

WORKING PAPER

# INFLUENCING BUDGETS FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

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## **Influencing Budgets for Children's Rights**

### *Summary*

States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention) are required to undertake legislative reforms to incorporate the Convention in their domestic legal systems. To follow through with legislative reform efforts and the introduction of new laws and policies, resources need to be allocated towards meeting objectives and fulfilling children's rights. That is, budget allocations have to reflect the government's policy decisions and legislative actions.

The objective of this document is to highlight the ways in which various actors, including branches of government, civil society organizations, communities, international agencies, etc., have attempted to analyze, devise, and advocate for socially equitable and gender- and child-sensitive budgets. The document provides examples of "budget initiatives," that is, efforts aimed at influencing budgets for children's rights through actions such as improving budget transparency; creating public awareness; building capacity for analysis and advocacy; analysing budget content and effectiveness; and holding governments accountable for policy decisions. It describes some of the tools and methodologies employed by budget initiatives and their impact where possible. It concludes with highlighting some of the common features of the initiatives, and suggestions for improving the monitoring of resource allocations and expenditures for children's rights.

## Table of Contents

1	Introduction to the policy and budget process .....	1
1.1	Background and purpose of this document.....	1
1.2	Availability of resources for implementing children’s rights .....	3
1.3	Ensuring state accountability .....	5
1.4	Estimating resources given that rights are indivisible and inter-related .....	6
1.5	Challenges in monitoring budgetary allocations.....	6
1.6	The public policy process and its links to the budget .....	9
2	Ways and means to influence the budget.....	10
2.1	Costing laws and policies: Objectives and methodologies .....	11
2.2	Entry points along the budget cycle.....	12
3	Case studies.....	14
3.1	South Africa: Costing the implementation of the Child Justice Bill .....	14
3.2	South Africa: Child poverty and the budget .....	15
3.3	Vietnam: Child-focused budget study on the right to education .....	16
3.4	Brazil: Calculating the “Children’s Budget” .....	16
3.5	Brazil: Community participation .....	17
3.6	Ecuador: Budget analysis and national-level advocacy.....	18
3.7	India: Raising public awareness at the sub-national level .....	18
3.8	Tanzania: Gender budget network .....	19
4	Conclusions.....	20
4.1	Common features of budget initiatives .....	20
4.2	Measuring impact.....	21
4.3	Suggestions for further action.....	23



# 1 Introduction to the policy and budget process

## 1.1 Background and purpose of this document

*How the Convention on the Rights of the Child make a call for public resource allocation*  
Implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention) places a clear resource obligation on State Parties as well as on civil society, non-government organizations, media, international organizations, etc. The Convention is explicit about the responsibility of State Parties to ensure that public resources are made available, allocated, and spent in order to progressively realize children's rights. Under Article 4 of the Convention, State Parties are obligated to "undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights" recognized in the Convention. Particularly with regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties undertake to utilize "the maximum extent of their available resources," and, where needed, to do so "within the framework of international co-operation."

The Convention indicates particular duties and responsibilities of State Parties in this regard. For instance, in Article 18, State Parties also undertake to assist parents and legal guardians in fulfilling their child-rearing responsibilities, to develop institutions, facilities and services for the care of children, and to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child-care services and facilities for which they are eligible. Under Article 26, the Convention recognizes the right of every child to benefit from social security, and enjoins State Parties to undertake measures to achieve the realization of this right in accordance with their national law and in the context of the circumstances of the child.

Further, in Article 24 on health and nutrition and Article 28 on education, the Convention refers to the need to take account of developing countries and says that State Parties shall "undertake to promote and encourage the need for international co-operation" in this respect.

The above Articles, together with others in the Convention, lay out the obligations, duties, and responsibilities of State Parties, of both the state and of those persons responsible for the care of children. The implementation of the Convention calls for a framework of resources, institutions, facilities, services, and standards required for the realization of children's rights. Moreover, the Convention indicates not only *what* should be made available, but *how* the process should proceed, including that it should be in keeping with the best interests of the child (Article 3) and with the participation of the child (Article 5).

*What is a budget? How do budgets fit in with the implementation of the Convention?*  
The budget is defined as "a document that, once approved by the legislature, authorises the government to raise revenues, incur debts and effect expenditures in order to achieve certain goals ... the budget determines the origin and application of public financial

resources.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, a budget represents, in monetary terms, the policy objectives of the government.

A new budget is prepared each year and is instituted as an annual law. That is, each year, the budget is drawn up by the executive branch of the government and has to be approved by the legislature before it comes into effect. The budget is prepared on the basis of the government’s economic and social goals, and the overarching ideological platform that the government holds. The budget is influenced by political imperatives, from both within the government and outside it, such as private sector interests and pressure from international financial institutions. The budget-making process – its theory, reality, and weaknesses - is described more fully below.

#### *The importance of confronting the entire public policy process*

All resource allocations that are listed in the budget represent the government’s objectives, policy decisions, and approved laws. In other words, the budget reflects the agenda of the government. This is a critical point for addressing budgets with a human rights-based approach.

If the budget is to be revised from the perspective of children’s rights, then the policy framework that it reflects has to be evaluated in its entirety for its impact on the realization of rights. For any legislative change undertaken to implement the Convention, the associated resource implications need to be evaluated in terms of how the entire budget is structured. This is because any increases in one part of the budget (for example, higher spending on child protection measures or on social security) are usually only possible if there is one or both of the following: a decrease in another part of the budget (for example, decrease in military spending), or an increase in revenues for the government (for example, increase in income taxes). The various parts of the budget may not all be explicitly related to children, but they affect the potential to create a socially equitable distribution of resources.

Budgets are put together through a process that intersects with the policy-making process and legislative reform process. Each process influences the other; therefore, it is not enough to look at the budget in isolation. Neither is it enough to undertake legal reform without ensuring that public funds are made available and are spent to follow up the implementation of new legislation for children. Laws, policies, and budgets need to be considered *together*. In addition, they need to be assessed not only in terms of what they propose to do, but also the outcomes they achieve.

#### *The focus and objectives of this document*

As the Convention makes clear, the adequacy of resources for realizing children’s rights is a concern not limited to the state, but extends throughout society and the international community.<sup>2</sup> This includes the private sector, civil society organizations, development agencies and international financial institutions. However, the primary responsibility for

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<sup>1</sup>Elson, D. and Norton, A. *What’s behind the budget? Politics, rights and accountability in the budget process*. Overseas Development Institute (ODI). June 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Parker, D. “Resources and child rights” in Himes, J.R. (Ed.) *Implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child: Resource Mobilization in Low-Income Countries* (1995). UNICEF. Page 36.

providing public resources lies with the state. It is the state that can undertake legislative, institutional and administrative actions, provide social services, make policy decisions, and formulate budgets to ensure that children's rights are realized.

Therefore, the focus of this document is on the resources available to State Parties and the mechanisms to allocate and use the resources. These mechanisms involve what is referred to here as the "public policy process," which denotes the making of laws, policies, and budgets and translating them into action and outcomes. Understanding the links between laws, policies, budgets and their outcomes is important because the budget should not be dominated by political interest groups, or by corruption or inefficiency in the public sector; rather, it should be driven by the objectives of legislative reform and policy decisions. In addition, political will, governance, and public sector efficiency should ensure that the funds are spent so that they actually reach and benefit children and families. States play a key role in this regard.

