

CASE STUDY 10: WORKING WITH OTHER CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS

CIVIL SOCIETY INVOLVEMENT

1. Recognise **barriers** to participation!

Make sure your materials are **accessible**



RESEARCH

2. Policy analysis can be **difficult** to **understand!**



ANALYSIS

Civil society organisations can provide **evidence** of the **impact** of **economic policy**

3. Civil Society organisations often **lack time** and **resources!**

CAPACITY BUILDING



Partnering on research to pool resources and **co-produce reports**

4. Organisations may have other priorities!

LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP



Work with pre-existing **groups** and tap into existing **networks**

FOLLOW UP

CASE STUDY 10: WORKING WITH OTHER CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS

Don't just parachute in then leave

WBG member

The Women's Budget Group was set up to bring together academics and women's organisations to talk about the impact of the budget on women. Civil society organisations have always played a key role in the Women's Budget Group. We have worked on a series of local and national projects in partnership with civil society organisations in order to carry out research and build the capacity of individuals and groups to influence policy at a local level.

This section draws on case studies selected from some of these projects, and discussions with people working on gender budgeting projects in other countries, to highlight some of the key issues and lessons learned.

Civil society involvement is important if gender budgeting is to be more than just an academic exercise. Civil society groups can:

Research – by providing evidence of the impact of economic policy. This can include highlighting unexpected impacts, and showing how a change in one area can impact on what might seem like a completely unrelated area – for example cuts to public transport budgets preventing women accessing healthcare services.

Hold decision-makers to account – through carrying out local research, analysing local budgets and putting pressure on local or national decision-makers.

Promote research findings to policy-makers and the wider public – through campaigning and advocacy work.

However, there can be barriers to civil society participation in gender budgeting work. These include:

- Analysis, as well as the policy-making process, may be inaccessible, overly complex or difficult to understand.
- Civil society, particularly small grassroots organisations, may be overstretched and lack the time and resources to take part in gender budgeting projects.
- Organisations may have other priorities and not see gender budgeting as relevant to their work.
- National organisations may lack local contacts or understanding of the local context.

We've done workshops with grassroots organisations on how to analyse the budget. And every time they get a good reception. But the question is always, 'this is amazing, but when am I going to have the time to implement it?'

WBG member

PARTNERING ON RESEARCH

In researching 'Intersecting Inequalities', a report on the impact of public spending cuts on black and minority ethnic (BME) women, WBG worked with both national and local civil society organisations. At a national level our main partner was the Runnymede Trust, a race equality think tank. At a local level we worked with two organisations, RECLAIM in Manchester in the north of England and Coventry Women's Voices from the West Midlands. Members of both groups carried out interviews and focus groups with women experiencing austerity. This meant that our statistical data, which showed that women were losing more benefits and services than men, and BME women were losing most of all, was reinforced with evidence from civil society organisations of what this meant for women's lives.

In Manchester, three young BME women who had worked with RECLAIM were trained as peer interviewers. They carried out in-depth interviews with young working-class women and narrated a short video about the findings of the research. These young women were invited to the House of Commons to speak about their findings, and their experience of carrying out the research at the launch of the report.

One of the peer researchers on the project wrote about the experience:

Within my community I can see the realities of austerity cuts and felt a responsibility to take part in this project and voice these collectively shared experiences. I have felt empowered to contribute raw evidence of the lasting impacts that austerity is having on the personal lives of young BME women. Despite the narrative in the interview sometimes feeling bleak and distressing to hear, I did find that speaking on and sharing our realities had offered a cathartic release and that by the end of the interview there was a sense of solidarity amongst us young women that was being propelled through this work.

– Peer researcher

The work with RECLAIM was made possible because of the relationship between WBG members at the University of Manchester and RECLAIM that had been developed over previous research projects. WBG included funding for the researchers' time and travel expenses for the peer researchers to travel to London for the report launch as part of the project budget.

