1. In the 2022/2023 state budget, the amount allocated to early childhood is 6.1 billion Burundian francs (BIF), or 3.0 million US dollars (USD). It represents 0.3% of the total budget as in 2021/2022.

2. The sector is covered by various ministries and institutions, including the Ministry of Public Health and the Fight against AIDS still responsible for coordination. This situation creates difficulties in terms of budget monitoring and programming.

3. The sector concerns children aged 0-8 years, who represent 40% of the population. It is critical to develop a comprehensive financing strategy to scale up multi-sectoral Early Childhood Development (ECD) program interventions for the first 1,000 days of a child’s life and family support. This could include the creation of a comprehensive sector budget to operationalize policy commitments and improve tracking of financial flows to the sector.

4. A cost-benefit analysis of ECD investments in Burundi shows that for every BIF invested in this age group in 2022, a return of 18 BIF could be expected by 2050. It is therefore important to increase resources for early childhood development.

Recommendations

➤ The budget for the early childhood sector is low, representing less than 1% of the national budget, while there is an urgent need to strengthen funding levels for this age group by providing various multi-sectoral intervention programs, necessary to ensure their development. In this framework, it is crucial to mobilize both domestic and external resources to meet the needs of early childhood.

➤ The government should consider developing a comprehensive financing strategy to implement ECD interventions. It includes the creation of a comprehensive Early Childhood Development (ECD) budget to operationalize policy commitments and improve tracking of budget allocations to the early childhood sector.
Considering the breadth of interventions in this early childhood sector, it is recommended to establish a single structure to coordinate and monitor better all ECD interventions and to ensure budgetary monitoring.

The ECD funding strategy must take advantage of all available sources of funding. Burundi’s high level of indebtedness, coupled with constraints related to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, means that donor funding must be optimized in the short term. Donor collaboration will be key to ensuring that sufficient resources are pooled to finance ECD. However, in the long term, it is important that the ECD funding strategy be refocused on domestic sources of funding.

Planning for scaling-up of ECD services must go beyond current funding. The government must address the feasibility and implementation of ECD packages. While funding is essential to implement services, money is not enough on its own. An enabling environment for high-quality, effective ECD services has to be developed. Actions should include assessing development potential, establishing institutional and governance structures, and deploying a monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

Introduction

Early childhood development is one of the best investments a country can make to stimulate economic growth, promote peaceful and sustainable societies, and eliminate extreme poverty and inequality. Equally important, investment in early childhood is necessary to fulfill the right of every child to survive and thrive (United Nations, 1989).

The right to early childhood care and education is essential, which is a phase of the life course from conception to age 8. During this period of early childhood, the young child will undergo a rapid development, acquiring physical, cognitive, motor, psycho-emotional and social skills that will accompany him/her throughout his/her adult life. Fundamental research indicates that this is the time in the life course when opportunities for human development are the greatest (UNESCO, 2012).

Some key early childhood statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neonatal disorders of infants in Burundi (2010 and 2019)</td>
<td>3.8% (2010) 42.4% (2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutritional deficiencies of children aged 1 to 4 years in Burundi (2010 and 2019)</td>
<td>9.5% (2010) 8.6% (2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaria of children aged 1 to 4 years in Burundi (2010 and 2019)</td>
<td>9.6% (2010) 5.1% (2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence (infection rates) among pre-schoolers aged 1 to 4 years (2019)</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Schoolers aged 1 to 4 years (2019)</td>
<td>90.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidence of iodine deficiency in children under five years of age in 2019 (number)</td>
<td>888</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: UNICEF (2021), Cost-Benefit Analysis of Early Childhood Investments in Burundi.
In fact, 90% of a child’s brain development occurs before age of 8. To reach their full potential, young children need an interconnected and diverse set of supports including quality health care, adequate nutrition, safety, early learning opportunities and nurturing.

Every child has the right to be protected from harm. Yet every year, the lives and physical, mental and emotional well-being of millions of children around the world are threatened by many forms of abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation.

Globally, it is estimated that up to 1 billion children between the ages of 2 and 17 have been physically, sexually, or emotionally abused or neglected over the course of a year (WHO, 2020). Other studies show that between 25 and 50% of all children declare having experienced severe and frequent physical abuse. In addition, an estimated 215 million children are involved in child labor, which is a form of child exploitation, and of these, 115 million are employed in hazardous work (ILO, 2010).