State Parties need to be held accountable for harnessing resources and the development process for children. However, estimating, reporting, and monitoring resource allocations and expenditures with respect to children's rights is a challenge for most State Parties. As described more fully below, few State Parties are doing so systematically.

Civil society actors also face challenges in this respect. For instance, the link between policies, laws and budgets is often not transparent. Tracking government action and the realization of children's rights with respect to laws, policies, and budgets requires well-documented and accessible information. Such information is often difficult to record and is not easily available. Policies and laws are often made without a careful reckoning of the resources that they require, either due to a lack of information and/or lack of capacity within the government (within both the executive and legislature). This poses a challenge for implementing the Convention as well as for monitoring its implementation.

Given this challenge, State Parties have made concerted efforts to work with experts, non-government organizations (NGOs), communities, and international organizations on the issue of monitoring the realization of children's rights. In several cases, NGOs have taken the lead in estimating and monitoring the public sources required to implement children's rights, and have launched advocacy strategies to hold the government accountable.

The objective of this document is to highlight these varied efforts, and illustrate the ways in which various actors (including branches of government, civil society organizations, communities, international agencies, etc.) have attempted to analyze, devise, and advocate for socially equitable and gender- and child-sensitive budgets.

## *1.2 Availability of resources for implementing children's rights*

As mentioned above, under Article 4 of the Convention, State Parties are obligated to take appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of

children's rights. The reference to State Parties undertaking such measures to the "maximum extent of their available resources" is critical to its implementation. There are various types of resources in a society that can be harnessed towards this effort, and there is considerable overlap and interaction across these categories:<sup>3</sup>

- *Human resources*: Physical and mental health, knowledge, creativity, self-confidence, time availability, and skills (interpreted broadly to include important abilities such as child-rearing, teaching, leadership, managerial and political skills)
- *Economic resources*: income (in kind or cash, or individuals or enterprises), assets, natural resources (especially land and water), credit, government revenues and expenditures
- *Organizational resources*: family and household structure, extended family or clan relationships, community structure and organizations, cooperatives, trade unions, religious organizations, the media, governmental organizations, other public- and private-sector institutions and managerial arrangements, technologies

*Reasons that are sometimes cited for unavailability of resources*<sup>4</sup>

Governments may delay the implementation of certain laws, not follow up with the needed actions or policies, or give them lower priority, on the grounds that the economic or institutional resources at their disposal are limited. The argument of limited resources is related to factors that are internal to the country, or to external international pressure, or both.

For example, low-income countries typically have limited capability to raise funds through taxes. They have limited capacity to meet standards of quality and access to services that essential for child survival, development, protection, and participation. Developing countries whose policy frameworks are subject to conditions stipulated by international financial institutions, such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (IMF), may find that the conditions leave them little flexibility in deciding how national public funds should be spent.

Forces such as privatisation, decentralization, deregulation, trade liberalization, etc. have the effect of limiting the role of the government. That is, the government withdraws from regulating the economy or providing basic social services. Consequently, vulnerable and marginalized groups are left unprotected and could be excluded from enjoying their rights. For example, privatisation of health services poses a burden on the poor who cannot afford the costs of private healthcare. If there is no mechanism to address the inequalities in income, power, voice, or opportunity in a society, then the protection and fulfilment of children's rights is jeopardized.

Moreover, the larger macroeconomic framework of the country might be skewed so that there is no room to consider concerns of social equity and children's rights, which get left out of budgetary decisions. As Elson and Cagatay note<sup>5</sup>, even when attempts are made to integrate macroeconomic management with socially-oriented goals, there is still a

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<sup>3</sup> Himes, J.R. (Ed.) *Implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child: Resource Mobilization in Low-Income Countries* (1995). UNICEF. Page 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Children's Rights. Turning Principles into Practice* (2000). UNICEF and Save the Children. Page 84.

<sup>5</sup> Elson, D. and Cagatay, N. (2000). *The social content of macroeconomic policies*. World Development, Vol. 28, No. 7, pp. 1347.

tendency to design what are termed ‘sound’ macroeconomic policies with a focus on market-based criteria.<sup>6</sup> Policies that aim at equity and non-discrimination are added only afterwards, as an afterthought.<sup>7</sup> In such a scenario, children’s rights receive low priority in national spending plans.

The central issue is to ensure that state actions and policy decisions do not constrain the resources available for fulfilling children’s rights and for implementing related legislation. One way to achieve this is through ensuring that policy and budget processes are transparent, participatory, and accountable.

### *1.3 Ensuring state accountability*

#### *Ensuring accountability with a focus on results*

Two ways that governments can set targets or indicators to monitor progress are (1) by observing the change in *outputs*, such as higher levels of spending on the juvenile justice system, or expansion in public housing, and (2) by observing the achievement of *outcomes*, such as improved quality of education. Of these two ways, outcomes emphasize a focus on *results*. Outcome indicators shift the focus from observing what the state has instituted, produced, built or delivered, towards observing the effect of these investments and activities on the well-being of children.

As Himes writes in relation to setting explicit goals and target dates for monitoring children’s rights, the need is to ensure effective implementation and monitoring “not so much of the process as the actual outcomes for children resulting, at least to some extent, from measures taken by States Parties.”<sup>8</sup>

#### *Relevance to the rights-based approach*

The distinction between outputs and outcomes is critical from a human rights perspective, since it enhances ways to monitor the accountability of the state. As Elson and Norton state, it “resonates well with a human rights approach in that the formulation of economic and social rights in the relevant treaties is generally formulated in ‘outcome’ terms (the right to health is about health outcomes, not specific rights to the outputs of public health services).”<sup>9</sup> A human rights-based approach to public policy would affect the budget as follows:

- Increase the level of **funds allocated for social services**, and protect these funds against retrenchment (i.e. protect them from being withdrawn)

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<sup>6</sup> “Market-based criteria” implies a reliance on markets, without government intervention, to deliver the optimum distribution of goods and services in a society. It does not place as a primary objective the social equity or justice of the distributions of resources; rather it assumes that markets will ultimately deliver the most efficient outcomes. Note that “efficient” outcomes are not necessarily “equitable.”

<sup>7</sup> Actualizing an alternative approach based on human rights principles presents a number of challenges. For instance, governments may lack the power or capacity to negotiate effectively for such changes. Legislators may lack the technical expertise to analyze and challenge budgets. Civil society has limited channels for participation.

<sup>8</sup> Himes, J.R. “Introduction.” *Implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child: Resource Mobilization in Low-Income Countries* (1995). Himes, J. (Ed.). UNICEF. Page 18.

<sup>9</sup> Elson and Norton. Page vii.

- Increase resources, including human, economic, administrative, etc., allocated for **strengthening state institutions**, for both delivery of services and enabling legal redress
- Increase resources towards building **capacity of the disadvantaged to claim rights**, for example, improving access to information and organizational skills, and enabling society to hold the state accountable for performance
- Design **fund allocations in other sectors**, such as industry, trade, etc, so that they complement the progress towards the realization of children's rights

However, monitoring budgets according to rights-based criteria is a task that is complicated by the nature of budgetary data (which is often incomplete, not detailed enough, or unavailable) and requires careful analysis based on the inter-relatedness of rights.