[The key to] working with grassroots groups is ... finding partners who already have ... relationships. If there is already a network set up in advance, or people with the connections you need, partner with them. Or you need the resources to build up the relationships over time. Otherwise if you parachute in, do something and leave not much happens afterwards.

WBG member

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

In 2016/17 WBG organised a number of workshops around the country to build the capacity of local women to speak confidently about economic issues and develop relationships with decision-makers. These workshops took place in Bristol, Glasgow, Manchester and London, included participation from local women's organisations and were held in local women-friendly/women-only venues.

The first of these workshops was held in Bristol, where two WBG committee members have worked locally for many years in various women's organisations and represent WBG on the Economic Subgroup of the Mayor of Bristol's Women's Commission.

The workshop was jointly organised with Bristol Women's Voice (an umbrella organisation representing women's organisations and individual women in Bristol). The workshop focused on actions that could be taken to ensure that the economic development monies invested via the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone would deliver benefits to women, particularly low-income women residing in the residential areas near the Temple Quarter. The workshop was well-attended by women and equality organisations and by the CEO of the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership.

Following the workshop several attendees worked with the LEP on their equality impact assessment. Work in Bristol is continuing with a participatory project involving WBG co-ordinated by Bristol Women's Voice.

The workshop in Bristol led to on-going action locally because it built on a long-standing relationship between WBG members and activists in Bristol and capitalised on existing work on economic development in the area. WBG has found that projects of this type are most successful where we work with a pre-existing group, otherwise the work that goes into organising a workshop may not lead to lasting change.

We concluded that conducting a training workshop and producing a toolkit has limited impact without an on-going local organization that is funded to continue to use the knowledge gained. Setting up local organisations is beyond the capacity of WBG, so we must partner with existing local organisations to build longer term strategies, including identifying elected representatives and people working in local government (including trade unionists) who are champions of gender equality, and working with them.

WBG member

WORKING TO BUILD CAPACITY FOR LOCAL CAMPAIGNING

The Women's Budget Group ran a two-day campaigning skills workshop in partnership with Platform 51 (an organisation working with young women, now known as the Young Women's Trust).

The women who attended the workshop were all interested in campaigning, but did not have shared goals. So, the workshop started by using a mapping exercise to help the women think through the issues that were most important to them. A range of issues were highlighted by the women including:

- Unemployment and the difficulty finding paid work.
- Crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Education for their children.
- Lack of support for mental health problems.
- Lack of facilities for young people in the area.
- Public transport which was expensive and didn't go where women needed to go.
- Heavy traffic.
- Problems faced by disabled children in accessing services.
- Wanting to support local groups and projects which they or their children attended.

Making your voice heard



Once the women had thought about their own issues, they shared their main priorities with the group. The whole group then looked at the long list of issues to find the ones that were shared by several group members. From this discussion they agreed to work on funding for affordable activities for children and young people locally, with a particular focus on the needs of disabled young people. They felt that this issue caused a lot of other problems that affected them, including crime, bullying, and family tensions as children were forced to stay indoors all the time.

Between the first and second one-day workshop, participants carried out a local survey to find out the views of other women in their area. On the second day WBG

trainers explained how to find out about local council officials and elected councillors, and helped the group frame their messages.

This workshop was successful because it focused on the priorities of the participants, rather than trying to impose a set of priorities onto them. This meant that participants were motivated to come back for a second day to talk about how to turn those priorities into ideas for a local campaign. From the experience of these workshops wBG produced 'Making Your Voice Heard', a toolkit for local campaigning.⁴⁷

TRANSLATING NATIONAL RESEARCH INTO LOCAL ACTION

In 2004 wBG member Professor Sylvia Walby, funded by the government's Women and Equality Unit, carried out research into the costs of domestic violence in terms of public services (health, criminal justice and so on), lost economic output and the human and emotional cost.⁴⁸ This work was then updated in 2009. The 2004 report found that the total cost of domestic violence was over £2bn a year; over £3bn in services, over £2.6bn in lost economic output as a result of violence and a human and emotional cost of over £17bn. This work has been widely used to support calls for greater public investment in tackling domestic violence, both by local and national government, and by women's organisations providing domestic violence and abuse services.