According to WHO and UNICEF, each year, 7.6 million children worldwide die before their fifth birthday. More than 25 times this number, so over 200 million children, survive but do not reach their full human potential. When these children reach adulthood, their countries lose an estimated 20% of their productivity. This underscores the importance of the role played by health services, health workers, and community service providers in promoting early childhood development.

Thus, the International Convention on the Rights of the Child was unanimously adopted on November 20, 1989, by the member countries of the United Nations. It came into force in France on September 6, 1990. Early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, is the first of the six Education for All goals agreed by 164 countries in Dakar in 2000 and is affirmed as a right in its own right by numerous international and regional treaties.

All states have committed to take all necessary measures to establish comprehensive child protection systems, including laws, policies, regulations, and appropriate budgetary allocations, to ensure access to services in all social sectors, including but not limited to health and nutrition, education, social protection, security, and justice, to address the multiple underlying vulnerabilities of all children and to meet their multiple needs without discrimination.

Similarly, in 2021, Burundi launched its first multi-sectoral national ECD strategy 2021-2027, to unify the Early Childhood Development (ECD) approach. This strategy is firmly anchored in the principles of the National Development Plan (PND) and is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals 2. Early childhood is increasingly the focus of reform attention in Burundi. Burundi has one of the youngest and fastest growing populations in the world. Indeed, early childhood accounts for nearly 40% of the population, representing approximately 2.4 million children in this age group (World Bank, 2021). If managed effectively, Burundi could reap the benefits of this demographic dividend.

Mortality and morbidity continue to pose a significant threat to early childhood development in the country. The probability of survival to age 5 is 94%, while 52.2% of children are stunted, putting them at significant risk for lifelong cognitive and physical limitations. Interestingly, preventable diseases continue to drive the burden of disease (and in some cases have increased over the past decade), despite the existence of highly effective interventions (UNICEF, 2022).

After taking into consideration all the events and phenomena mentioned above and considering the financial needs of the early childhood sector, the budgetary allocations for this sector remain very minimal to achieve its activities. We are concerned with the analysis of the need and, by the structure of budget allocations for early childhood in Burundi.
Over the course of the budget year from 2020/2021 to 2022/2023, budget allocations for early childhood have shown an increasing trend in both nominal and real terms. Indeed, budget allocations in nominal terms increased from BIF 2.3 billion in 2020/2021 to **BIF 6.2 billion in 2022/2023**, an increase of BIF 4 billion in two years. During this study period, budget allocations in nominal and real terms followed the same trend.

The share of the total government budget allocated to the ECD sector is **0.3% in 2022/2023** and as well in 2021/2022. In addition, it should be mentioned that a minimal 0.1% of total national resources (GDP) is allocated to ECD spending. Since 2020/2021, Burundi has not allocated sufficient resources to this sector, as the share of the budget dedicated does not exceed 0.3% of the total budget or 0.1% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The evolution of the share of this budget in the GDP for the early childhood sector follows the same trend. Indeed, if one is stagnating, the other tends to stay at the same level; if it is increasing or decreasing, the other will tend to follow the same pattern.
The early childhood sector is essentially supported by five ministries:
- the Ministry of Justice,
- the Ministry of Public Health and AIDS Control,
- the Ministry of National Solidarity, Social Affairs, Human Rights and Gender, the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, and

The interventions carried out by these ministries are presented in the figure 3.

The share of each of them shows how much the early childhood sector is of concern. It should be noted that the Ministry of Public Health and the Fight against AIDS is the one that intervenes most in the early childhood sector, with 58.9% of the total allocated. Next comes the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research with 31.2%.

Sources: Budget Act 2022/2023
Credibility and budget execution

Over the study period, the level of budget execution dedicated to early childhood was consistently been over 95%. This demonstrates good quality budget programing for the early childhood sector from 2020/2021 to 2021/2022.

Funding sources

An analysis of funding sources over the 2020/2021, 2021/2022, and 2022/2023 fiscal years shows that domestic resources are the most important.

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1. The budget allocated to early childhood in 2021/2022 was BIF 5,711,685,523, equivalent to US$ 2,890,470.60
2. UNICEF (2021), Early childhood in Burundi.

Acknowledgment

This budget analysis is part of a series of analyses on the social sectors for the 2022/2023 fiscal year. This budget analysis is the result of a frank collaboration between the University Research Center for Economic and Social Development (CURDES), the Ministry of Finance, Budget and Economic Planning and the sectorial ministries.

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