#### *1.4 Estimating resources given that rights are indivisible and inter-related*

Fulfilling children's rights does not imply investing only in sectors that are directly or explicitly of concern to children's well-being. This is aligned with the principle of indivisibility and inter-relatedness of rights. For example, investment in healthcare is critical for children; however, simply investing in the health sector is not enough to guarantee an acceptable standard of health. Without adequate attention to child protection and care, the standards of health will be compromised. In other words, fulfilling children's rights involves taking a *comprehensive* perspective of the factors that contribute to their well-being.

The process of implementing laws, policies, and budgets is also a matter of co-ordinated action at many levels. Programmes and activities need to be implemented across sectors and involve both government agencies and non-government actors. Estimating the resources required for realizing children's rights involves *comprehensively* evaluating the actions and resources required.

In order to take a comprehensive perspective, we need to define a social and economic policy framework that addresses human rights in their entirety - one which takes into account economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights - and to plan actions and make investments accordingly. Physical infrastructure such as roads, electricity and water supply; trade and environmental policies; privatization and decentralization policies; among other factors, are as significant to achieving a world fit for children as making investments in child protection, education, health, etc. and promoting gender equality. The various sectors are inter-related, and need to be assessed *jointly* for the kinds of effects that they produce *collectively*.

#### *1.5 Challenges in monitoring budgetary allocations*

There are several ways by which to monitor government budgets with respect to the realization of children's rights. Some of these are through analyzing documents, plans

and reports such as: State Party reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, National Plans of Action, and national development plans. The challenges associated with these documents and plans, as well as with the nature of budgetary data in general, are presented below.

#### *State Party reporting on resource mobilization*<sup>10</sup>

One of the primary ways to monitor budgets for children is by looking at what State Parties are saying in their reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. However, country reporting on resource mobilization has, in general, been weak in scope and quality. The statistical information requested by the Committee is demanding for most developing countries, and reporting falls short of the guidelines. Budgetary information is often not disaggregated by sectors or groups of children, and is often not explained through substantive analysis. It is difficult to distinguish between planned and actual expenditures. Expenditure on welfare or social security programmes is usually made for the population as a whole, and States do not assess the specific impact of such expenditures on children. There are few studies on the impact of trade or market liberalization, deregulation or privatization on children and families. Lack of standardization across State Party reports makes comparative or trend analyses difficult.

#### *The challenges of using aggregated budget data*

To a significant extent, the inadequacy of the information in country reporting can be traced to the challenges of dealing with budget-related data. While in theory the budget is a straightforward document – a statement of the sources and uses of public funds – in practice it is presented in a way that can be challenging to understand. Data on government spending is not disaggregated in a manner that can be easily analyzed for its impact on children. For example, the budget may show the amount spent nationally on social security or primary education as a whole, but it would be difficult to estimate how much of that was spent on the poorest children.

Also, budgetary data does not always show clearly the contribution of donor funds - which would measure the extent of international cooperation - in relation to the government's own funds. The amount of donor contributions towards investing on children is a serious issue for countries where a sizable portion of social sector projects are funded through development assistance.

Therefore, largely because budgetary data is usually not presented in a disaggregated manner, State Party reporting on budget-related information is imprecise.

#### *The inter-relatedness of rights and the inter-relatedness of sectors*

The difficulty with aggregated data is compounded by the fact that strategies required to realize rights inevitably have to take a multi-disciplinary approach. For example, in order to realize a right that falls under one sector, such as child protection (for example, child labour), it is important to concurrently make investments in other sectors, such as education, and vice versa. If outcomes in education are observed to be below expectations, then there could be several causes for the low quality of education, such as

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<sup>10</sup> *Children's Rights: Turning Principles into Practice* (2000). UNICEF and Save the Children. Essay 10, Page 157.

inadequate attention to child protection (for example, child labour, which prevents children from attending school), or low investment in nutrition and healthcare (that is, children who are ill, malnourished or hungry cannot be expected to perform their best in school). Achieving outcomes in reducing child labour thus requires looking at all the factors that influence the child's development in a protective environment.

Therefore, the budget needs to be subjected to in-depth analysis in order to understand whether investments are being made across sectors, and how one sector affects the other. As mentioned above, the analytical perspective needs to be *comprehensive*. Often, the availability of detailed information and the capacity for analysis is lacking within the branches of government.

#### *Challenges of monitoring Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)*

PRSPs are national plans for achieving the stated aim of poverty reduction. PRSPs are linked to expenditure plans that indicate how the resources required for poverty reduction activities will be raised, allocated, and spent. These expenditure plans are integrated with national budgets. However, the annual reporting process of the PRSPs does not lend itself well to monitoring the realization of children's rights.

The PRSPs do not include systematically coherent national mechanisms for monitoring the obligations of the state. So far, there has been limited consideration and inclusion of children's rights in the design of PRSPs. Thus, the corresponding budget information in the PRSP does not accurately reflect children's priorities.<sup>11</sup> Several countries show changing allocation patterns in their PRSPs, notably with increases for education, health, clean water and sanitation, which clearly benefit children. However, it is difficult to gauge whether the increased allocations will be reflected in budgets and executed efficiently and reach vulnerable groups of the population.

#### *Challenges of monitoring National Plans of Action (NPA)<sup>12</sup>*

While a large number of countries have developed NPAs for children in a consultative participatory manner, the NPA does not indicate how the plans and activities it specifies will be funded. NPAs were, in general, conceived with the aim to be used as a reference for advocacy and fundraising, and most NPAs were designed in isolation of national development programmes.

#### *Challenges of monitoring national development plans (NDP)<sup>13</sup>*

NDPs do come with a budget that spells out how they will be funded. However, NDPs are generally led by the ministry of economic development, finance or planning. If economic or fiscal objectives are prioritized over social policy goals, then it can be difficult for the social sector ministries to significantly impact the process or content of

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<sup>11</sup> Based on an internal UNICEF desk review by Jose Guillermo Monroy Peralta, (2004). *Ninos, Ninas y Jovenes en las Estrategias de Reduccion de la Pobreza*.

<sup>12</sup> Based on the report by Nelson, J. (2004). *National action to fulfil the commitments of the UN Special Session on Children: A preliminary assessment*. This is an [internal](#) UNICEF report commissioned in collaboration with the Global Movement for Children Convening Committee and the NGO Group on the Convention.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

the NDP, in terms of both the design of the plan and the allocation of resources towards it.

