

Analysis of the 2019 budget proposal from a gender perspective: progress and setbacks for equality

A comprehensive gender responsive budget (GRB) policy should consider all phases of budget preparation: formulation, planification, budget preparation and impact evaluation of implemented public policies. On the other hand, a GRB policy requires the analysis of the differential impact of tax collection between women and men. This implies analyzing not only the distribution and impact of state spending, but also the fundraising modalities obtained through the tax burden, considering its impact on different population groups.

On the other hand, a budget analysis sensitive to the inequalities that affect women, lesbians, transvestites and transsexuals involves not only the programs or policies specifically aimed at this collective, but also those with a strong impact on them (such as Universal Allowance per child, spaces aimed at early childhood or care for the elderly population), as well as programs or budgetary decisions with negative impacts on gender equality, such as cuts in social protection programs, education or health coverage programs.

Various regulatory frameworks and international initiatives support and promote the adoption of gender responsive budgets, among which the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Santo Domingo Consensus (XII Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean), as well as the 2030 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A gender responsive budget must also connect to the government's priority objectives in terms of reducing gender gaps.

The proposed budget for 2019 presented by the national executive branch shows progress in the transversal implementation of the gender perspective based on the identification of "gender policies"¹ by program and category. The analysis presented in this document identifies the main advances and setbacks in terms of transparency, budget allocation and compliance with the assumed commitments, with special emphasis on those programs that have an explicit component of reducing gaps between women and men².

1. Main advances: more information and transparency

➤ Labeling of expenses linked to gender equality

A first step in the construction of gender responsive budgets consists of the identification of those expenses that have the reduction of gender inequalities as an explicit objective. One way

¹ Strictly speaking, in order to be able to consider it a gender budget, categories that exceed the binary classification of men and women should be considered, so thus far it's rather an initiative that advances in budgets sensitive to women (not genders).

² We appreciate the careful reading and substantive comments of Rafael Flores, of the Argentine Association of Budget and Public Financial Administration (Asociación Argentina de Presupuesto y Administración Financiera Pública, ASAP).

to carry out this task is through the “labeling” of expenses. The 2019 proposed budget made progress on this matter, incorporating the label “Gender Responsive Budget (GRB)” (Presupuesto con Perspectiva de Género, PPG). This tool allows a simple identification of the contribution made by different state agencies and programs to the reduction of gender gaps and non-discrimination against women, contributing to budget transparency and also facilitating its follow-up.

➤ *Greater disaggregation of budget lines*

One of the main findings of the budget analysis carried out by ELA and ACIJ for the year 2018 was, as one of the pending challenges, the difficulty in accessing information in a disaggregated manner, which prevented “a comprehensive analysis of the overall budget allocation for the implementation of public policies aimed at promoting gender equality, and preventing and eradicating violence against women” (Translation of quote from ACIJ and ELA, 2018: 4).

Although it is still necessary to continue efforts towards a greater disaggregation of information, the 2019 proposed budget shows progress since it allows the identification of the investment destined to some programs that were previously not explicitly made visible. The following are some examples of this advance:

Table 1			
Ministry that executes	Program / Policy	Budget according to law 2018	Budget according to bill 2019
Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology	Strengthening of Comprehensive Sexuality Education	\$ 21,852,645	\$ 102,906,633
Ministry of Health and Social Development	National Action Plan (Plan Nacional de Acción, PNA)	\$ 50,500,000 (*)	\$ 32,099,395 (**)
	Program Hacemos Futuro Juntas (previously Ellas Hacén)	It was not visible, but according to the estimate of the Ministry of Finance it was \$ 4,841,100,000 (***)	\$ 3,658,695,500
	Prevention of Teenage Pregnancy	Not visible	\$ 489,000,000 (executed by the National Directorate of Institutional Management and Development)
	Integral Health in Adolescence	Not visible	\$ 1,479,395 (executed by the Government’s Secretary of Health)
	Development of Sexual Health and Responsible Procreation	\$ 245,506,635 (executed by the Undersecretary of Programs, Prevention and Primary Care, of which \$ 13,227,146 were destined to support medically	\$ 560,344,785 (executed by the Government’s Secretary of Health, of which \$ 7,003,830 are used to support medically assisted

		assisted reproduction)	reproduction)
Ministry of Security	Actions for Gender Equality in the Core Activities as well as the different forces	Not visible	\$ 65,225,319
Ministry of Finance	INDEC, Actions of the Register of Cases of Violence against Women	Not visible	\$ 2,922,247

Source: Own elaboration.

