



First introduction to

Working for Child Rights

from a budget perspective

**STUDIES & EXPERIENCES
FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES**



Save the Children

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Save the Children
Sweden

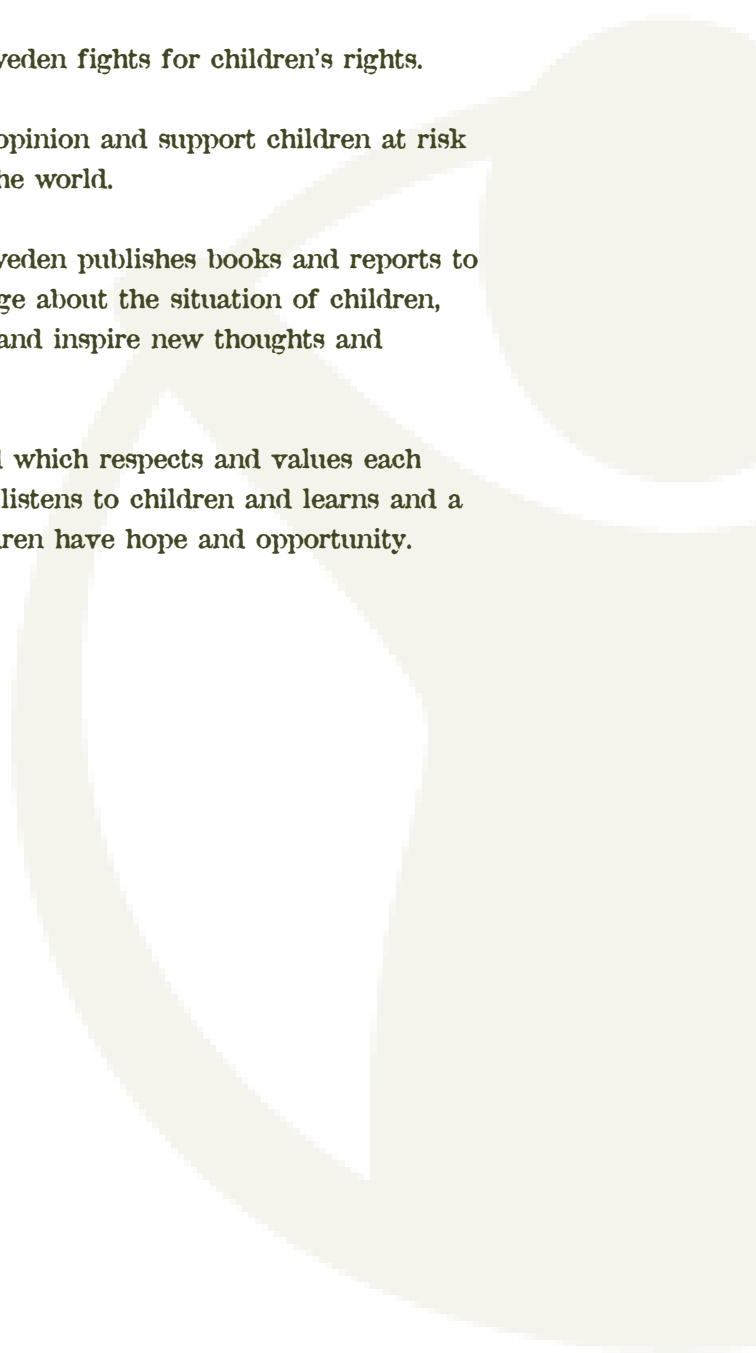


Save the Children Sweden fights for children's rights.

**We influence public opinion and support children at risk
- in Sweden and in the world.**

**Save the Children Sweden publishes books and reports to
disseminate knowledge about the situation of children,
to provide guidance and inspire new thoughts and
discussions.**

**Our vision is a world which respects and values each
child, a world which listens to children and learns and a
world where all children have hope and opportunity.**



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Sweden

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A number of key resources were pivotal in preparing this document. These include *Monitoring government budgets to advance child rights: a Guide for NGOs* (2003), *Child Budget Analysis Training Manual* (2002), *Budgeting for child socio-economic rights* (2001) and *Methodology Guide for a Child Budget Study* (2000), all published by the Idasa Children's Budget Unit (CBU) in South Africa.

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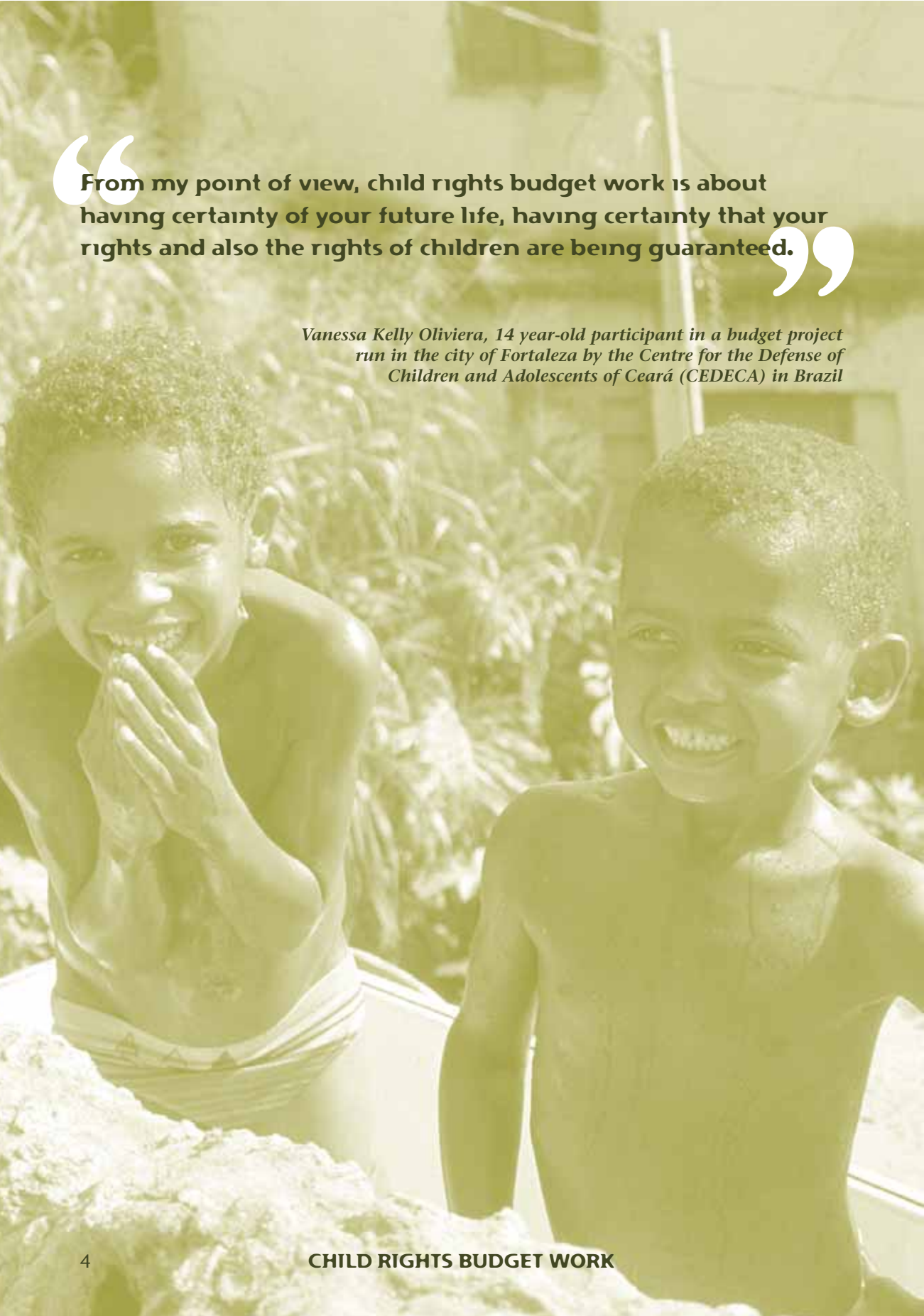
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“From my point of view, child rights budget work is about having certainty of your future life, having certainty that your rights and also the rights of children are being guaranteed.”

Vanessa Kelly Oliviera, 14 year-old participant in a budget project run in the city of Fortaleza by the Centre for the Defense of Children and Adolescents of Ceará (CEDECA) in Brazil

INTRODUCTION

This booklet is about a particular way of working for children's rights. It introduces you to practitioners in different countries who are monitoring the implementation of children's rights from a budget perspective. As a shorthand term, the booklet refers to this approach as child rights budget work.



In this booklet, you can:

- Find out what it means to do child rights budget work.
- See why child rights budget work is a valuable tool for advocacy.
- Gain an overview of the various aspects of work involved in this terrain.
- Learn from the insights and experiences of child rights advocates and researchers working with this approach in different countries.

Civil society organisations around the world are developing many new avenues to engage with their governments and to hold them accountable. Child rights budget work forms part of this endeavour. It emerged out of collaboration between child rights advocates, researchers and economists with an interest in children and their rights. It has informed and sharpened the debate around how governments use their resources to deliver benefits and services to boys and girls. In a nutshell, child rights budget work has become a powerful means to monitor governments' commitment to children.

Against this background, this booklet is intended for:

- Child rights advocates and organisations who would like to know more about budget analysis as a tool to complement their work.
- Researchers with an interest in children's issues who want to build stronger bridges between research and advocacy.
- Economists who would like to find out how budget analysis can be used to advance children's rights.

The aim of this booklet is to offer an introduction to child rights budget work. It invites you on a brief tour of this exciting and relatively new way of working for children's rights. It also hopes to put you in conversation with those doing child rights budget work in other countries.

This booklet is intended as a springboard for further interest and learning about child rights budget work. You can build on the basic information provided here by making contact with the practitioners and researchers listed in the back of the booklet and by reading some of their reports and publications.