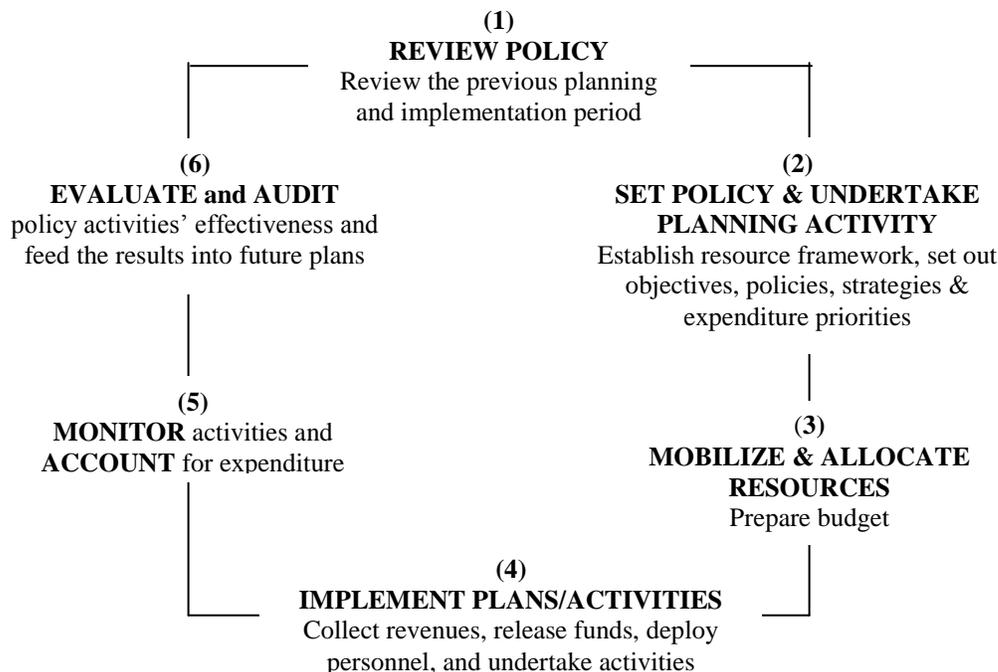
*To sum up...*

In sum, the task of reporting on budgetary allocations for the implementation of the Convention is difficult, and few State Parties undertake the kind of analyses that would yield satisfactory information. However, the clear need to monitor budgetary allocations - for social equity and sustainability in general, and in particular for the realization of children's rights - is recognized by government agencies, parliamentarians, civil society organizations, communities, and international development organizations. Some of their notable attempts to monitor budgets are highlighted in the case studies in this document.

### 1.6 *The public policy process and its links to the budget*

The public policy process is inter-connected and cyclic. The processes of planning, policy-making, and budget-making and execution intersect, and there is a dynamic between them, whereby one influences the other. The following diagram illustrates the links.<sup>14</sup>

*Graph: The policy, planning and budgeting cycle<sup>15</sup>*



<sup>14</sup> The World Bank (1998). *Public expenditure management handbook*. Chapter 3, page 32.

<sup>15</sup> Source: World Bank *Public expenditure management handbook*. (1998).

However, there are discrepancies between the theory and reality of how policy decisions are made and budgets are formulated and executed.

*In theory ...*

Theoretically, if policy and planning processes function smoothly, and if social and economic rights are reflected in policy decisions, then it should follow that resources will be adequately allocated for social services. However, there are several weak points along this linked process, whereby the outcomes for universal and equitable development are compromised.

*In reality, the process is fragmented ...*

According to a World Bank report, a “failure to link policy, planning and budgeting may be the single most important factor contributing to poor budgeting outcomes at the macro, strategic and operational levels in developing countries.”<sup>16</sup> Policy making, planning and budgeting often take place independently of each other. A lack of attention to strategic planning implies that budget decisions are not reconciled with legislative actions or policy decisions. Analysis and feedback from previous years does not factor into planning decisions. Priorities are not aligned according to long and short term objectives. In such cases, the planning exercise does not involve a strategic and co-ordinated inter-sectoral allocation of public funds.

To summarize, the weaknesses in public sector operations that can disrupt budget outcomes include the following:<sup>17</sup>

- Weak links between legislative, policy-making, planning, and budgeting exercises;
- Inadequate assessment of the resources needed to implement legislation or policy decisions;
- Inadequate expenditure control, cash management and accounting systems;
- Inadequate funding or planning for recurrent needs (operations and maintenance of ongoing programmes/activities);
- Weak relationship between budget as formulated and budget as executed, causing unpredictability in funding needs and flows through the year;
- Unreliability in the flow of budgeted funds to agencies and to lower levels of government;
- Poor management of external aid or development assistance;
- Inadequate reporting of financial performance;
- Poorly motivated or insufficiently trained staff.

## **2 Ways and means to influence the budget**

While there are challenges to monitoring budgets through the instruments mentioned above, there are alternative ways to analyze and influence budgets. Some of these are described below.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid. page 31.

<sup>17</sup> Based partly on the World Bank’s *Public expenditure management handbook*. (1998). Chapter 2, page 5.

## 2.1 *Costing laws and policies: Objectives and methodologies*

Cost benefit analysis and cost effectiveness analysis are just two of several methods used to make strategic, operational and financing decisions with respect to laws and policies.

### *Objectives<sup>18</sup>*

There are several objectives to costing a particular policy or piece of legislation. The immediate aim is to facilitate consideration of alternative policy options, i.e. to evaluate whether the law or policy is affordable and sustainable, provide information on how its implementation can be planned and budgeted, and estimate its direct costs on stakeholders. In the long term, conducting such an exercise helps to put in place the processes, methodology, and institutions necessary to ensure sound comparative analysis in the future, at each stage in the legislative reform and policy development process.

### *Cost-benefit analysis*

Cost-benefit analysis involves deciding which legislative option or policy will benefit society the most, and assessing its associated costs. Governments would ideally undertake a cost-benefit analysis during the strategic planning stage of the legislative or policy-making process. A cost-benefit analysis exercise would require the government to consider who bears the costs and/or enjoys the benefits and what the *economic and social* impact is likely to be for all stakeholders.

### *Cost effectiveness analysis*

Cost effectiveness analysis aims to evaluate the following: given a particular legislation, policy, or project, what is the most cost-effective method of implementing it? Unlike cost-benefit analysis, which focuses on the net *social gain or loss* resulting from a particular legislative or policy option, cost effectiveness analysis compares the *resource costs* of different implementation options. It involves identifying the options; determining the demand for the service or product that would be provided under each option; determining the inputs, price of inputs and activities involved in each option; calculating the total budgetary or resource cost of each option; and finally, recommending the alternative that is most cost effective.

### *Challenges of conducting cost-benefit and cost effectiveness analyses*

Analyses to cost policy have their limitations. For instance, calculating the economic value of the benefits of social services, which are often supplied freely or are subsidized, is highly uncertain. Moreover, non-material values, such as the values that accrue to the quality of life, are also difficult to estimate in economic terms, such as aesthetics or cultural affiliations. Other challenges include questions of how to decide whose benefits and costs to count, how to factor in the interests of different social groups, and how to measure the impact on future generations.

Because of such uncertainties, arbitrary assumptions or unreliable calculations can potentially be made about the benefits or costs of a policy. This distorts the real costs and benefits, and could be used politically to manipulate the advocacy or design of the policy.

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<sup>18</sup> Based on a presentation by Conrad Barberton, Cornerstone Economic Research, South Africa, May 2003.

However, calculating costs and benefits is still an important step in evaluating the resource implications of laws and policies. The costing of the Child Justice Bill in South Africa is, presented as a case study in this document, illustrates this point.

## 2.2 *Entry points along the budget cycle*

Influencing budgets does not imply producing separate budgets for children. Rather, the aim is to identify and reform how laws, policies, and budgets are made and executed in order to realize the rights of children.

