

Government of Jamaica / UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation 2002-2006
Social Investment for Children Initiative
Concept Paper/Terms of Reference
Working Group on Social Investments for Children

1. Introduction

Governments around the world have committed to social visions as reflected in the Millennium Development Goals, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and numerous other international conventions. As countries experience economic hardships, however, there is the tendency to reduce budgetary allocations to the social sector as a first step in cutting costs. This, though widely practiced, has not been proven to be a sound strategy. In fact, the opposite has been proven: countries which spend on social services in an economic crisis make greater social and economic gains in the long term. International best practices suggest that social investment is most effective where:

- the country has a framework which defines the priority social areas;
- there is strong political will and adherence to stated social priorities, and;
- needs are disaggregated and addressed based on criteria including age, gender, ethnic groups, socio-economic status etc.

Jamaica, faced with economic stagnation for much of the last decade, has decreased its expenditure (as per cent of budget) to most social sectors. A good example of this is education which now accounts for approximately 9% of the budget compared to 14% six years ago. In addition, allocations which have been made comprise primarily recurrent costs – exceeding 90% of total budget in most sectors. However, the national priorities are clearly defined in the recently completed Medium Term Socio-economic Policy Framework (MTF) and those for children set out in the National Framework of Action for Children (NFAC).

Maintaining current social gains and meeting the goals set in the MTF and the NFAC will require substantial social investment. The experiences of the past and lessons from other countries suggest that in order to maximize investments towards fulfillment of child rights, stakeholders must be more vigilant in their monitoring and advocacy of budgetary allocations to the social sector.

2. The Response to Date

Among the major steps taken to date are:

- An analysis of budgetary allocations to children and the publishing of “What’s in the Budget for Children?” The main goal of the budget analyses was to provide information on the trends in expenditure, identify areas of need, and to give us an idea of the effectiveness of Government expenditures - and whether or not this expenditure was consistent with its pronouncements, levels of commitments in relation to policy decisions and targets set. The Jamaica Coalition on the Rights of the Child (JCRC) has led these analyses since 1995.

- A Social Investment Workshop entitled “Maximising Budgetary Allocations to the Social Sector in Order to Fulfill Child Rights” was held from June 8-9, 2004, at the Knutsford Court Hotel. This workshop aimed to examine the most appropriate approach to monitoring and influencing budgetary allocation to children and was hosted by the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), the JCRC and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) The workshop reached consensus on: a) the framework for analysing the Jamaican budget in the future; b) objectives of a budget analysis; c) the stakeholders and their roles in monitoring and advocating for improvement in budgetary allocation, and; d) the process that should be used in doing a budget analysis.

3.0. Proposal for the Way Forward: The Jamaican Social Investment Initiative

The analysis of the budget over the past five years has identified glaring gaps in data that need to be filled in order that civil society may effectively advocate for improved social investments. The follow-up workshop allowed for stakeholders to agree on the basic tenets that should be involved in future efforts to monitor and influence budget allocations.

It is now proposed that a programme be developed to build on these initiatives and develop the national capacity to monitor and advocate for necessary investments towards the fulfillment of children’s rights.

3.1 Objective:

- To build national capacity so as to ensure that social investment is consistent with agreed national priorities for children.

3.2. Key Strategies:

- Advocacy
- Communication and social mobilization
- Stakeholder Participation and Consultation (at all levels)

3.3. Priority Areas, Recommended Strategies and Major Activities

Based on the recommendations of the social investment workshop and the first meeting of the committee, the following four priority areas, strategies and activities were identified.

i. Children and Youth Participation

- ✚ Increase children and youth participation in the budget analysis and the movement to improve social expenditure.
 - Youth fora and children’s parliament, and;
 - Promote integration of social investment in school curriculum.

ii. Communication and Social Mobilization

- ✚ Develop appropriate communication strategies to educate the public on the budget process and content to ensure sensitisation of the widest possible audience.
 - Develop and disseminate user-friendly materials about the MTF and from the analysis of budget expenditures;
 - Hold sensitisation sessions with persons in the political arena and private sector;
 - Organise community level involvement, building on the JASPEV approach, and;
 - Advocate for broadened stakeholder participation in defense of budget allocations for children.

iii. Research and Analysis

- ✚ Ensure easy access to reliable data
 - Establish reliable databases of information and a network of partners who can readily access same, including by establishing more firmly JAMSTATS (DEVINFO), as a tool to monitor national progress as well as disparities among communities;
 - Undertake timely impact assessment of select sectors;
 - Ensure inclusion of social expenditure indicators in established data collection mechanisms;
 - Develop performance framework and establish baseline for the Medium-Term Socio-Economic Framework (including indicators, means of collection and verification);
 - Set up a mechanism to influence budget development and monitor social investment on an ongoing basis, and;
 - Complete annual analysis of the budget – beginning with a costing of the MTF and NFAC in 2005 (to provide baseline for future analyses).

iv. Training and Capacity Building

- ✚ Provide training and capacity building activities to stakeholders in budget analysis, advocacy, the budgeting process and economic concepts.
 - Conduct advocacy training;
 - Provide opportunities for knowledge transfer (from technical experts and practitioners);
 - Training in strategic planning and budget analysis, and;
 - Training in negotiation and lobbying.

v. Advocacy

Undertake dialogue/negotiation to influence budgets in support of the fulfillment of the rights of children.

- Enlist opinion leaders as champions of social investments for children
- Lead budget discussions with the GOJ and private sector leaders

4.0 Management and Implementation

It is proposed that a steering committee guides the process. The committee will have a rotating chair, held in the first year (2005) by the PIOJ. The committee is responsible for

overall supervision and coordination of activities. Implementation will be led by the agencies represented on the committee, each of which will play a leadership role in one of the five priority areas. The individual agency, with the approval of the steering committee and consistent with the identified strategies, will determine the approach to be used and activities required to accomplish the objective.

5.0 Membership of Steering Committee

- The Jamaica Coalition on the Rights of the Child (JCRC)
- The Planning Institute of Jamaica (Chair)
- The University of the West Indies
- The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- The United Nations' Development Programme (UNDP)
- The Office of the Children's Advocate
- The Ministry of Finance and Planning
- The Cabinet Office
- The Child Development Agency
- The National Centre for Youth Development

5.1 Role of Steering Committee Members

- The Government of Jamaica, represented by the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), the Cabinet Office, the Child Development Agency, the National Centre for Youth Development, and the Ministry of Finance and Planning, will help ensure access to government data as well as information on the budgeting process. These agencies, especially the Ministry of Finance and the Cabinet Office, will play a role in influencing internal budgetary process. The PIOJ will also coordinate implementation of activities and chair the Steering Committee;
- The University of the West Indies will ensure the process is guided by the best in research capacity and soundest economic theory and methodology;
- The Jamaica Coalition on the Rights of the Child will ensure wide participation the NGOs; assist with communication/social mobilization efforts; and, play key role in advocacy;
- UNICEF and UNDP will: provide technical support to the process; provide some of the required funding; and, assist with dissemination of information from the initiative;
- The Child Development Agency and National Centre for Youth Development will ensure the participation of children and youth - those most impacted by social investments.
- In addition efforts will continue to get the Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica (PSOJ) to join the Working Group in order to represent the interest of the private sector and help in advocacy among the members of the PSOJ;

6.0 Frequency of Meetings

The committee meets **every other month**.