For anyone about to undertake a child rights budget study, we strongly recommend *Monitoring government budgets to advance child rights: A Guide for NGOs*, compiled by Judith Streak and published by Idasa in 2003.

The availability, allocation and delivery of resources is so important to realising the rights of disadvantaged children. Resources aren't everything, but without them things rarely change no matter how great the plans or strategies are.



Anne Crowley, Wales

This booklet consists of three sections:

PART 1: SNAPSHOT OF THE TERRAIN

Part 1 gives a quick overview of child rights budget work. It looks at the principles that guide this approach. It explains how child rights budget work is used in advocacy and how it can impact on the lives of children.

PART 2: INSIGHTS EMERGING FROM PRACTICE

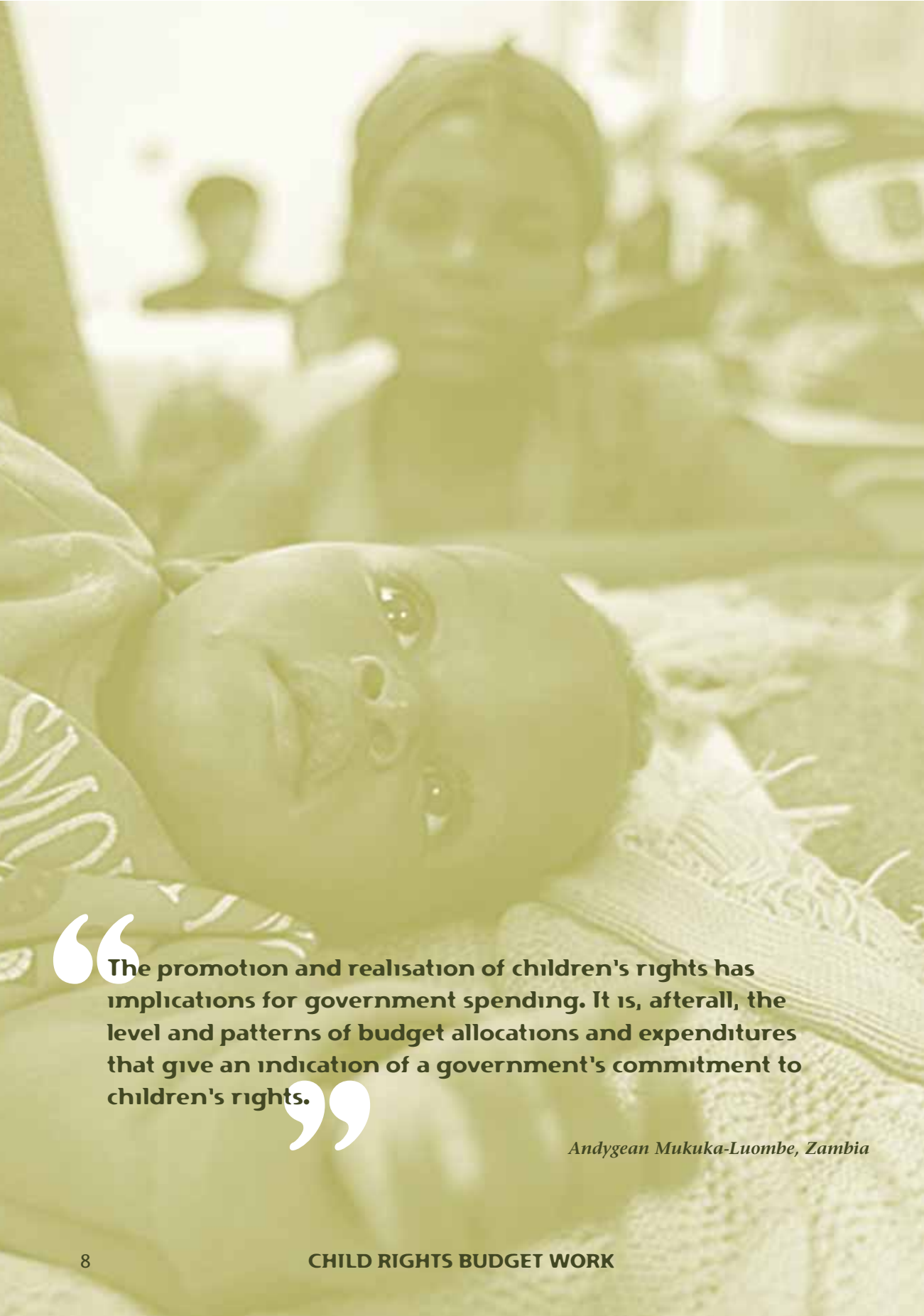
Part 2 draws on the work of various child rights budget projects around the world. It identifies eight areas of focus that have been spotlighted by practitioners in different countries. It outlines what kind of work is involved in each of these focal areas.

OVER TO YOU

This short section offers ideas and suggestions for those who would like to embark on a child rights budget study of their own. It also provides a list of useful resources and contacts to get you started.

Throughout the booklet, you will come across examples of child rights budget studies and ideas from those doing child rights budget work in different countries. The studies were conducted mostly between 2000 and 2004 in Angola, El Salvador, Peru, South Africa, Sweden, Vietnam, the West Bank/Gaza and in Zambia. The work was carried out by different teams in the various countries, initiated by local civil society organisations and/or child rights networks. The studies were supported by Save the Children Sweden (SCS) as part of its International Child-Focused Budget Project. SCS also promotes interaction and exchange between those doing child rights budget work in different parts of the world. SCS and other members of the International Save the Children Alliance continue to support child rights budget work in several countries, including – in addition to those above – Mozambique, Brazil and Zimbabwe. Practitioners in all of the countries mentioned above have contributed in some way to this booklet.





“The promotion and realisation of children's rights has implications for government spending. It is, after all, the level and patterns of budget allocations and expenditures that give an indication of a government's commitment to children's rights.”

Andygean Mukuka-Luombe, Zambia

PART 1

This part of the booklet addresses the following questions:

- What is child rights budget work?
- What kind of people do child rights budget work?
- Where is this kind of work being done?
- What principles underpin child rights budget work?
- How is child rights budget work used as a tool for advocacy?



Snapshot of the terrain terrain

What is child rights budget work?

Child rights budget work is an approach to monitoring the implementation of children's rights in a specific context - usually a country, province or district. It combines two existing areas of work in a new way:



Monitoring children's rights

Child rights organisations have long played an active role in monitoring. In many countries, they keep watch over child rights violations and advocate for policies or practices that protect, promote and fulfil children's rights. Some child rights organisations also monitor how well their governments are providing for the needs of children in the country. They have asked questions like:

- What progress has government made in fulfilling the rights of children?
- How has the situation changed for children and what further action is most urgent?



Analysing government budgeting

Economists have a long track record of analysing government budgets. Traditionally, they have looked at budgets through a macro-economic lens: tracking trends in economic growth, productivity, inflation, taxation and so forth. Some economists also monitor the way governments manage and use public resources. They have asked questions like:

- How well is government managing the country's money on behalf of the people it serves?
- How is government using its budget each year to meet the country's needs?

MONITORING CHILD RIGHTS FROM A BUDGET PERSPECTIVE

Child rights budget work draws from both traditions above. It looks at the relationship between children's rights and government budgeting. It asks questions like:

- How well is government managing and using the country's money to realise children's rights?
- How is government using its budgets to give priority to children and their most urgent needs?

It makes sense to take a serious look at government budgets if you are interested in the implementation of children's rights. After all, it usually costs money to deliver a right. Most rights only become a reality for boys and girls once they take the form of actual services and benefits. Governments need to allocate resources to delivering such services and benefits – and this allocation takes place through the budget process. Governments also need to spend resources well and fairly if they are to make progress in fulfilling the rights of every child. So when a government is committed to children's rights, this commitment should be reflected in its budgets.

This is not the only reason why government budgets provide a useful mirror of what is happening in relation to children's rights in a country. The budget – especially in developing countries – has to create a careful balance between the needs that exist in a country and what a government can afford to deliver. In this sense, government budgets also show what priority is being given to children's rights compared to other competing needs and demands.

In a nutshell, then, child rights budget work provides a way of looking closely at government budgets to see what they reveal about the implementation of children's rights. There is no single model for doing this kind of work, although it generally involves both research and advocacy. By examining the nuts and bolts of government budgeting, child rights budget work helps to sketch a detailed picture of how - and how well - a particular children's right is being implemented. This, in turn, makes it all the more possible to identify what specific interventions and changes are needed to speed up the delivery of this right to all children.

Budget analysis gives rights-based organisations the opportunity to raise the issues of inequality and the mismanagement of resources... and to advocate for the proper utilisation of resources and for children's access to resources.

Obaidur Rahman, Bangladesh



Who does child rights budget work?

In most countries, child rights budget work has involved a new kind of collaboration amongst child rights advocates, economists and others. It offers an excellent vehicle to deepen the discussion amongst all these parties and to integrate their strengths through a shared initiative. At heart, child rights budget work is about producing research that is informed by advocacy and about undertaking advocacy that is informed by research.

Traditionally, economists and child rights advocates have spoken different 'languages', each with its own vocabulary and jargon. They have looked at the implications of developmental and social policies through different lenses, usually finding it difficult to step into one another's point of view. This division allows little room for economists and child rights experts to communicate constructively and work together around a common agenda.

An economist may not be in a position to comprehend why there is a need to allocate so much to vulnerable children, while a child rights advocate may not understand the limitations to available resources. For child rights budget work, you need a balance between the two.