### *General approaches to influence budgets*

The range of activities includes research, policy analysis, negotiations with international financial institutions, advocacy, capacity-building, training, building organizational networks, enabling and fostering community participation, and raising economic literacy. Depending on the nature of activity, the target audience could be the general public, policy-makers, parliamentarians, government agencies, or civil society organizations. Such activities are loosely termed as “budget initiatives”, and they can be undertaken by a variety of actors from both state and society and the international community, including academia, NGOs, government agencies, legislative bodies, development organizations, human rights advocates, etc.

One way to map the range of budget initiatives is to consider how their efforts address the budget cycle along its various stages. This section describes the budget cycle, both in the ways it is supposed to work in theory, and as it is usually observed in reality. The section highlights points of entry along various stages of the budget.<sup>19</sup>

### *Drafting stage*

*Drafting/formulation by the executive:* The finance ministry prepares resource projections and forecasts the macroeconomic outlook. It determines the level of total affordable government expenditure as well as subtotals according to sector, program or line ministry. Based on this assessment, the finance ministry sends out a “budget circular” to line ministries, which includes guidelines for budget planning and invites bids from line ministries for their spending needs. Line ministries prepare and submit budget requests to the finance ministry, according to constraints and goals as per the budget circular. The finance ministry reviews budget requests and negotiates with line ministries to arrive at a draft budget. Estimates for expenditures in the draft budget are categorized by line ministry, program and sector.

*In reality:* The drafting stage is dominated by the executive, particularly the finance ministry. Macroeconomic concerns can take over social policy objectives. Political agendas coupled with

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<sup>19</sup> The budget process as presented here is based on that described in *What's behind the budget?* By D. Elson and A. Norton, a publication of the Overseas Development Institute (June 2002). As Elson and Norton indicate, the literature on public expenditure management is mostly normative, and usually presents the ideal types of arrangements (how the system “should” work). While the process that they present draws mostly upon Anglophone systems, the general principles apply in all cases. They also note that, “despite differences in emphasis, audience and objectives [in various source documents], there are substantial elements of consensus which emerge in the discussions of budgets and public expenditure management presented.”

imbalances in negotiation power between the ministries can cause inequitable outcomes. Civil society organizations lack formal channels for intervention and participation. Moreover, there is often a lack of accurate and adequate information on budgets from previous years, or statistical or economic data, in order to plan for funding requirements, forecast demand for services, estimate prices etc, for future years.

*Entry points to influence the budget:* Budget initiatives at the finance ministry level focus on advocacy to strengthen political will, influencing national policy objectives to ensure more equitable outcomes, analyzing budgets and building technical capacity. Channels for civil society participation in development planning exercises, such as the PRSP, can be used as a way to consult with otherwise marginalized social groups and bring their concerns into the policy-making process. At the line ministry level, the negotiation process between sectors can get overtaken by competing political agendas instead of being driven by an overall vision. Advocacy efforts can help to represent the rights of children and emphasize the inter-relatedness of issues that affect them (e.g. between education, child labour, and poverty).

### ***Budget approval and enactment***

*Approval and enactment by the legislature:* The finance ministry sends the negotiated budget to the legislature for approval and enactment. The legislature votes on budget appropriations and approves the budget, which is then enacted and comes into force as an annual law. The legislature plays a critical role in analyzing, challenging and approving the budget.

*In reality:* This is where legislature first debates and can change the budget. However, budget documents are often inaccessible and complex, and legislatures are poorly informed and lack the technical capacity to critique and challenge the budget.

*Entry points and ways to influence the budget:* The important target group at this stage is the legislature or parliament, which plays a critical role in analyzing and approving the budget. Budget initiatives aim to increase awareness and capacity of the legislature to take informed decisions and to monitor the performance of the executive. Clear, accessible, well-presented analysis of public finance data allows for greater transparency and highlights critical information.

### ***Implementation of the budget***

Implementing the budget involves the release of appropriations (i.e. funds) to spending ministries. Line ministries or spending agencies enter into contracts and orders. Goods and services are delivered and verified. Payments are made and transactions are recorded.

*In reality:* Expenditures that are unplanned and unsustainable cause budget outcomes to deviate from policy goals. When financial information is not recorded and maintained efficiently or transparently, then the necessary checks and balances on public expenditure are weakened. Bureaucratic inefficiency or political obstacles cause flows of funds across

the levels of government (from national to sub-national) to be unpredictable and uneven. All these factors compromise the smooth functioning/execution of the budget.

*Entry points to influence the budget:* The goal here is to improve budget execution by monitoring allocations made versus actual expenditure incurred. Budget initiatives can organize around issues of freedom of information, governance and accountability. They can advocate for the generation and use of accurate and credible data and streamlined procedures. For civil society groups, another important aspect of this stage is to collect information on expenditure, revenue, outputs and outcomes, which would contribute to the quality of their participation in the legislative stage.

### ***Audit and evaluation***

*Independent audit, followed by approval by the legislature:* Accounts are prepared by the finance ministry, and audited by independent auditors. The legislature approves the audited accounts. Accounts are analysed, evaluated and used to inform the budgets in subsequent years.

*In reality:* Governance and transparency are the main issues. Also, there is inadequate feedback of results into future budgets, in part because audits are not produced in a timely manner. The legislature may lack capacity to adequately scrutinize the accounts.

*Entry points to influence the budget:* Initiatives at the budget evaluation stage aim to specify standards for government transparency. Activities include disseminating information (publicizing budgets); improving access of civil society to published public accounts; building capacity within civil society to analyze budgets; assessing the clarity of responsibilities and functions of different levels of government and publishing citizen's guides to economic management or public finance. Few civil society groups work on the budget in the auditing stage, since the audited accounts are often presented much after (up to two years) after the close of the financial year.

## **3 Case studies**

This section presents several case studies of budget initiatives. They illustrate how budgets have been analysed for their relevance to children's rights, and also provide examples of awareness-raising, advocacy, and capacity-building activities.

### ***3.1 South Africa: Costing the implementation of the Child Justice Bill***

The draft Child Justice Bill was the first piece of draft legislation in South Africa for which the costs of implementation were explored in detail prior to it being tabled in Parliament. The draft Bill, which was released in December 1998, emphasised effective action in the period immediately following the arrest of a child and before proceeding to trial. It increased the legal mechanisms to avoid detention and trial by diverting children

to programmes that have a restorative justice content. It provided for an increased range of sentencing options, including many alternatives to imprisonment.

#### *Costing the draft Bill - Estimating the cost implications of the innovations*

Two costing exercises<sup>20</sup> were conducted to assess the cost of implementation of the Child Justice Bill, the second being an update and refinement of the first and incorporating revisions made to the initial draft Bill. The methodology used was the same for both exercises. Both were commissioned by the Child Justice Project, which is a United Nations Technical Assistance Project of the Government of South Africa, and is located in the Department of Justice.

#### *Realizing savings due to the draft Bill and reallocating expenditure*

The implementation of the draft Bill would impact on the economic, organizational and human resources of both national and provincial government departments. The exercise showed which departments stood to gain or save resources as a result of implementation of the draft Bill, to what extent, and most importantly, *how* the savings could be re-allocated, and how overall expenditure could be managed more effectively.