(*) In the project presented by the national executive branch to the Congress in 2018, there weren't any clear identifiable items included for the National Action Plan. As a consequence of the advocacy actions carried out by ELA together with other organizations, an appropriation of \$50,500,000 was included in the Approved Budget Law 2018, as estimated by the national executive branch itself in the National Action Plan document presented in July 2016. See p. 115 at: https://www.argentina.gob.ar/sites/default/files/plannacionaldeaccion_2017_2019ult.pdf

(**) The proposed budget presented by the national executive branch provides for a line item of \$ 32,099,395, that is 20 million less than the \$ 52,000,500 that the national executive branch had indicated that would be used for the implementation of the National Action Plan for the fiscal year 2019, at the time of its presentation, in July 2016. See p. 115 at: https://www.argentina.gob.ar/sites/default/files/plannacionaldeaccion_2017_2019ult.pdf

(***) Current credit estimated by the Undersecretary of Macroeconomic Programming, Ministry of Finance of the Nation.

➤ *Budget lines for sexual and reproductive rights*

A positive aspect of the proposed budget presented for the financial year 2019 is the allocated funds to the program of Development of Sexual Health and Responsible Procreation that went from having \$ 245,506,635 (in the budget law of 2018) to \$ 560,344,785 in the 2019 bill, which constitutes an increase of 69% in real terms. However, the item destined for medically assisted reproduction decreased from \$ 13,227,146 to \$ 7,003,830, which represents a reduction of almost 61% in real terms.

In the same sense, the program for Strengthening of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (ESI) went from receiving \$ 21,852,645 (in the budget law of 2018) to \$ 102,906,633 in the bill for 2019. This advance in the resources allocated to two key aspects of reproductive autonomy is undoubtedly the product of the "green tide" that, despite not achieving the right to legal abortion, highlighted the importance of complying with the law of Comprehensive Sexuality Education in all schools in the country and the policies related to sexual and reproductive rights.

During the course of 2019, the execution of these allocations will be monitored with particular interest from civil society and the feminist movement. In order to do this the visibility of item lines in the formulation of the budget is very relevant.

➤ *Incorporation of goals and physical indicators linked to gender equality*

In relation to compliance with the 2030 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the 2019 budget incorporates goals and indicators linked to some SDGs, indicating the baseline (2013), mid-term (2023) and long-term (2030) indicators.

SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The indicators included are related to the reduction of the time gap dedicated to unpaid care work between men and women, and the percentage of seats occupied by women in the chamber of deputies and the national senate.

SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages. Performance indicators that consider the percentage of pregnant women attended by the program that realizes the first pregnancy control before the 13th week of gestation for the year 2019.

SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. A target of 25% of women in the postdoctoral fellowships in the CONICET³ area is established.

SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. In the case of the Hacemos Futuro Juntas Program, as a goal active and trained titleholders are indicated, and as an indicator, an enrollment rate for women in the Hacemos Futuro program, although this is still without data.

2. Main setbacks: the impact of the adjustment on women's rights

➤ *Decrease in key budget lines for the achievement of gender equality*

A worrisome fact of the proposed budget for 2019 is linked to budget reductions, both for the National Mechanism for the Advancement of Women - the National Institute for Women (Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres, INAM) - and in some programs related to the eradication of gender inequalities in other governmental institutions.

INAM had achieved a total allocation of \$ 211,500,000 pesos for 2018, as a result of the budgetary reallocations achieved during this fiscal year. For 2019, a total of \$ 234,394,881 will be allocated. Although this represents an 11% increase in nominal terms, taking into account the average inflation rate used by the executive power itself in the drafting of the budget (34.8%), this implies a decline of 18% in real terms in relation to the previous year.