Petronella Mayeya, Zambia

Child rights budget work provides a frame of reference for collaboration between child rights advocates, economists, development practitioners, human rights lawyers and others with an interest in children. Children themselves can participate in child rights budget work and enrich the entire initiative when they do so. It does call for openness, from all concerned, to learning new concepts and using new tools. For example, undertaking a child rights budget study asks of non-economists to get to know and use a range of basic budget concepts and economic terms. Learning to speak the economic language can be a valuable asset for child rights advocates to engage with economists and policy-makers on their own turf. At the same time, economists who take part in a child rights budget study will have to learn the child rights language and build an understanding of its basic principles and concepts. Child rights budget work also draws from other kinds of expertise. For example, development specialists can add to the shared vocabulary by fostering greater insight into concepts like child poverty and child vulnerability.

Our experience in Fortaleza proved you do not need to be an economist to do child rights budget work. By the conclusion of the project we knew more about budgeting than many politicians around here who are supposed to know about the subject.

Andrei da Costa, 17 year-old participant in a budget project run by CEDECA in the city of Fortaleza, Brazil



Different child rights budget studies call for different combinations of skills and levels of expertise. Depending on the exact scope and nature of the project, there may well be some aspects of the analysis that are best undertaken by economists. There may be other parts that require specialist knowledge of a particular children's issue (like child labour or education, for example). The project may also call for expertise in the interpretation of rights, advocacy strategies, policy reform, programme evaluation, demographic data analysis or participative workshops – to name but a few possibilities. Ultimately, the design of a child rights budget study will determine what inputs and contributions it best requires.

Child rights budget work can thus include all kinds of people in a truly multi-disciplinary team. It empowers those involved to build better and more convincing arguments in the interest of children – and to do so in a language that compels decision-makers to take the message seriously. In this way, child rights budget work can help take the development debate to a new level.

I don't think you need to be an economist to do child rights budget work – but a certain level of economic literacy is required. For example, one has to be able to interpret the implications of monetary and fiscal policies and relate this back to children's issues.



Bob Muchabaiwa, Zimbabwe

Child rights budget studies around the world: some examples

This booklet introduces you to others who have done child rights budget work around the world. It draws from the following studies conducted in different countries. Please look at the reference list at the back of this booklet to find the authors' names and full publication details of these studies.

El Salvador
Education and Working Children in Soyapango and Tacuba: A study of the financial resources allocated to children in El Salvador

Peru
• *Children...first? A Peruvian Child-Focused Budget Study – A Study of Public Social Expenditure Targeting Children in Peru: 1990 – 2000*
• *Children...first? Volume II – How much did the Peruvian Government spend on boys, girls and adolescents, 2001 – 2003*

Brazil
Children and Adolescents in Action – a Participatory Budget

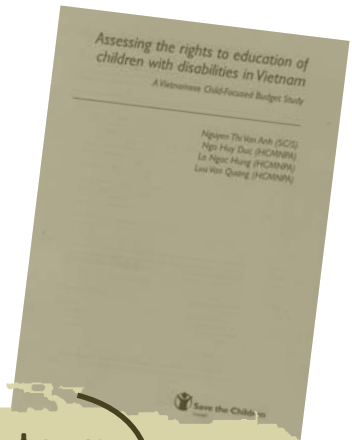
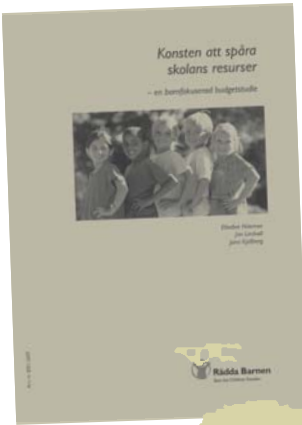
El derecho a la educación de la niñez y adolescencia trabajadora en el presupuesto nacional y municipal

Review of Humanitarian Assistance to Angola through the UN Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal: A Child Rights Perspective

Criança e adolescente em ação, orçamento com participação

Sweden

The Art of Tracking Educational Resources: A Swedish Child-Focused Budget Study



Vietnam

Assessing the Rights to Education of Children with Disabilities in Vietnam: A Vietnamese Child-Focused Budget Study

Gaza / West Bank

Dollars and Cents for a Better Childhood: Palestinian Child-Focused Budget Study



Angola

Review of Humanitarian Assistance to Angola through the UN Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal: A Child Rights Perspective

South Africa

- *First Call: The South African Children's Budget*
- *Where Poverty Hits Hardest: Children and the Budget in South Africa*
- *Are Poor Children Being Put First? Child Poverty and the Budget 2000*
 - *Budgeting for Child Socio-Economic Rights: Government Obligations and the Child's Right to Social Security and Education*
 - *Monitoring Child Socio-Economic Rights in South Africa: Achievements and Challenges*



ZAMBIA'S Commitment to Children's Rights:

the Budget Perspective

Zambia

- *Zambia's Commitment to Children's Rights: The Budget Perspective*
- *Children and the Budget in Zambia (a popular version of the above publication)*

What principles underpin child rights budget work?

Child rights budget work is informed by the following general human rights principles:

UNIVERSALITY	All people hold exactly the same rights at all times, wherever they live in the world and whatever their circumstances
INDIVISIBILITY	All human rights are equally important, inter-dependent and inter-related. No one right can be sacrificed for the sake of another.
PARTICIPATION	All people have the right to participate in political and cultural life. They should be able to impact on decisions that affect them.
ACCOUNTABILITY	When a state promises to implement a set of rights, it becomes accountable to its citizens and the rest of the world for doing so.

Against the background of these general human rights principles, the key document that guides all child rights budget work is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC has four umbrella provisions that create an overall framework for children’s rights:

NON-DISCRIMINATION Article 2	All rights apply to all children without any exceptions or exclusions. The state must protect children from discrimination. It has a duty to implement the rights of all children without discriminating unfairly against any child.
BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD Article 3	In all actions concerning the child, his or her best interests should be the most important consideration. The state must give serious attention to what is best for children in all its decision-making, planning, policies, laws, programme design and delivery.
THE CHILD’S RIGHT TO SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT Article 6	The state has a duty to protect the life of each child and to support all children to develop to their full potential. This includes physical, cognitive, emotional, social, cultural and spiritual development.

**THE CHILD'S RIGHT
TO BE HEARD**

Article 12

All rights apply to all children without any exceptions or exclusions. The state must protect children from discrimination. It has a duty to implement the rights of all children without discriminating unfairly against any child.

There is an overlap between the general human rights principles and those framing the CRC. For example, the child's right to survival and development is closely linked to the indivisibility of rights: for children to develop their full potential, all rights are equally important and dependent on one another. The right of children to express their views, as outlined in the CRC, is echoed by the general principle of participation. Taking these overlaps into account, the following five building blocks can be seen as the foundation of child rights budget work:

All children have the same rights.
Children's rights are universal: no child may be discriminated against or be excluded from the implementation of rights

Children have the right to participate and be heard in issues affecting their lives.

The best interests of the child are paramount

To survive and develop, children are entitled to see all their rights realised.
Children's rights are indivisible and inter-dependent

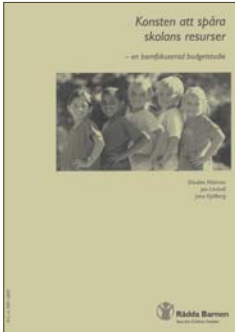
When a state has ratified the CRC, it is legally obligated to deliver children's rights

On the following pages, you can see how each of these building blocks is applied in child rights budget work.

Note: The discussion of core child rights principles in this section is strongly informed by the following resource from the International Save the Children Alliance: *Child Rights programming: How to apply rights-based approaches in programming* (2002).

All children have equal rights

Child rights budget work monitors the extent to which governments respect the universality of rights. In other words, this approach can be used to examine how well a government is realising the rights of *all* children – or conversely, whether its policies or programmes discriminate directly or indirectly against any category of children.



e.g. The child's right to education in Sweden

A Swedish child rights budget study – *The Art of Tracking Educational Resources* – was undertaken in 2001. It took as its starting point the CRC principle of non-discrimination: *that all children have the same rights*. The study was posed to find out whether the government in Sweden was delivering the right to education to children in keeping with this principle. To answer this question, the study investigates how government was budgeting for education through the compulsory school system at national, municipal and local level. The aim was to see whether and how decentralisation and cutbacks in resources had affected schools in Sweden – and whether it had affected all schools in the same way. Two municipalities – Malmö and Sandviken – were chosen for closer comparison. The municipalities were compared to see how their social structures varied and what differences there were between them in terms of spending on education. The study found that the decentralisation of schooling in Sweden had brought about variation and inequity in the provision of education from one municipality to another. Children living in different municipalities were not enjoying the same quality of education: a contravention of the principle of non-discrimination under the CRC.

All beings have the same rights and the obligation to fight for them. Not only economists can know about budgeting, but all humanity, because the budget is not a seven-headed monster.

Vanessa Kelly Oliviera, 14 year-old participant in a CEDECA project involving adolescents in budget work in the city of Fortaleza, Brazil

Children are entitled to see all their rights realised

Child rights budget work recognises that children should enjoy all their rights. In practice, governments rarely have the resources available to give equal attention or weighting to all rights. It would be unrealistic to expect that governments, especially in developing countries, can implement all children's rights in full at once. Child rights budget work can be used to identify and monitor what 'package' of rights is being prioritised in government budgeting – and to uncover what implications this has for other child rights.



e.g. **The interdependence of child rights in South Africa**

The Children's Budget Unit in South Africa produced a study in 2004 - *Monitoring Child Socio-economic Rights: Achievements and Challenges*. The study did not look into all children's rights: it chose to focus on four specific socio-economic rights (the child's right to nutrition, health care, social security and education). Across these four areas, the study highlighted how the non-realisation of one child right often had a detrimental impact on other child rights. For example, when a child is not enjoying his or her right to adequate income or nutrition, this often means he or she is less able to participate effectively in education. It showed that children were forced to trade off one right for the sake of other rights: a clear contravention of every child's right to develop his or her full potential. For example, in the case of child-headed households, many older children had given up their right to education in order to go out and work to support their younger siblings.