### **3.2 South Africa: Child poverty and the budget**

The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) is a South African NGO. One of its programmes is the Budget Information Service (BIS), which tackles South Africa's budget system through research, analysis, training and capacity-building, with the goal of alleviating poverty. In a report entitled *Child poverty and the budget in South Africa*, BIS aims to contribute "towards monitoring government's performance in delivering on its promises to poor children."<sup>21</sup> The report examines the government's promises to children - as put forward in South Africa's National Programme of Action (NPA) – and uses these as a benchmark for evaluating the government's performance in relation to child poverty reduction. The focus of the study thus falls on policy developments, budget decisions and service delivery.

#### *Methodology*

The study begins with a definition of child poverty that goes beyond conventional income measures to include the concepts of powerlessness and vulnerability. It then examines government policy, spending and service delivery, to assess whether or not poor children are being 'put first', i.e. whether children are included in strategies, plans and activities, but it deliberately does not examine the impact of the measures on reducing child poverty (i.e. it focuses on policy statements and plans, not on child poverty indicators). The study analyzes South Africa's Budget 2000 and investigates the medium term expenditure

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<sup>20</sup> The first is *Costing the Implementation of the Child Justice Bill: A Scenario Analysis* (1999), and the second is *Re-Costing the Child Justice Bill. Updating the original costing taking into consideration changes made to the bill* (2001), by Conrad Barberton with John Stuart.

<sup>21</sup> Report by Shaamela Cassiem, Hellen Perry, Mastoera Sadan and Judith Streak. Budget Information Service, Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA). November 2000. Accessed in April 2004 from: [http://www.hri.ca/children/welfare/SAfrica\\_povertybudget.pdf](http://www.hri.ca/children/welfare/SAfrica_povertybudget.pdf).

This document is an abridged version of the book: *Are poor children being put first? Child poverty and the budget 2000*, by the same authors. Cape Town: Idasa.

framework<sup>22</sup> (MTEF) for 2000-2003 with a focus on poor children. One of its most useful aspects is that it provides clear descriptions of the structure of government finance and implications of fiscal policy, which are essential to base an analysis of the budget.

### 3.3 *Vietnam: Child-focused budget study on the right to education*

Save the Children Sweden conducted a child-focused budget study in Vietnam that examined district-level budgets for primary education for children with disabilities (CWD).<sup>23</sup> The study examined three primary schools, with the following objectives: make children including CWD, more visible in policies and decision-making processes, especially those related to budget and resource allocations in Vietnam; collect information on the process and structure of education budgets at district level, with a focus on expenditure on education for CWD; identify and clarify the link between budget and policies related to children's rights to education.

The main approach of the study is to regard the budgetary process as an incremental process. This means that the analysis of the budget and other financial resources will not focus on overall efficiency of the budget, but on the *incremental* part of the budget (that is, the part that changes from year to year). The justification for taking this approach is that governments as well as researchers face obstacles in limited access to information and data and analytical capacity. By starting from the central government level and then delving into more specific district and school levels of budgets, the analysis can provide an understanding of overall limitations of the budgetary process at lower levels of government. The study emphasizes qualitative rather than quantitative analysis, due to data limitations as well as the breadth of the research question.

### 3.4 *Brazil: Calculating the “Children’s Budget”*

The “Children’s Budget” is a national-level effort in Brazil that aims to promote transparency in the use of public resources through monitoring public budgets and providing relevant information to civil society groups and others.<sup>24</sup> In 1995, a number of local and international organizations helped to formulate the Pact for Children document, which highlighted the importance of monitoring public policy financing that affects children. In 1996, two Brazilian think-tanks detailed a methodology for identifying state actions and resources aimed at guaranteeing the survival, development and protection of children, given the absolute priority for such activities demanded by the new Brazilian Constitution.

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<sup>22</sup> The World Bank describes the MTEF as a process of reconciling “availability” of resources, both domestic and aid, which must be projected beyond a single year, with “needs”, which must be prioritized and made consistent with the resource framework. This reconciliation process involves engaging finance, planning, and line ministries as well as the Cabinet, and making intersectoral trade-offs.

<sup>23</sup> Nguyen Thi Van Anh, Ngo Huy Duc, Le Ngoc Hung, Luu Van Quang. (2000). *Child-focused budget study: Assessing the rights to education of children with disabilities in Vietnam*. Save the Children. Hanoi.

<sup>24</sup> Source: A report based on a longer study of UNICEF Brazil’s participatory budget activities prepared for UNICEF by four Brazilian consultants (2003).

### *Methodology*

In its analysis, the Institute for Socioeconomic Studies (INESC), a Brazilian NGO, focused on the government's direct expenditures for children during 1995 to 1998. INESC began tracking the spending of various ministries on projects and activities that have an impact on children's rights. By totalling the spending on such projects, INESC arrived at Brazil's "Children's Budget." The reports on spending for children were disseminated to some 200-300 decision-makers, civil society groups, and individuals. In 1999 INESC began producing a separate, more focused, improved bulletin, *Budget and Policy for Children and Adolescents*, which was disseminated to 2,000 recipients, including media outlets and members of Congress.

### *Impact*

The importance of the Bolsa-Escola Programme, which provides a stipend to families who withdraw their children from the labour force and send them to school, and a programme aimed at ending child sexual exploitation was successfully placed on the national agenda. Some existing programmes, such as the Ministry of Justice's Department of Children and Adolescents received increased funding. In real terms, spending on children grew by 42 percent over 1998-2001.

## **3.5 Brazil: Community participation<sup>25</sup>**

The Participatory Budget in Brazil is a government-led methodology for increasing popular participation in financial decision-making. It aims to strengthen a sense of citizenship among ordinary people, to encourage them to act politically and sharpen their capacity to make demands on those in power. Although it does not have an explicit focus on children, its results in Porto Alegre, Itapuí and Roraima demonstrate that the demands made by communities and parents on local officials are generally for improvements that affect children. Among the most common demands were improved infrastructure, water supply, access to schools, and recreational opportunities. In Itapuí, children and adolescents have been included in the participatory process.

### *Methodology*

Neighbourhood representatives were elected to work with the city on carrying out the decision-making process regarding municipal funds. Representatives received training on human rights, management, social participation, and organisation. After training, the representatives began participating in every aspect of the city's work, from planning to execution.

### *Impact*

In Boa Vista, one of the first actions taken was to put 550 children (aged 7-14 years) who were not attending school back into the educational system. In addition, neighbourhood residents asked for and got 1,300 toilets, improved lighting to reduce violence, and construction of schools and sports fields. A project was developed to address the

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<sup>25</sup> From a UNICEF report based on a longer study of participatory budget activities prepared for UNICEF by four Brazilian consultants (2003).

adolescents who were not in school and were involved in drinking and gang activity. The project found job-training opportunities for them and provided a small monthly allowance as well as health and dental benefits to participants who returned to school; 90 percent of the youth targeted did so. Another pilot programme was to establish day-care centres for working mothers living in the poorest neighbourhoods. Each centre cares for 25 toddlers and is staffed by local women who are trained by educators, psychologists and nutritionists to care for the children.

### ***3.6 Ecuador: Budget analysis and national-level advocacy***

Beginning in 1999, as Ecuador was facing an economic crisis, UNICEF Ecuador decided that to protect children's rights, it was necessary that the government and society understand the roots of the crisis in order to develop and implement meaningful solutions. The goal was to minimize the negative impact of recent economic shocks on the poor, especially children, by shaping public policies based on a consensus regarding a society's obligation to its members.