In addition, there exists a setback with respect to INAM's share of the total budget. While in 2018 it represented 0.006% of the total national budget, for 2019 it represents 0.00005%.

On the other hand, in the proposed budget some items that are key for the prevention, attention and eradication of violence against women are reduced, such as the National Plan of Action for the Prevention, Assistance and Eradication of Violence and the violence against women hotlines of the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights.

- **National Action Plan (Plan Nacional de Acción, PNA).** Although initially the funds allocated to the PNA were not identifiable in the 2018 proposed budget, after an

³ CONICET stands for National Scientific and Technical Research Council

advocacy action of ELA and other civil society organizations to make visible the funds assigned to the PNA, about \$ 50,500,000 was allocated to the 2018 budget⁴. The 2019 proposed budget foresees \$ 32,099,395 for the implementation of the PNA. This implies a reduction in nominal terms of 39%, while in real terms it implies a loss of 55%⁵. It also represents a cut of 20 million pesos from the \$ 52,000,500 that the national executive branch had indicated that would be used for the implementation of the PNA for the financial year 2019, at the time of its launching, in July 2016⁶. Regarding inflation, in order to not lose value, the line item for PNA should be at least \$ 67 million pesos by 2019.

- **VAW hotlines 137 and 0800-222-1717 of the National Ministry of Justice:** In 2018, this program had \$ 295,060,207 pesos and in 2019 it will have \$ 301,790,243 pesos. In nominal terms it is only a 2% increase, while in real terms it implies a loss of 24%⁷.
- **Hacemos Futuro Juntas Program (previously Ellas Hacen):** In 2018 this program had \$ 4,841,100,000⁸, while in 2019 it will have \$ 3,658,695,500 pesos. In nominal terms it represents a loss of 25% while in real terms it implies a loss of 44%.

➤ *Women's rights in a context of fiscal adjustment*

As UN Women states “(i)n the current scenario, measures such as the defense of the minimum wage, the protection of social spending with a gender perspective, public investment and macroeconomic policies that reduce the retraction of employment help protect the economic empowerment of women. On the other hand, monetary hyper-contraction, the reduction of social spending and the deterioration of minimum wages lead to the erosion of the achievements that women could obtain during the expansive cycle and do nothing to promote the economic empowerment of the ones lagging behind the most” (Translation of quote, UN, 2017: 93).

Given that human rights are interdependent, the evolution of women's rights cannot be evaluated in an abstract way, but rather a contextualized analysis is needed. In this sense, it is important to evaluate the impact of fiscal adjustment policies on women's rights. “The cuts in public services and the costs of indebtedness affect the provision of health, education and care services, which ultimately burden women” (Translation of quote, ELA, 2018).

An example of this tendency can be seen in what happens with the National Hospital Alejandro Posadas (the largest in the country). For 2018 its budget allocated in the bill was \$

⁴ <https://www.cronista.com/economiapolitica/Ampliaron-en--50-millones-el-presupuesto-del-Instituto-Nacional-de-las-Mujeres-20180105-0085.html>

⁵ Taking as an inflation proxy an average of 34.8%.

⁶ The full text of the PNA with the budget estimate for each of the exercises can be viewed at: https://www.argentina.gob.ar/sites/default/files/plannacionaldeaccion_2017_2019ult.pdf

⁷ Taking as an inflation proxy an average of 34.8%.

⁸ Estimation made by the Undersecretary of Macroeconomic Programming, Ministry of Finance of the Nation from the expenditure of the activity (41) Promotion of Social Income with Work (Argentina Trabaja) in the Employment Support Program (MDS), taking into account the participation of the beneficiaries of Ellas Hacen in the total number of beneficiaries of Argentina Trabaja. Source: Ministry of Finance.

3,744,834,044. In the bill remitted to the congress for 2019, it is assigned \$ 4,173,685,136, which implies only 11% more in nominal terms, and a great loss in real terms.