Children's best interests come first

Child rights budget work provides a useful framework for understanding this important principle of the CRC. It takes a serious look at what it would mean for a government to think first and foremost about the best interests of the child in all its actions concerning children. It is difficult to think of an area of government action that does not concern children: all kinds of government decisions, policies and programmes impact on children in one way or another. So in one sense, this principle directs governments to give first thought to children's best interests in all its decision-making, planning, programme design and implementation. Not everyone will agree with this interpretation. But at the very least, it seems fair to say that governments should - as far as possible - give priority to children's best interests in their planning, budgeting and service delivery. They should also be careful when they design and implement programmes for boys and girls to make sure that their interventions do no direct or indirect harm.



e.g. **Children's rights and national priorities in West Bank/Gaza**

A child rights budget study was undertaken in West Bank/Gaza in 2000, by the Secretariat of the National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children, supported by Save the Children Sweden. The aim of the study was to initiate national discussion on the challenges facing Palestinian children and to advocate for giving children's interests higher priority in policies, plans and budgeting of the Palestinian National Authority. The study found that the vast majority of ministries responsible for issues concerning children were generally under-funded and considered non-priorities. Security, infrastructure and economic policy had been the priorities during the time period of the study: but not the rights of children. The study suggested that public spending on the implementation of children's rights in Palestine should be seen as fundamental inputs for a successful nation. This meant that the Palestinian National Authority would have to think about and set budget priorities in a new way to advance children's best interests.

Children have the right to be heard

Child rights budget work can be used as an effective vehicle for voicing children's own views and opinions. In most countries, it would be highly unusual for government to consult with children in the process of drafting its budgets. At the same time, such budget decisions have a profound impact on the services and opportunities that children enjoy. Children generally have no avenue to influence how their government spends their country's resources – and are rarely even aware that they have a right to do so. Child rights budget work can serve as a bridge between children and government.

e.g.

Children's right to participate in Brazil

The Centre for the Defence of Children and Adolescents of Ceará (CEDECA) in Brazil began monitoring the country's budget process in 1999. It has worked to educate citizens - including children and adolescents - on the importance of budget issues. For example, CEDECA invited adolescents to take part in analysing the budget of Fortaleza, a city with over 2 million people. The young people between the ages of 12 and 18 took part in intensive training about the budget system and process, as well as the challenges facing their city. They researched and documented the needs of youth in various parts of Fortaleza. They learnt how to analyse municipal budgets and interpret the results. The young participants made a number of interesting discoveries - such as allocations to a graveyard that didn't exist and that meals for primary schools were budgeted at only 5 cents per pupil. The adolescents used the information and knowledge they gathered through the process to engage with the formal budget-making process of the Fortaleza city government. They submitted and presented budget amendments to the city government and succeeded in increasing spending on children and youth in the city.



“Our politicians want everyone to believe that finances, budgets and numbers are too complicated for common people to understand. I am here to prove that teens are fully capable of grasping what kinds of decisions are being taken and what the consequences are.”

Ana Cristina Viera, a 15-year old participant in a budget project run by CEDECA in the city of Fortaleza, Brazil (cited in Barn, Save the Children Sweden 2003).



Governments are accountable to children

In child rights budget work, the analysis of government budgets is grounded explicitly in a child rights framework. This is because child rights instruments, like the CRC, place certain legal obligations on governments to take action to improve the lives of children. The CRC recognises that boys and girls are the holders of rights – and that governments are duty-bearers. They are not simply *expected* to deliver children’s rights, they are *obligated* to do so. When a government has ratified the CRC (and this includes all countries except the USA and Somalia), it can be called to account – by its citizens and the international community - and asked to explain what progress it has made in implementing children’s rights. Child rights budget work is geared to inform this discourse between governments and their citizens. It produces information that can help to reflect how well government has fulfilled its obligations to children.



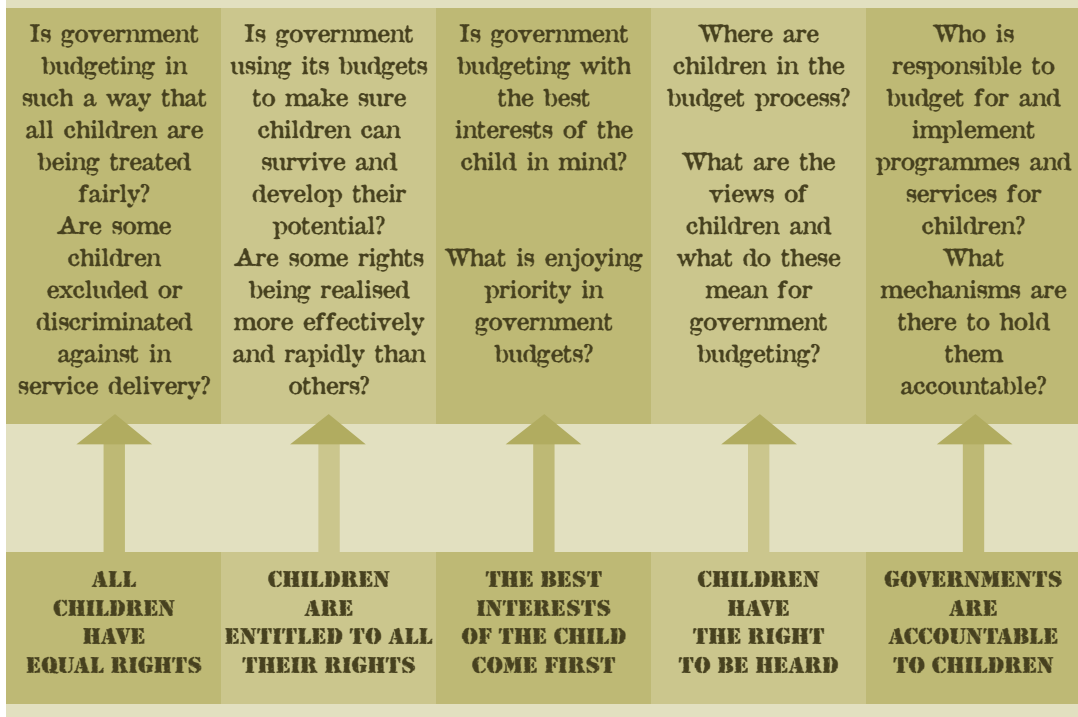
e.g. The obligation to fulfil children’s rights in Vietnam

A child rights budget study was undertaken in Vietnam in 2002 - *Assessing the rights to education of children with disabilities in Vietnam*. The study gave a detailed overview of where children featured in the political and legal institutional framework. It described the main national policies affecting children in Vietnam. The study team also looked carefully at the fiscal and budget systems in Vietnam and explained how the budget process worked. It then investigated the education system and how government budgeted for the delivery of primary education. In this way, the study helped to clarify exactly how, when and by whom decisions were made around resource allocations that would affect children’s right to education. This was an essential step in understanding who in government could be held accountable for implementing a specific child right and which different role-players influenced the process at different stages.

While undertaking a budget study economists should liaise closely with people with knowledge on good governance. They should also try to work closely with NGOs and CBOs or other relevant partners working with children’s rights. Involving youth and children in the research will also add a great deal of value.

Monica Lindvall, Ethiopia

Child rights budget work builds on the five core principles by asking questions about the way a government uses public resources



“Duty bearers can argue good intentions, but if these aren't reflected in resource allocations (and in mechanisms to ensure the resources get to where they are meant to), they are often rather meaningless in terms of advancing children's rights. Consequently budget analysis is a key tool (a 'must have') for child rights advocates.”

Anne Crowley, Wales



What does the CRC say about government budgeting?

On the basis of the CRC, governments can be held accountable for making progress in the delivery of children's rights. As this booklet has shown, when a government is indeed making progress in turning child rights into real benefits and services for children, this should be reflected in its budgeting. But what exactly would we expect to see in governments' budgets when they are committed to children's rights? How much is a government *meant* to spend on service delivery to children? How quickly is it expected to reach *all* its children and make sure they enjoy *all* the rights contained in the CRC?

The CRC does not answer the questions above in absolute terms. It recognises that different countries face different challenges and resource constraints – and that it would be impossible for all governments to realise all children's rights overnight. Instead, the CRC allows for the *progressive realisation* of children's social, economic and cultural rights. In other words, countries are expected to *make progress* in delivering these rights to all children over time. The CRC also says all states are obliged to undertake everything that is necessary to make progress in realising children's rights, *to the maximum extent of available resources* and, where needed, with the help of the international community.

For practitioners working on child rights budget projects, it has been important to think carefully about what these provisions of the CRC mean in terms of government budgeting. Clearly, the CRC leaves leeway for different countries to implement child rights in keeping with their own laws, development challenges and economic conditions. Does that mean that a country is free to make very slow progress in implementing children's rights and simply say that it can't afford to do so any quicker? Human rights experts argue that governments can in fact be held accountable for the way they use public resources once they have ratified a rights treaty.

States are under an obligation to use budgets – and society's resources – to implement programmes to give effect to the CRC (and to other rights). Hence, resource allocations and spending by governments must be tracked and monitored.

Judith Streak, South Africa

So what are governments obligated to do?

The following points are highlighted in a guide from the Children's Budget Unit in South Africa:

- Even though governments are not expected to realise children's rights overnight, this does not give them an excuse *not* to allocate any resources to this purpose.
- Instead, governments should be able to show that they are giving priority to children's rights when they decide how to allocate the country's resources.
- Governments are obligated to do as much as possible, as quickly as possible to implement children's rights taking into account all the resources they have available and using these as effectively as possible.
- Governments should give priority to the rapid delivery of basic core services and should make progress in upgrading these until all children's rights are fully realised.
- A government cannot take steps backwards by, for example, taking away services that give effect to a child right or reducing the quantity or level of services provided.
- If a government is not delivering at least a minimum core of services to meet children's rights, it has the onus to prove that the necessary resources are not available.
- Where children's rights are not being fully realised, a government must be able to show what plans it has made and how it will use its resources to deliver these rights in future.