UNICEF brought together an experienced and respected team of international and local consultants to analyze the economic situation and its implications for children, with a focus on the national budget. The study concluded that social sector allocations do not help the poor, because expenditures are uneven and inefficient. The results were presented to key figures in Ecuador, including the president, cabinet members, and political party leaders.

The idea of linking social and economic decision-making was accepted, and social spending increased by 15.5 percent over the amount originally allocated during 2000, helped in part by a spike in oil income. UNICEF was given access to the government's database, which it used to analyse the impact of budgetary decisions on children's well-being and to produce a periodical Bulletin aimed at legislators, civil society, and the media.

### ***3.7 India: Raising public awareness at the sub-national level***

Developing Initiatives for Social and Human Action (DISHA) is not a child-centred organization but its work is indicative of the emerging local initiatives on budget-related issues.<sup>26</sup> DISHA, a membership-based organisation of 20,000 tribal and forest workers in the state of Gujarat, has addressed issues of equality, discrimination and governance through alternative budget analysis since the early 1990s.<sup>27</sup>

#### *Methodology*

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<sup>26</sup> DISHA works with labour unions, village-level groups, co-operatives, etc. in predominantly tribal and agricultural areas of Gujarat. It works on issues of enforcement of minimum wages for forest labourers, drought-relief labourers, migrant construction labourers, casual mine-workers, and casual labourers, as well as to regularize the ownership of forest-land to the forest land cultivators. Accessed on April 6, 2004: <http://www.worldbank.org/participation/mistrydoc.htm>

<sup>27</sup> Mihir Bhatt. (2000). *Alternative budget analysis: DISHA's experience*. Foundation for Public Interest, India. Accessed April 6, 2004: <http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/civsoc/final/india/ind14.doc>

To understand the slow pace of economic, social and infrastructure in tribal areas<sup>28</sup> of Gujarat vis-à-vis the many years of government spending in these areas, DISHA adopted the accounting system prescribed by the government's Auditor General of Accounts. It studied the codification of sectors, programmes, and schemes in the state-level budget. It analyzed the amount spent in the tribal areas relative to other areas in the social sectors, agriculture, women's welfare, children, etc., and concluded that these areas were being neglected. DISHA prepared dissemination material in the local language and distributed the information to members of the legislature, the press, opposition parties, and public cause advocates, thus forcing the government to defend itself against the facts and analysis of socio-economic conditions and expenditures in the tribal areas.

#### *Impact*

The nature of debate within the legislature and state government changed. The state government responded by increasing allocations and expenditures on the identified items and sectors in subsequent budgets. DISHA next looked at the income earned and taxes borne by the poor. This not only strengthened its case for demands on allocation and adequate spending, but also widened its vision of development from one segment (tribal) of society to include all the poor of the state of Gujarat. Instead of a concern on a narrow range of issues, DISHA began to address the whole budget system. It also organized training programmes for NGOs of different states to understand the state-level and district budgets.

### **3.8 Tanzania: Gender budget network**

The Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) is a non-governmental organization working to obtain social transformation with a gender focus in all levels of society. TGNP pioneered the Gender Budget Initiative (GBI) in mid-1997 in collaboration with the Feminist Activism Coalition (FemAct). GBI aims to advocate for a more people-oriented development strategy and participatory and equitable allocation of resources. The strategy is to influence and transform planning and budgetary processes so that they are more participatory, and take into account the practical and strategic needs of marginalized groups, women, youth and the poor.

#### *Impact*

TGNP has gained access into government structures and strategic decision-making bodies. Through its participation in the PER and TAS processes, TGNP together with the FemAct Coalition has been able to push a collective agenda and advocate for transformation in macro-economic processes, transparency, and accountability by government actors.

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<sup>28</sup> The tribals and other communities live in hilly regions in Gujarat and constitute 15 percent of the state's population. At the national level, they number nearly 80 million over all the states of India.

## 4 Conclusions

### 4.1 *Common features of budget initiatives*

As the introduction mentions, the objective of this document is to highlight the attempts of government and non-government actors to influence budgets in order to make them socially equitable and gender- and child-sensitive.

The case studies above illustrate a collection of such attempts, referred to as “budget initiatives,” which span a range of activities: analysis of budgets, raising public awareness, building capacity for budget analysis, facilitating participation, building networks, and advocacy, among others. While these initiatives are targeted at various audiences and levels of government and civil society, and are conducted by different actors, they share certain common features. The most obvious is that they are all committed to ensuring that budgets are more socially equitable and the budget process is transparent and has greater accountability throughout. Among their other common features, they share two significant characteristics with respect to their goals, processes, and outcomes.

The first is that they seek to build upon and *strengthen the link between law, policy, and budgets*. That is, their goals implicitly recognize the link between law, policy and budgets, and their activities seek to achieve the realization of rights through building upon these links.

The second common characteristic is a consequence of the first: budget initiatives involve activities and processes that result in *building capacity* amongst both government and non-government actors and *enabling civil society participation* in public policy processes. This stems from the fact that, as in most of the cases described above, budget analysis is only the first step. The work does not end at analysis, but goes further to disseminate the analysis, raise public awareness, advocate on budget-related issues and participate in policy and legislative processes.

It is important to note that since policy processes are cyclic and dynamic, the above factors influence each other. That is, enhanced analytical capacity and effective participation in policy-making and budget processes has the effect of strengthening the links between law, policy, and budgets.

This interplay occurs in several ways, including the following:

- Evidence and analysis helps to enhance the role of civil society organizations in their pro-poor and rights-based advocacy work, so that they can participate more effectively in policy debates. It also helps to empower communities and enable their participation.
- Research partnerships between development and human rights organizations and policy analysts help to integrate the different perspectives and skills and advance policy analysis geared towards children’s rights.

- Building capacity on budget analysis amongst policy makers, government officials and parliamentarians equips them to access and use the information they need to consider the rights of children, and to influence budget decisions with this information.

## 4.2 *Measuring impact*

As with any effort that requires a multi-pronged approach, with simultaneous action on various fronts (such as national and sub-national government, legislature, civil society, academia, etc.), evaluating the impact of budget initiatives requires taking into account the whole context in which the budget exercise is conducted. Budget initiatives involve a range of activities (such as analysis, capacity-building, advocacy, etc.), each of which can have a different degree of impact for a different audience. Given the many dimensions of such efforts, some of the main challenges in measuring their impact are as follows:

### *Challenges in measuring impact by attributing cause and effect*

Moreover, budgets are influenced by a variety of imperatives, actors, and decisions. The cause and effect of results cannot be easily attributed to specific efforts. In other words, it is difficult to link impact directly and uniquely to a particular strategy or initiative.

For example, in Ecuador, after the results of budget analysis were presented to key government figures, social spending increased by 15.5 percent over the amount originally allocated during 2000. However, this increase was helped by a spike in oil income, which made available additional resources to the government. The advocacy efforts were significant, but they were not the only reason for the observed increase in social spending.

### *The success of each budget initiative is context-specific*

The success of budget initiatives depends on strategic as well as technical skills. Even when those undertaking the efforts have strong capacity and political power, their influence on the budget depends on the political, social, and economic climate in which they operate. What is considered as “success” varies according to country-specific circumstances and shifting political scenarios.