On the other hand, of the Savings-Investment-Financing scheme, it is observed that the burden of the debt interest payment grows every year, reaching a total of 14.9% of the total current expenses this year⁹. In recent years, the burden of indebtedness has increased from 11.5% in 2017 to 13.5% in 2018, to be representing 14.9% by 2019. This percentage is equivalent to the sum of the budget allocated in 2019 to the Ministries of Justice and Human Rights (less than 1% of the total), Production and Labor (less than 1% of the total), Ministry of Defense (3.60% of the total), Ministry of Security (3.80% of the total), and Education, Culture, Science and Technology (5.38%), which represent 14.4% of total current expenses. Overall, the budget allocated to the payment of debt has been increasing at the expense of public policies with a social impact, such as those aimed at guaranteeing women's rights.

➤ *Lack of visibility of the funds allocated to the Integral Protection Shelters*

A striking aspect in the bill presented by the executive power is the absence of integral protection Shelters (hogares de protección integral, HPI) for women in situations of violence, among the institutional objectives of the budget. When the National Action Plan was launched in July 2016, a central relevance was given to the construction or remodeling of these spaces for the protection of women in situations of violence. So much so, that most of the allocated budget was going to be allocated to the construction of these HPI: \$ 600,000,000 of the \$ 750,000,000 allocated for the National Action Plan between 2017 to 2019, that is, 80% of the total.¹⁰

However, currently there is no information in the budget regarding the progress of the construction goals in 2018 and those that must be reached in 2019. Given that the 15th Commitment of the Argentine State in terms of Accountability in the National Action Plan of OGP (Open Government Partnership) includes the monitoring of the National Action Plan, it is important to provide information that allows to report the progress, the execution and the achievement of the established goals¹¹.

➤ *Scarce resources for the empowerment and economic autonomy of women*

Although the access, continuity and promotion in the labor market under equal conditions and women's rights are a key focus to improve the wage gap, women's income poverty and their economic autonomy, the meager amount that is assigned to this by the Secretary of Labor with only \$ 1,156,183 draws the attention. This Secretary has among its functions "to understand equal opportunities and treatment between men and women in access to employment and work, as well as the protection of motherhood" (Translation of quote, Decree

⁹ <https://www.minhacienda.gob.ar/onp/documentos/presutexto/proy2019/mensaje/mensaje2019.pdf>

¹⁰ https://www.argentina.gob.ar/sites/default/files/plannacionaldeaccion_2017_2019ult.pdf

¹¹ According to Chequeado, more than two years after the launch of the National Action Plan, the Ministry of Interior had only planned the construction of three homes and did not build any, according to the data obtained through a request for access to information. See (in Spanish): <http://chequeado.com/el-explicador/el-gobierno-hizo-nueve-de-los-36-refugios-para-mujeres-victimas-de-violencia-de-genero-que-planifico/>

No. 802/2018). However, the allocated investment is not significant, which hardly results in the necessary dedication to contribute to the transformation of structural barriers to equal opportunities and rights in the labor market.

On the other hand, as evidenced in the previous sections, the Haciendo Futuro Juntas program (previously called “Ellas Hacen”), whose objective is to contribute to the economic empowerment of women, suffered a significant reduction in the 2019 budget, and the Ministry of Production and Labor represents less than 1% of the total current expenses.

To promote quality employment under conditions of equality for women and men, it is essential to address the structural conditions that sustain inequalities, promoting, among other policies, a social organization of care that is fairer both in terms of gender as in socioeconomic terms. These policies should address the necessary universality of access to the time for care, the money for care and the care infrastructure (ELA 2018: 7), without dealing with rights derived from the employment status of the people.

Consulted resources

- ACIJ & ELA (2018) Las cifras de la igualdad de género: análisis del presupuesto 2018. Available in: http://acij.org.ar/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/documento_genero.pdf

- ELA (2018) Reformas macroeconómicas en Argentina en un contexto de políticas de austeridad y su impacto en los derechos de las mujeres. Informe ante el Experto Internacional de la Deuda de Naciones Unidas. Available in: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Development/IEDebt/Pages/ImpactEconomicReformPoliciesWomen.aspx>

- UN Women (2017) El progreso de las mujeres en América Latina y el Caribe. Available in: <http://lac.unwomen.org/es/digiteca/publicaciones/2016/12/el-progreso-de-las-mujeres-americalatina-y-el-caribe-2017>