Source: The information in this box has been adapted from *Monitoring Government Budgets to Advance Child Rights: A Guide for NGOs* (2003) by Judith Streak. Cape Town: Idasa.

The state has an irrevocable responsibility to guarantee the human rights of children... It is important for civil society to participate in the definition and implementation of programmes to deliver these rights. However, it is through active participation in the drafting and monitoring of public budgets that the intended actions to apply these rights universally will be determined.

Neiara de Morais, Brazil



How does budget work support advocacy for child rights?

The budget is one of the most powerful tools a government has at its disposal. A country's budget reflects what priorities its government has chosen for the coming period. It translates a government's promises and policy choices into taxes and spending plans. In this way, a government's budget decisions affect the everyday lives of its citizens: it influences where people work and live, what transport they use, what health care is available when they are sick, what education their children receive and so forth (Robinson & Biersteker 1996: 19-20).

To transform children's everyday lives, it is therefore almost always necessary to bring about changes in budgeting. To impact on this process, child rights advocates need to understand how their government budget works, what policies and programmes enjoy budget priority, where resources have been allocated and how they will be used – as well as the implications of all this for children.

Child rights budget work provides a useful framework for developing such an understanding. It can be used to look at past, current and future budgets to uncover government's budgeting choices and patterns and to build an argument around improving the implementation of child rights:

Child rights budget work is used to investigate government budgets...

Past budgets

The current budget

Upcoming & future budgets



to see how spending on children has changed over time and whether this shows a positive, negative or turbulent trend



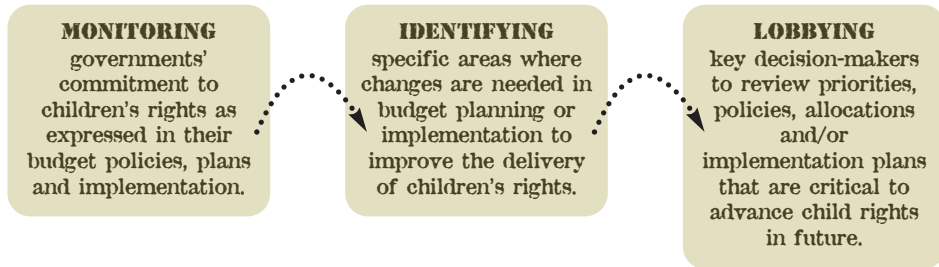
to see what has been allocated to policies and programmes affecting children and to monitor their implementation



to see how government is planning to deliver to children in the future and to identify what changes are feasible

...in order to generate information and build an argument that will influence decisions.

Child rights budget work is geared to produce findings that are detailed and practice-orientated. This in turn gives civil society a firm foundation to advocate for specific changes that will speed up the delivery of child rights or enhance the quality of existing services to children. In this way, child rights budget work is a vehicle for:



Using research to inform advocacy

The information flowing from a child rights budget study can be presented and communicated in various formats, depending on the audience you have in mind. For example, the findings generated by studies in different countries have been used in the following ways:

ENGAGING WITH CITIZENS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

- Holding workshops to demystify the budget and build budget literacy
- Producing easy-to-read popular resources to spark public interest in the budget and children's rights
- Empowering people to participate in the budget process and ask questions
- Holding briefings with child rights advocates on key budget issues and trends
- Mobilising broader civil society participation in budget debates and campaigns

ENGAGING WITH GOVERNMENT

- Meeting with government officials to discuss and motivate particular policy alternatives and their costs
- Campaigning for specific, urgent interventions for vulnerable children and those at risk
- Developing training curricula for government officials on budgeting for children's rights
- Influencing government to make the budget more transparent and accessible
- Developing child-sensitive budgeting guidelines and lobbying government ministries to apply them when budgeting for programmes aimed at children
- Lobbying for the right to information and good governance

ENGAGING WITH ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

- Preparing submissions to parliamentarians or councillors on the forthcoming budget and its implications for children
- Conducting pre-election campaigns to call for the inclusion of children's issues in political parties' manifestos
- Monitoring parliamentary sessions to see how much time and debate is dedicated to children's rights and programmes
- Involving children themselves in formulating and lobbying councillors for amendments to budget proposals
- Organising Q&A sessions for civil society to participate in parliamentary budget debates

ENGAGING WITH THE MEDIA

- Preparing press releases on critical budget issues for boys and girls
- Encouraging the media to provide more regular and substantial coverage of budget issues as they relate to children and their rights
- Hosting or participating in budget discussions on television or radio

Using research to inform further monitoring

Child rights budget studies do not only generate information for advocacy. The studies undertaken so far have served as a foundation or framework for teams in different countries to undertake more extensive and/or continuous monitoring to advance children's rights. So for example, the insights gained through child rights budget studies have been used:

- to establish an observatory for civil society to monitor public social expenditure on children and to develop relevant indicators;
- to track how allocations to programmes affecting children change over time and monitor shifts in children's access to resources;
- to identify critical points in the budget cycle and/or levels of government budgeting most in need of future monitoring; and
- to decide which child rights, geographical areas and/or category of children are most urgently in need future budget monitoring.

Essentially, the budget reflects the 'real' policy priorities of a government, which is the subject of all child rights work.

Ngo Huy Duc, Vietnam

The best way to get the needs of children met is to influence national priorities and consequent resource allocations.

Bob Muchabaiwa, Zimbabwe

Budget analysis helps to advance children's rights because it reaches the source of the problem: the budget. It is here that the amounts spent on education, on health and leisure is determined and as such, it is here that a more direct claim can be made.

Andrei da Costa, 17 year-old participant in CEDECA's project involving adolescents in budget work in Fortaleza, Brazil



“Each child rights budget initiative must find its own best practice. However, to find the best way to carry out child rights budget work in a country, much can be learned from the thinking and practical work going on in other countries.”

Comment made at the Southern African, “Imali ye Mwana”, child rights budget network meeting in Pretoria, October 2003

PART 2

This part of the booklet explores what is being done in the terrain of child rights budget work in different countries. It identifies eight focal areas where child rights budget practitioners are shining the spotlight:

- The situation of children
- The legal framework for children's rights
- Government policies and programmes put in place for children
- Understanding how budget systems and processes work
- Budget input analysis: what is being allocated to and spent on children?
- Budget output analysis: what goods and services are being delivered to children?
- Assessing budget outcomes and impact
- Highlighting important issues for advocacy



What is the scope of child rights budget work?

Child rights budget work is an evolving approach. It has been applied in different ways in different countries. After all, the child rights situation and budgeting systems vary from country to country. At the same time, those involved in child rights budget work learn from one another and continue to develop new insights and methodologies. There is thus no single recipe or model for doing child rights budget work. For those interested in planning a child rights budget study of their own, it is not always easy to know where to start.

This part of the booklet takes a more precise look at the kinds of questions that have been tackled through child rights budget studies. Looking across the terrain, it draws examples from various countries to show what is emerging from

FOCUS 1

Children

What is the situation of children in this country/province/district/city?

FOCUS 2

Children's rights

What is the legal framework for children's rights – internationally, regionally and in this country?

Rights principles that inform every aspect of study

FOCUS 8

Change

How can government use it budgets better to advance child rights?
What are the key issues for advocacy right now?

FOCUS 7

Budget outcomes and impact

What has changed for children and what progress has been made in the realisation of child rights?

practice. The aim is to provide some food for thought about the different components and kinds of research that might be taken up in designing and preparing a child rights budget study. This booklet does not explain in detail how to go about conducting the research itself (see the resource list at the end for some pointers on this front). The ideas and examples on the following pages are simply intended as a springboard for getting started – drawing from the experiences of those who have been involved in working for child rights using this approach.

Currently, the terrain of child rights budget work can be seen to include eight key areas of focus. Not all child rights budget studies cover all eight areas. Yet looking collectively at the studies undertaken thus far, the majority of practitioners have turned the spotlight on some – and a few on all – of the following eight focal areas:

FOCUS 3

Govt measures

What laws, policies, programmes and plans of government have an impact on children here?

- ▶ Universality of child rights
- ▶ Indivisibility of child rights
- ▶ The best interest of the child
- ▶ Children's right to be heard
- ▶ Accountability to children

FOCUS 4

The budget

How does the budget system and the budget process work in my country?

FOCUS 5

Budget input analysis

What is government allocating to and spending on programmes that impact on children/on programmes that advance a particular child right?

FOCUS 6

Budget output analysis

What services and benefits are being delivered to children? How efficiently and effectively are they delivered?

Doing child rights budget work in different contexts

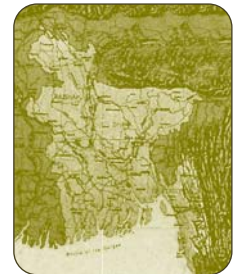
Child rights budget studies are designed to suit the needs of different contexts. When an organisation or network decides to undertake such a study, there are often particular concerns or issues they hope to investigate or address. Child rights budget work provides a flexible framework that can be used by practitioners to serve diverse aims and pursue different advocacy agendas. Every country has its own political, socio-economic and development dynamics: so each study faces a different set of circumstances within which to engage in the debates most crucial and suited to their place and time. The examples of child rights budget work in this booklet reveal different choices about the following issues:

Choosing a specific child right or a range of child rights

It would be very difficult, if not impossible, to track *all* children's rights in a single child rights budget study. Every right calls for careful and time-consuming investigation. Including too many rights in a study would therefore mean that none of them can be well researched. Several child rights budget studies have chosen to monitor a single right, while some others have looked into a set of four or five rights.

For example, child rights budget studies in Sweden and Vietnam focussed their attention specifically on the child's right to education. In Peru on the other hand, the first child rights budget study tracked spending in relation to the child's right to education, health, nutrition, well-being and justice.