The people who most wanted it was the NGOs, they wanted it for their local services, so I did a lot of work working with local services, taking the costings and persuading them to work it out locally – if their city is 1% of the population they therefore have 1% of the costs, really simple. So both nationally and locally NGOs picked it up and used it to argue for services.
– Sylvia Walby

CREATING ACCESSIBLE MATERIALS FOR LOCAL CAMPAIGNING

Many of the materials produced by wBG are aimed at politicians and other policy-makers. By their nature they are often technical and not always accessible for a wider public audience. In order to address this problem wBG has started to produce more accessible versions of some of our materials, including a briefing pack explaining feminist economics to women's organisations.

47. wBG, (2011), Making Your Voice Heard Toolkit, available online at <https://wbg.org.uk/resources/making-voice-heard-toolkit-local-campaigning/>

48. Walby, S, (2004), The Cost of Domestic Violence, Women and Equality Unit, DTI, available online at www.lancaster.ac.uk/sociology/about-us/people/Sylvia-Walby

Find more of this material on wbg.org.uk

What is FEMINIST ECONOMICS?

FEMINISM

Feminism is the pursuit of equality between men and women. Feminists seek economic, political, social, legal and personal rights for women that are equal to those of men.

Feminist campaigns have campaigned for major societal changes such as voting rights, reproductive rights, greater political representation and fairer pay. But there is still a long way to go until men and women lead truly equal lives.

ECONOMICS

The word 'economics' comes from the Greek word 'oikonomia' meaning 'household management'. But nowadays the meaning of 'economics' has expanded to mean the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services.

When we analyse the economy we investigate the psychology of human behaviour and decision-making.

FEMINIST ECONOMICS

Values the role of unpaid work carried out by men & women, in the home & through care work.

Acknowledges that the economy depends not just on the production & distribution of goods and services, but on **co-operation & care**.

Recognises that the interests of members of the same household may differ and that resources are not necessarily **shared equally**.

Acknowledges that the **complexity** of human lives cannot always be quantified.

MAINSTREAM ECONOMICS

Has a tendency to prize **money, machines & men**.

Measures paid work in **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**, but fails to count the contribution of unpaid work.

Fails to recognise **non-market activities** as important to the economy.

Builds its picture of the economy as consisting of people motivated by **self-interest & material goods**.

Assumes that the influences on people's decisions can be objectively quantified & tends to build economic theories that depend on **mathematical models**.

FEMINIST ECONOMICS

Feminist economics promotes economic equality between women and men. The activities, behaviour and decisions of men and women have a major impact on our economy, but mainstream economics has a tendency to be based on men's lives and recognises only work that is done for money.

A feminist economics perspective recognises the paid and unpaid work of both men and women.

wbg WOMEN'S BUDGET GROUP

Find more resources at wbg.org.uk



I AM A Parent

A family with one child under two in part-time childcare and one child aged five at an after-school club can now expect to pay £7,933 per year for childcare, over 28 per cent of median household income.

The economic policy choices made by the government have a huge impact on the options that are available to parents. In many cases women bear the brunt of the responsibilities for childcare due to poor working rights, maternity and paternity policies.

The Women's Budget Group recognises the importance of affordable childcare and support for all child carers.



I RECEIVE Benefits

In 2016, 843,000 young people were not in education, employment or training.

Young people today face countless challenges such as finding jobs and training, competing in the work place and finding affordable housing. Girls and young women, particularly in deprived areas, experience particular challenges in securing work and gender segregation of the workforce means they are more likely to enter lower paid jobs.

The Women's Budget Group believes that we need to invest in our economy to create sustainable jobs and a brighter future for young people.