For example, gender-sensitive budget analysis was pioneered in Australia in 1984, when gender advocates from within the government launched the first and longest-running gender budget initiative in the Australian federal government.<sup>29</sup> It studied the budget’s impact on women and girls, and one of its goals was to change the budget and policies to further gender equality. During the main activity of the initiatives (1985–1996) expenditures on areas of significance to women grew substantially. However, progress was constrained by the political nature of the budget process in the context of shifts to a more conservative government. Whilst the government has moved away from formal gender budget exercises, the goals are still a priority for women’s policy units, community groups, and researchers. The impact, therefore, is substantive but mixed.

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<sup>29</sup> Sharp, R. and Broomhill, R. (2002). *Budgeting for Equality: The Australian Experience*. *Feminist Economics*, 8(1), 2002, 25–47.

### *Challenges in measuring impact in the short term*

Though budgeting and policy-making are annual cyclic processes, the outcomes from execution of many economic and social policies are often only observed in the medium to long term, which makes it difficult to measure impact in the short term. The long term nature of outcomes affects not only the challenge of measuring impact, but also the analytical approach of a budget exercise.

For example, the objective of the study on child poverty and the budget in South Africa is to assess whether or not poor children are being “put first” in government policy, spending and service delivery. It does *not* examine the direct impact of the poverty reduction measures in reducing child poverty. It primarily assesses policy statements, budget documents, and social services to see if children’s rights are accounted for; it does not assess child poverty indicators. It cites a number of reasons for taking this approach, one being that there is generally a time lag between increases in public spending on children and changes in child poverty outcomes.

### *So how does one evaluate impact?*

The conclusion is that in order to assess the impact of budget initiatives, one needs to understand that their effectiveness is observed over time, through cumulative efforts, and only when they are accompanied by complementary activities. For example, a single analytical report on child poverty and budgets is not likely to have a significant change in social policy. But several such reports, each one building on and improving the other with deeper evidence and analysis, with concerted advocacy efforts at different levels of government, would be more likely to influence policy decisions. As another example, one of the shortcomings of the Australian gender budget initiative was its failure to engage civil society groups, including by making results accessible, which resulted in a lack of external pressure to hold the government accountable.<sup>30</sup>

### *Commonly observed results from successful initiatives*

Another conclusion is that while the impact of budget initiatives depends on the final outcomes achieved, a consequence of conducting the exercises over time is that they build capacity and skills, establish dialogue and debates on policy issues, and mobilize human and organizational resources. These consequences may not be the explicitly stated objectives of all the initiatives, but they form an important aspect of influencing policy, as follows:

- *Establishing a policy dialogue on children’s rights and gender:* By virtue of mobilizing efforts around budget-related issues, analysts, activists and advocates accomplish the task of raising the profile of gender, social equity and children’s rights in policy debates. This brings a new dimension and balance to the content and discourse of policy debates, and lays the foundation for further dialogue; it establishes an analytical/theoretical base as well as the basis for institutional reform. In addition, such a dialogue affects the dynamics and structure of interaction between the state

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

and civil society on issues of economic and social policy and public resources, which enhances participation and enables sustainability of reforms.

- *Mobilizing human and organizational resources:* Importantly, the range of budget initiatives and their partnerships, involving government at national and sub-national level and parliamentarians as well as economists, sociologists, gender advocates, and human rights activists, all show that a diverse array of actors, skills, capacities and organizational resources are mobilized. These efforts illustrate the will and capability that can be marshalled within both state and society to influence legislation, state institutions, and public finances towards social equity objectives.

### 4.3 *Suggestions for further action*

#### *Improving State Party reports through civil society cooperation*

In the State Party reporting guidelines<sup>31</sup>, under Articles 19 and 20, State Parties are required to indicate “any initiatives taken in cooperation with the civil society ... and any mechanisms developed to evaluate progress achieved,” as well as “arrangements for budgetary analysis enabling the amount and proportion spent on children to be clearly identified.” These imperatives should be followed up more concretely. States Parties should report on budget analyses conducted in partnership with civil society. Technical skills in budget analysis should be mobilized to produce relevant analyses.

Under Article 45(a) of the Convention, the Committee on the Rights of the Child may invite specialized agencies, UNICEF and “other competent bodies,” including NGOs, to provide expert advice on the implementation of the Convention. The Convention thus expressly gives NGOs a monitoring role. NGOs and experts who are involved in budget analysis and advocacy should be encouraged to participate in State Party reporting.

#### *Enhancing quality and availability of data*

An important aspect of improving State Party reporting is for States to obtain and use better quality data. Improvements in data availability, disaggregation, and accuracy will improve the monitoring efforts for all actors.

#### *Using benchmarks linked to international development goals*

Another part of the solution is to revise the benchmarks used to measure progress. For example, as the Committee on the Rights of the Child<sup>32</sup> has commented, the ‘20/20 Initiative’ is one such benchmark. However, since it was initiated in 1995, progress on 20/20 has tapered off. Other internationally agreed development targets, such as the Millennium Development Goals and the World Fit for Children agenda, are currently more relevant and useful, and can help to guide monitoring efforts.

#### *Tracking multiple indicators, taking a multi-disciplinary approach*

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<sup>31</sup> General guidelines for periodic reports. November 20, 1996. CRC/C/58.

<sup>32</sup> *Children’s Rights: Turning Principles into Practice* (2000). UNICEF and Save the Children. Essay 10.

The analytical approach should be multi-disciplinary and cross-thematic. It should focus on addressing the links between laws, policies, and budgets, within the economic, social, cultural, and political context of the country, and its regulatory and legal framework. An example of a cross-thematic issue is the privatization of healthcare services in developing countries and its impact on AIDS orphans.

*Studying the impact of economic policies on children's rights*

Macroeconomic policies have an important effect on children's well-being, and can set the constraints under which the Convention has to be implemented. This is an issue that has been raised by the Committee. However, the relevant analysis is generally limited, and needs to be increased and improved. For example, the negative influence of economic recessions on children's nutrition levels and school enrolment is well documented. But when fiscal and monetary policies are geared towards excessive budget surpluses or high interest rates, which constrain spending on social sectors, their cost in terms of children's rights being jeopardized is often neither mentioned nor measured.

*Monitoring PRSPs requires dialogue between government ministries...*

An analysis of how the government proposes to finance sectors such as social security, child protection, healthcare, etc. under the PRSP would illustrate the commitment of the government to its plans for poverty reduction. Since the PRSP process is largely led by the ministry of finance, economic development, or planning, it becomes critical for line ministries to gain a seat at the negotiating table and participate effectively, that is, with knowledge of how economic and fiscal priorities play out and how children's rights can be made central in the goals.

*...which distributes accountability for children's rights across ministries ...*

Greater dialogue between the finance ministry and line ministries on the above issues is critical for several reasons. It would bring greater detail and clarity in State Party reporting on budgetary allocations. It would distribute the responsibility for answering to questions on social sector spending to both line ministries and the finance ministry. It would engage the finance ministry on issues of equity and rights more substantively, and distribute accountability for children's rights more equally across government entities.

*... and strengthens NPAs and NDPs.*

In the context of assessing NPAs and NDPs for children, purposeful dialogue between ministries would raise the profile of children's rights and bring clarity to rights-based approaches in the government planning process.