Organisations have to decide for themselves which child rights issues they would like to focus on and see reflected in the budget. At first, an organisation might choose to commission a small study on a specific thematic issue – and then use that study to see how a child rights-related issue can be tracked in the budget.



Obaidur Rahman, Bangladesh

Choosing a particular category or group of children

Many child rights budget studies set out to monitor government's progress in delivering a right or number of rights to *all* children in a given country. However, child rights budget work has also been used to highlight the delivery of rights to a specific category of vulnerable children or to all children in particular geographical area, such as a province, district or municipal area.

A study may choose to focus on vulnerable children

There is no single definition of vulnerable children. In different contexts, child rights budget practitioners may choose to focus their work on one or more of the following categories or groups of children:

- Children living in poor and chronically poor households, particularly child-headed households;
- Children with disabilities;
- Children infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS;
- Boys and girls in need of protection, particularly those who have been abused or abducted, or are subject to commercial sexual exploitation;
- Children living and working on the streets;
- Boys and girls being exploited through unfair labour practices;
- Internally displaced children;
- Child victims of foreign occupation, emergency situations or war;
- Children accused or convicted of crime; and/or
- Those living in institutions rather than in parental care

Choosing areas of focus

Looking at the chart on pages 32 – 33, there is a logical flow between the areas. For example, it would not make sense to begin analysing budget inputs and outputs without first understanding the legal framework for children’s rights and the policies and programmes that impact on children. However, not all child rights budget studies begin with a focus on the situation of children: in some instances, there may already be good overviews available. Not all studies include focus 4, explaining how the budget system and process works: while this is an essential component in first time studies, it makes less sense to repeat it in every study afterwards. Not all studies include focus 6 and focus 7: it is not always possible to access the data needed to tackle these focal areas - and the analysis required here can be complex.

Thus depending on the availability of data and research capacity, different child rights budget studies have included varying combinations of the focal areas. When a child rights budget study is undertaken for the first time in a country, it is often wise to focus attention on areas 1 to 5, as well as 8.

Choosing a level of analysis

The eight areas of focus involve different levels of analysis. To understand the legal framework for children’s rights in a country, studies have looked at international and regional rights treaties and, where appropriate, the country’s own constitution. Policies and programmes that impact on children may be set in place at national and/or at lower levels. In many ways, the nature of the budget system in a particular country has determined what levels of analysis were needed. For example, in highly decentralised systems, where programmes are budgeted for and delivered at local or municipal level, studies have directed their analyses here. Where budgeting is strongly centralised, the national level has required more attention. In countries where development aid plays a big role in government budgets, studies have also looked towards the flow of donor funds.

Focus 1: What is the situation of children?

Many child rights budget studies begin by outlining the situation of children in their particular country, province, district or city. Such an overview might include, for example:

- Basic demographic information about the child population
- Data on child poverty and/or vulnerability
- Data on a chosen category of children, such as girl children, working children or those without parental care
- A breakdown of the most important problems facing children
- More detailed information on a chosen aspect of children's lives, such as their health, education or nutrition status
- Information from children themselves about the way they experience their situation
- Contextual information about factors or trends that contribute to the situation of children and undermine progress in bringing about lasting improvements to their lives.

The situation of children has often been a useful starting point in child rights budget work because it allows a study team to establish right up front:

- why there is an urgent need to implement children's rights (or a specific child right)
- the extent to which children's rights (or a specific child right) are not being fulfilled at present, and
- what it means for boys and girls when their rights are not realised.



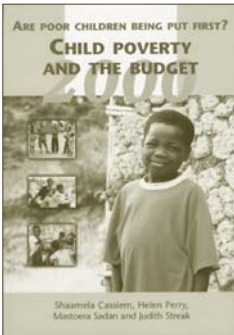
e.g.

Gathering information from children themselves

A child rights budget study was done in El Salvador in 2001 – *Education and Working Children in Soyapango and Tacuba*. The study made use of child participation workshops in two municipal areas – one rural and one urban. The aim was to gather first-hand information from a critically vulnerable category of children in El Salvador: urban and rural working children. The input from the children was incorporated into a profile of working children in each municipality: highlighting schooling trends and work activities, as well as the risks and priorities facing them. The study revealed that children were often conditioned to work from a young age and were largely excluded from education and health services, as well as other social programmes that could contribute to their development. The participative approach used in the study allowed children to play an integral role in defining their own situation, rather than treating them as an object of analysis.

“Children bring a different perspective to budget analysis, allowing those who are generally only ‘the beneficiaries’ to be heard. Their participation in budget work helps us to shift from a culture of doing for the child to one of doing with the child.”

Neiara de Morais, Brazil



e.g. Creating a child poverty profile

The Children’s Budget Unit in South Africa included child poverty profiles in a number of their studies. In *Child poverty and the Budget 2000*, a range of indicators were used to track various dimensions of child poverty, including income poverty, health and nutrition status, education status, as well as physical and economic vulnerability. Together, these indicators helped to construct a multi-faceted profile of the level and extent of poverty amongst children. Later studies have used both statistical data and child participation to profile child poverty in South Africa. For example, in *Monitoring child socio-economic rights in South Africa: Achievements and challenges* (2004), quantitative information is presented on income poverty and hunger amongst children. This picture of child poverty is complemented by the views and opinions of children themselves on what it means to be poor, drawn from four focus groups living in different kinds of vulnerable circumstances and parts of the country.

Focus 2: What is the legal framework for child rights in my country?

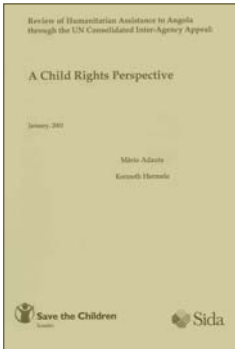
Child rights budget work is a tool for holding governments accountable for their progress in implementing children's rights. As such, many child rights budget studies include a section outlining exactly what rights children have in their given context and where relevant, more detailed information on the nature of these rights. Such an outline may involve a review of the rights given specifically to children and those afforded to everyone (including children) via international, regional and national legal instruments. It might also outline any additional legal rules and regulations that govern the implementation of a particular right, such as the child's right to nutrition or to protection from economic exploitation.

For example, the analysis in this section of a study might track a specific child right or set of child rights through some or all of the following:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict
- The Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
- Rights afforded to children (along with everyone) in other international rights treaties, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
- Child-specific or human rights included in regional treaties, like the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
- Rights afforded to children (or to everyone) in a country's bill of rights or constitution
- National laws or codes governing the delivery of a specific right in a country
- The United Nations' Millennium Development Goals as they relate to the country or child right under scrutiny.

Using the CRC as a primary frame of reference

The CRC was adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 1989. It is the most important international agreement protecting children's rights. All countries in the world have signed the CRC, showing their support for the spirit of the convention. In addition, all countries except the USA and Somalia have ratified the CRC, meaning that these countries undertake to implement the contents of the convention. Once a country has ratified the CRC, it becomes legally obligated to obey its provisions and implement the rights it contains. This means that the CRC can be used as a frame of reference for almost any child rights budget study.



e.g. CRC core principles and humanitarian aid in Angola

A child rights budget study in Angola, conducted in 2000, set out to analyse the humanitarian assistance provided to the country under the auspices of the *UN Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal*. The study took as its starting point the four core principles of the CRC (see pages 16 – 17 of this booklet). It then examined if and how well the funding and delivery of humanitarian assistance to Angola had served to promote and protect each of these four principles. So for example, had humanitarian aid been delivered in such a way that children's best interests were protected? Had efforts been made to identify the most vulnerable of children?

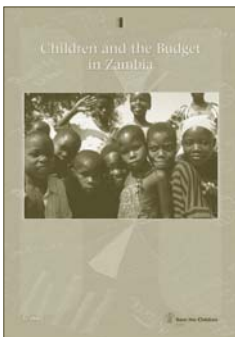


Looking at other international and regional legal instruments

Any number of international or regional conventions or treaties may be relevant to a particular child rights budget study. For example, studies that have a specific interest in children's socio-economic rights have taken into account, besides the CRC, also the provisions of ICESCR, the United Nations Declaration on the Millennium Development Goals and the United Nations Report of the General Assembly 27th Special Session (UNGASS). Studies concerned with the rights of working children have given special attention to the International Labour Organisation's Convention 138 on Child Labour. In certain cases, regional rights treaties may include further specific commitments to children's rights.

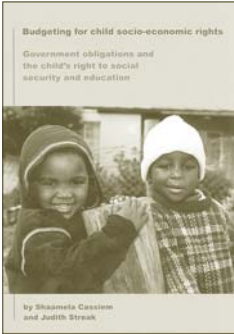
Considering national constitutions, laws and codes

To uncover the legal framework for children's rights in a given country, it may also be important to explore its own constitution or any other national legal instrument that give definition to the rights of citizens. In some instances, the rights afforded to citizens by a country's constitution or bill of rights may be more or less detailed than those given via international and regional conventions. National instruments may also include more specific information about a particular child right and/or about the obligations on government to deliver the right to children (or to everyone).



e.g. **Tensions and ambiguities in Zambia's legal framework for child rights**

The first child rights budget study was conducted in Zambia in 2003. It reviewed the rights given to Zambian children by the CRC, by the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and by the Zambian Constitution. The study drew attention to the fact that socio-economic rights were formulated as directive principles in the Zambian constitution, thereby calling into question what this meant for children. The study also included an overview of the main legislation in Zambia that impact on children, highlighting contradictions and ambiguities between the CRC and the national legal framework for children.



e.g. **The legal obligations to deliver children's rights in South Africa**

The 2002 child rights budget study in South Africa was called *Budgeting for Child Socio-Economic Rights*. It aimed to establish what socio-economic rights children have in South Africa – and exactly what obligations were placed on government to deliver them. It considered the relevant international and regional conventions and married this with a detailed look at South Africa's own bill of rights, as contained in the country's constitution.

