blocks, did signature campaigns on 16 railway stations, organized workshops, met experts to understand the issue in depth and submitted 50,000 signatures and analytical survey report to BMC. Information received through RTI by right to Pee Campaign revealed that 24 wards of Mumbai have 6568 urinals for men. As per 2011 census, population of women in Mumbai is 741632 but there are hardly any public urinals for women.

The major Demands of the Right to Pee Campaign

1. Separate free clean, safe public urinals for women.
2. While providing this facility women suffering from disabilities to be taken into consideration.
3. To place the information boards at the entrance clearly indicating facility of free clean urinals for the women in the toilets blocks.
4. Facilities in the toilets blocks meant for women’s should be looked after by women’s organizations and women employees only.
5. Dustbins, sanitary pads should be made available.
6. There should be urinals at every 2 km of distance.
7. The management and coordination of urinals and toilets block should be done by organizations working on women issues and finance should be provided by BMC.
8. To start such separate urinals for women on experimental basis and then to include the same in city planning of Mumbai.

**Convert Gender Commitments into Budgetary Commitments**

Maharashtra Policy for Women, 2013 of Government of Maharashtra released on 8-3-2013 states that every 20 kilo meters there should public toilet Block for women. Right to Pee campaign demands toilet block at the distance of 1 Km. in Mumbai city. Gender Budget for SANITATION of Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai, 2013-14 has made financial allocation for toilets in communities. Gender Budgeting of MCGM 2013-14 promises in its PREFACE to construct toilets for women in crowded places. Current year’s budgetary allocation for Sanitation in MCGM Budget Estimates, 2013-14 is Rs. 75 lakhs foe construction of 25 toilets which is grossly inadequate. Even for this no work has begun.
**Critique of MCGB Gender Budgeting**

Targeting of toilet blocks for women only in the slums under “Toilets in toilet-deficient slums” & “Open-defecation free Mumbai” schemes is based on patriarchal myth that women in Mumbai are only home-bound. Promise of construction of toilets for women in crowded places not translated into budgetary allocation. Even after promise of construction of 25 toilet blocks for women and outlay of Rs. 75 lakhs by MCGM, there has been no outcome. Land suggested by Right to Pee campaigners turns out as belonging to ‘private party’, ‘railways’, ‘developers’, ‘road dept’ so on and so forth. MCGM is will to construct toilets on the land acquisitioned by demolition of huts ONLY. This is anti poor and must be opposed tooth and nail.

**Need of an Hour:**

MCGM must be clear in its gender commitments, then only financial commitments will bring gender responsive outcomes. Provision of toilets in public places is needed for all women and girls in Mumbai city as they travel long distance for work and education. Working women need functioning toilets at railway stations and Bus depots. Women Homemakers have to attend social functions, visit market places, take children to gardens and hospitals. Women from both, slums and non-slum background need public toilets. All tourist spots of Mumbai should also have toilet blocks for women managed by women.

Gender Budgeting for Women’s Toilet Blocks requires total financial allocation of Rs. 89.1 crores. Plan Expenditure: 81 crores (Rs. 3 lakhs per each toilet block) for 27 wards @ 100 toilet blocks =2700 toilet blocks. The most challenging task in front of BMC is Location Mapping-Land (most difficult challenge). BMC need to provide for construction cost of toilet blocks, electricity supply and water Supply. It is a question of gender sensitivity and political will to allocate recurring cost per annum Rs. 30000/- per toilet block and total amount of Rs. 8.1 crores for 2700 toilet blocks per annum to pay for salary, electricity bills, garbage bins, cleaning material and water bills. This not asking for too much from total size of Budget, 2013-14 of BMC i.e. Rs. 27578.67 crores. BMC began gender budgeting from the financial year 2009-2010. In the current year, BMC Budget for sanitation is Rs. 514 crores. Right to Pee campaign asks for 0.0032 % of total budgetary allocation of BMC and 16.5 % of Budget for sanitation for Gender Budgeting for Women’s Toilet Blocks. As per the directive on Women Component Plan by GoM, 30% of all development funds should be targeted for women.

If Mumbai, in which Women make crucial contribution to Mumbai’s economy, claims to be gender friendly city, must respect Right to Pee of women.