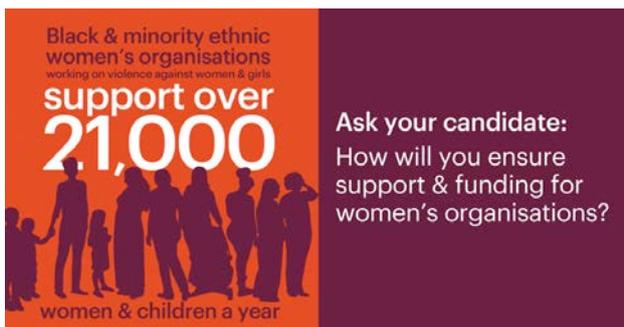
I AM AN Employee

Women working full-time earn 84 pence for every pound earned by a man working full-time.

In recent years there have been huge steps forward in ushering in greater equality between men and women's pay. But, despite these advances we know that women often receive less pay for the same work as men. This has knock on effect for women, including reduced pension contributions.

The Women's Budget Group campaigns for equal pay and earning rights for men and women.

During the 2017 general election we worked in partnership with a number of other women's organisations to produce a series of infographics with questions for candidates that could be shared on social media:

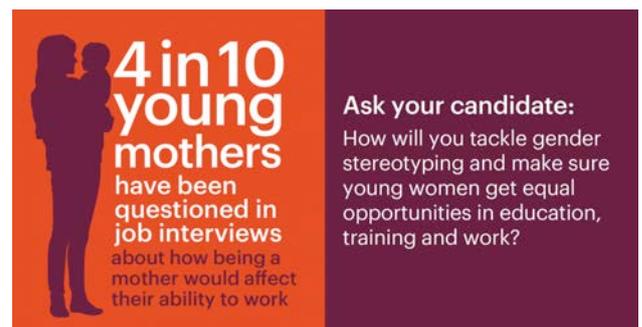


Black & minority ethnic women's organisations working on violence against women & girls

support over 21,000

women & children a year

Ask your candidate:
How will you ensure support & funding for women's organisations?



4 in 10 young mothers

have been questioned in job interviews about how being a mother would affect their ability to work

Ask your candidate:
How will you tackle gender stereotyping and make sure young women get equal opportunities in education, training and work?

For both these projects WBG worked in partnership with larger organisations and networks who could help distribute the materials to their members and supporters.

Communicate in everyday language and avoid technical policy language. Start by finding out about the concerns of civil society organisations and their client groups, find ways to make national data relevant at a local level, which can help make it useful for local organisations.

LESSONS FOR WORKING WITH CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS

Partnerships

Find the right partners and build relationships with them. As an organisation that mainly works at the policy level WBG can be far more effective in partnership with organisations working with women at the grassroots level. These relationships take time to build, but this means that projects such as a one-day training workshop have an impact beyond the day itself.

Tap into existing networks

Many local areas will have existing networks of civil society organisations and campaigners who work on economic policy nationally and locally. Taking time to find out about these networks and getting to know the key actors can help access several groups at the same time, find out what campaigns and relationships already exist, prevent replication and amplify the results of the project.

Recognise different forms of expertise

Civil society organisations, particularly those working at the grassroots level, can bring knowledge and expertise of the impact of policy on women's lives. Involve civil society organisations in the design of projects so they are relevant from the outset.

Recognise barriers to participation

Members of grassroots organisations may face many barriers to participation including limited time because of paid work and unpaid care, lack of money for travel expenses and a lack of knowledge of how to influence local decision-makers. Build funding into budgets for travel and other expenses and organise meetings at a time that suits participants. Recognise that some groups may need extra time and support to build knowledge, capacity and confidence to engage in particularly technical areas of policy-making and build that into the project.

Follow up

Make sure the goals of working with civil society organisations are clear and that their engagement is meaningful. Likewise, if your aim is to train organisations or individuals, consider how these skills will be used beyond the training and include time to follow up with participants.