In so doing, the study develops a thorough understanding of the multi-layered legal framework governing the implementation of child socio-economic rights in South Africa.

“Find out what is known about the content of the child rights (or right) in question and the associated state obligations. It is a good idea for the analysis of budgets to be driven by what the legal obligations require government to do by way of programming, allocating and spending.”



Judith Streak, South Africa

Focus 3: What policies and programmes are in place which impact on children?

In this focal area, child rights budget studies look at the implementation field:

- What development strategies and policies influence the implementation landscape?
- What promises and plans has a government made to translate children's rights into reality?
- What specific programmes are in place to deliver protection, benefits or services to boys and girls?

Broad development strategies and agreements

In order to understand the context within which child rights are to be delivered in any country, it is useful to consider the broader development approach that has been adopted by its government. Many child rights budget studies take a look at their government's macro-economic policy or developmental approach, highlighting some of the dynamics that shape the implementation of children's rights. This might include tracking foreign aid or trade agreements that a country has entered into – and the implications these may have for children. The analysis here might take into account international lending or grant assistance that calls for the adoption of a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). This is usually a requirement for countries to qualify for debt relief via programmes such as the Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative.

National plans of action

Many countries have developed specific plans or strategies to implement children's rights. In some countries, this takes the form of a national plan of action for children. It is in plans such as these that governments set out how they aim to bring about the extension or fulfilment of child rights in their country. In fact, the CRC places a duty on countries to explain exactly how they intend to reach the goals of child survival, protection and development. National plans of action for children therefore usually include specific targets or goals that a government has set and committed itself to delivering. As part of this focal area, child rights budget studies have looked at the content and scope of their governments' plans in relation to child rights. In some instances, the promises made in such plans have been used as a framework for evaluating a government's progress.

Specific policies and programmes

An important part of any child rights budget study is to identify specific government policies and programmes that advance the rights of children (or a specific child right) in a given country. This essential step allows the study team to pinpoint which programmes and policies should form the basis of its budget analyses in focal areas 5 to 7. So, for instance, if a study aims to monitor government budgeting for the child's right to health, the task under focus 3 would be to identify all the current policies and programmes that, either directly or indirectly, serve to advance the health status of children. This lays the groundwork for focus 5, when allocations to and expenditure on these policies and programmes will be analysed.

e.g. Strategies, plans and programmes that impact on children's rights in Zambia

Zambia's Commitment to Children's Rights: the Budget Perspective (2003) provides a good example of all three aspects of this focal area. In this study, the Zambian research team provided an overview of Zambia's macro-economic situation. The study reviewed Zambia's national plan of action for children, listing the targets adopted by government to improve children's livelihoods. The study went on to identify the specific programmes government had set in place to deliver health, education and welfare services to children. It went on to analyse government's budgeting for these programmes over a ten year period, highlighting the perpetual gaps between planned and actual expenditure on children in Zambia. It showed how uncertainty over donor funding made it difficult for government to use the budget as an effective tool for translating its child development targets into service delivery for children. The attention given to focal area 3 in this study helped to create greater insight into the dynamics and tensions affecting progress in the implementation of children's rights.

**ZAMBIA'S
Commitment to
Children's Rights:**

the Budget Perspective

Child rights budget work is a versatile approach to analysing government budgets and monitoring budget implementation. In some contexts, practitioners can focus on the budget itself and advocate for specific measures or policies that are important for children. In other contexts, this approach can for example be used to analyse and monitor how well government budgets are linked to a country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and/or National Plan of Action (NPA) for children. PRSPs and NPAs that are not backed by realistic budgets may end up merely as wish-lists.

Anna Schnell, Sweden

Focus 4: How does the budget system and process work in my country?

To monitor government budgeting for the implementation of children’s rights, it is naturally essential for a study team to have a firm grasp of how budgets are made and managed in their country, district or municipal area. All child rights budget studies have therefore involved a close look at the budget system and process in a particular context. However, this knowledge is not only useful to the study team itself. It has also been used to help create broader public understanding of the budget, to build budget literacy and to encourage civil society participation in the budget process.

WHAT IS GOVERNMENT BUDGETING?

Governments have to budget in much the same way as households do. Like most households, governments have limited amounts of money to meet all the needs and wants before them. They have to make choices and decide which needs are more important or urgent than others. They have to plan how much they are able to spend against how much income they expect to earn over a period of time. The annual government budget is a plan of how to balance expected government income against expected expenditures over the coming financial year. It is important to remember that a government is meant to budget on behalf of its people - including children.

When starting out with child rights budget work, there is a need to develop a good understanding of the budget process, especially its formulation and implementation. Budget formulation and implementation is an important factor affecting the delivery of public services. If budgets are misallocated, services that children need may not get adequate levels of funding.

Andygean Mukuka-Luombe, Zambia



It is important to understand the different components of the budget, how the budget is monitored and how budget priorities are determined... Then you need to think laterally: What suggestions can we explore for increasing the budget, bringing about greater efficiency in its use, greater transparency, children's participation, and so forth?



Richard Hartill, Colombia

Budget systems and levels

Most child rights budget studies provide an overview of the budget system in their country: this is the system by which public resources are allocated, recorded, monitored and accounted for. Many countries have adopted a multi-year budget system, usually referred to as a Medium Term Expenditure Framework. This kind of budget system enables governments to build stronger links between their policies, planning, spending and service delivery. In general, a good budget system should ensure that spending, on the whole, is affordable for the country over the medium term. The composition of spending should also reflect the government's policy priorities and objectives. The system should have checks and balances to see that money is used economically, efficiently and to the best effect or result possible.

A critical area for all child rights budget studies has been to find out at what level budgeting takes place for the programmes they wish to monitor. Budget resources and decisions are centralised or decentralised to varying degrees in different countries. For example, a study focussing on the child's right to health, first has to establish at what level of government resources are allocated to health services for children – and at what level spending on these services is then recorded, monitored and accounted for.

Uncovering the budget system: pointers emerging from practice

To gain an understanding of budget systems and levels, child rights budget studies have addressed questions like:

- What are the different spheres or levels of government in our country: national, provincial/state, local?
- What are the main responsibilities and powers of each level of government?
- Where does government get its income from? In other words, what are the sources of government revenue in our country?
- At which level of government is revenue collected?
- How is revenue divided up and distributed amongst the different levels of government?
- Which level of government is mainly responsible for providing social services (health, education, social assistance and welfare) and basic services (water and sanitation) and electricity to children?

The budget process

Each country has its own budget process that is informed by its own political and economic history. Yet, in general, the budget process in most countries reflects variations of the following four main stages:



Source: This chart is informed by a more detailed overview of the budget process in *Monitoring Government Budgets to Advance Child Rights: A Guide for NGOs* (2003), by Judith Streak. Cape Town: Idasa.

Investigating the budget process: pointers emerging from practice

In child rights budget work, an understanding of the budget process has helped study teams to address questions like:

- Are children's rights given priority in our country's budget process and if so, at which stage?
- Are the rights of children taken into account in the budget formulation stage? If so, how is this reflected in government's budget proposals?
- How reliable and useful is the budget information made available by government during the budget cycle? At which stage is more or better quality information most needed?
- Do members of parliament consider the implications of the budget for children?
- Can civil society organisations bring a child rights perspective into budget debates in the legislatures?
- During budget implementation in our country, how are departments and levels of government meant to report on their progress?
- What happens in our country when public money has not been spent as planned and authorised?



Knowing the budget process and how transparent it is, or not, is a vital key to child rights budget work.

Anna Schnell, Sweden



Child rights budget studies have looked into the budget system and process in their own contexts in different ways – and to varying degrees of detail. Sometimes this focal area has been allotted its own section of the study; in other instances, it is subsumed as part of the broader budget analysis.



e.g.

The budget system and process in Vietnam

The Vietnamese child rights budget study included a detailed overview of the country's budget system and process. It looked at the laws governing the budget system and described the budget responsibilities of all four levels of government: central, provincial, district and commune. It explained the four stages of the Vietnamese budget process (drafting, ratification, implementation and adjustment) and analysed the structure of the state budget in terms of revenue and expenditure. The study also drew attention to the regulations on budget transparency that form part of the Vietnamese budget reform programme. This overview created insight into the systems and processes that determine budgetary allocations, in particular to education and more specifically towards education for children with disabilities at the primary level. Unpacking the budget levels, system and process in clear logical structure also helped to demystify and explain a critical government process that was previously shrouded against public scrutiny in Vietnam.



e.g.

Guide to the Palestinian budget

The Palestinian child rights budget study included a brief 'Guide to the Palestinian National Budget'. The guide tracked the budget reforms implemented after the Palestinian National Authority assumed control over public finances in the West Bank and Gaza, focusing specifically on the legislative amendments to budget law during this period. The budget guide also explained the Palestinian budget process in each of its four stages.



e.g. **The national and municipal budget system in El Salvador**

In El Salvador, the child rights budget study team sketched a detailed picture of the national budget and budgetary process. They described the degree of centralisation of the budget system, the main components of expenditure and the key role-players involved in each phase of the national budget process. The study also looked at central government's deficit and tax revenue over the period 1995 to 1999. It went on to provide a similar overview of the municipal budget process, role-players, expenditure components and revenue trends.

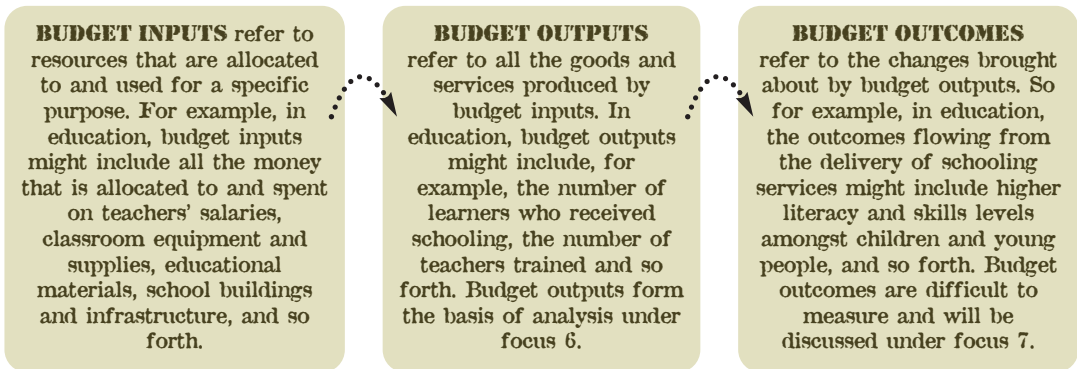


e.g. **The budget system and division of revenue in South Africa**

The 1996 South African study, *First Call*, gave an overview of the budget system and process, explaining the structure of the budget by programme and economic classification. It also described the inter-governmental fiscal system, whereby spending on social services is largely the responsibility of provincial governments and spending on basic services that of municipalities. In *Child Poverty and the Budget 2000*, the study analysed the division of revenue between the three spheres of government and asked whether the formula used to divide provincial revenue amongst South Africa's nine provinces was sensitive to poor children's needs. The 2001 study, *Budgeting for Child Socio-Economic Rights*, reviewed government's macroeconomic and revenue projections to establish what could be considered 'the maximum extent of available resources' – a key variable when interpreting the obligation placed on governments by the CRC.

Focus 5: Budget input analysis – what is being allocated to and spent on children?

Child rights budget work provides a framework for looking at government budgeting in terms of budget inputs, budget outputs and budget outcomes:



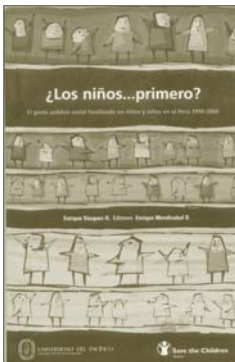
When analysing budget inputs from a child rights perspective, study teams have given attention to one or more of the following key questions:

- How much is government allocating to and spending on programmes that advance the rights of children in a broad sense?
- How is government budgeting in relation to specific child rights – for example in relation to health, education, shelter and/or adequate water?
- How well is government targeting its budget inputs to benefit vulnerable boys and girls?

Spending on children: the broad picture

It is impossible to track *all* the allocations in government budgets that impact on children. This is because some spending on children is 'hidden' in expenditure that benefits people in a more general way. For example, government spending on roads will have advantages for children: it may mean that some children can get to school more easily, or reach hospitals or clinics when they need them. Yet this spending category cannot easily be analysed from a child rights perspective: it is difficult to say what portion of spending on roads will ultimately translate into progress in fulfilling children's rights. So what spending categories are then the most evident and important to take into account when trying to sketch a broad picture of government budgeting for children?

Most child rights budget studies have looked at *social sector spending* as a good basis for analysing government budgeting for children in a broad sense. Social sector spending is generally seen to include budget inputs to programmes in the areas of health, education, welfare, social and community development, housing, nutrition, justice, sport and recreation. In addition, some child rights budget studies have also looked carefully at *spending on the delivery of basic services*, such as water, sanitation and electricity. It is argued that these categories of spending are those most likely to bring direct advances in the implementation of children’s rights, especially their socio-economic rights.



e.g. Social spending on children in Peru

The first Peruvian child rights budget study in 2001 was called *Children...First? A study of public social expenditure targeting children in Peru: 1990 - 2000*. The study constructed a detailed and composite picture of public budgeting for children – with the aim of uncovering to what extent government regarded children as a priority. It examined total public expenditure and total social spending targeting children in Peru, before taking an in depth look at each of the sectors of health, basic sanitation, nutrition, education, social welfare and the administration of justice. In spite of data limitations, the study aimed to identify what share of spending in each of the sectors above could be seen to target children. It also highlighted a range of programmes in each sector that were particularly important for children. The study compared trends in spending on these programmes, showing shifts in priority over time. It also illustrated how advances for children in some areas were mitigated by a lack of progress in others. The Peruvian child rights budget study thus built up a multi-faceted and broad view of government budgeting to advance child rights.

Spending in relation to a specific child right

Budget input analysis is especially well-g geared to track government spending in relation to a specific, clearly defined child right. Particularly in the case of socio-economic rights, it is often possible to identify a designated area of government spending that correlates well with a given child right. For example, children’s right to education is primarily advanced via government spending on education. Thus many child rights budget studies have used the broad picture sketched above as a backdrop to tracking budget inputs that deliver a particular child socio-economic right.

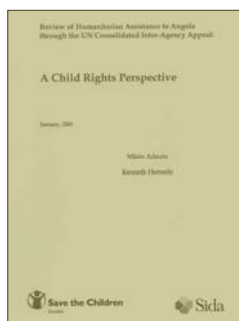


e.g. Budget inputs to education in Sweden

The Swedish study – *The Art of Tracking Educational Resources* (2001) – focused its budget analysis on the education sector. It examined education expenditure from a national perspective, analysing spending per learner in terms of the costs of teaching, premises, school meals, materials and student welfare over the period 1992 to 1998. It then considered the declining expenditure provision for student welfare and for specialist teachers. Moving onto the municipal level, the study compared expenditure per learner amongst municipalities, showing how these varied between northern and southern Sweden and between the major cities and rural municipalities. Focussing on two municipalities as case studies, it then analysed economic trends and spending on education in each: total cost per learner, costs for student welfare, spending on teaching materials, equipment and school libraries, information technology for learner use, teaching costs, as well as spending on school meals and school premises. The study clearly highlighted the extent of differentiation in spending on education between the two municipalities. This in turn illustrated the weakening link between central government budget and policy goals and decentralised education provision.

Spending targeted to vulnerable children

Budget input analysis has also been used to monitor government spending on an identified group or category of vulnerable children. Again, it is not always easy to track what portion of government spending on all children will ultimately benefit vulnerable children in particular. However, study teams have found various ways to analyse budget inputs in a way that sheds light on children in vulnerable circumstances.



e.g. **Humanitarian assistance and children in Angola**

The Angolan child rights budget study analysed the spending trends in humanitarian assistance to Angola in 2001. It was particularly interested to see how aid funds had advanced the rights of vulnerable children, particularly those displaced by war. It examined what proportion of total resources within the 2001 Inter-Agency Appeal was directed to advance the four foundation principles of the CRC. Through the analysis, the study team showed that the funding of food security enjoyed overwhelming dominance in the UN Appeals, limiting funding to other key rights for children. The study pointed out that interventions for children - particularly as regards protection, health and re-unification with families - were chronically under-funded. It argued that the bias in favour of food aid in the UN Appeal reflected donor preferences rather than the priorities of children themselves.

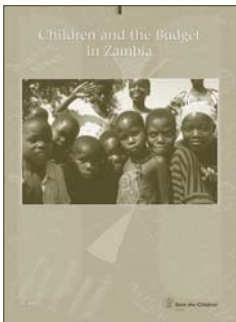


e.g. **Poor children and the distribution of spending in South Africa**

In *Budgeting for Socio-economic Rights*, the South African child rights budget study used poverty data to consider whether government was distributing its budget inputs to target those children most in need. The analysis of government spending on education and social security looked not only at how much was spent, but also how spending varied across provinces. This was then compared with the distribution of poor children in South Africa, to show whether the provinces with the most poor children were also, for example, the provinces spending most on delivering social security grants to children.

The importance of looking at allocated and actual expenditure

To monitor governments’ budget inputs, it has been important for studies to consider both the amounts budgeted for (or allocated to) child-related programmes, as well as the amounts actually spent on these programmes. Budgets are not always spent exactly as planned: a certain degree of variation is to be expected. Yet sometimes there may be large and persistent discrepancies between what a government plans to spend on children – and what it actually does spend. This kind of discrepancy might mean that during budget implementation, funds were being re-directed away from the programmes for which they were intended and used for other purposes. But it could also mean that a government’s budget planning was unrealistic: that it had allocated more money to programmes for children than it would have available for spending later on.



e.g. Gaps between planned and actual spending in Zambia

In the Zambian child rights budget study, the budget input analysis looked at government spending on education, health and child welfare programmes between 1991 and 2001. The analysis showed that the amounts government had allocated to these programmes were consistently a great deal higher than the amounts actually spent – and that the gap between allocated and actual expenditure had grown wider since 1991. The study explained that when government drew up its budget plans each year, it was never sure exactly how much money it would have available for spending in the following year. Government’s projections of available revenue generally included large amounts that it expected to receive from donors during the following year. When these donor funds were withheld, government did not have the necessary money available to implement its allocations as planned.

“In most cases, the available data are not disaggregated for gender, ethnicity, diversity and geographical location... It is also very challenging to separate out child rights-related information from the broader spectrum of the budget.”

Obaidur Rahman, Bangladesh



Sometimes the possible sources of information (such as government or the central statistics office) do not want to share data and other information needed to take child rights budget work forward. Other times the information is not available anywhere – it does not exist. Then there are times when data and information are widely available but not presented in an understandable way...



Comment made at the Southern African, “Imali ye Mwana”, child rights budget network meeting in Pretoria, October 2003

Working with budget documents: pointers emerging from practice

In order to analyse budget inputs, child rights budget practitioners need reliable budget data. This is often described as one of the biggest challenges of doing child rights budget work in a rigorous way:

- The accuracy, quality and timeliness of budget information differ from country to country. In some countries, good budget information is published on a regular basis, including information on a government’s past budget performance and future plans. In other countries it may, for example, be difficult to find regular data on actual expenditure that is consistent and reliable.
- Diverse formats and classification systems make it even more difficult to grapple with government budget data. For example, budget entries may be listed by expenditure programme, by economic classification (current or capital expenditure) or by standard item

classification. Child rights budget studies, when conducted for the first time, have generally used the budget listing by expenditure programme for analysis. This is the simplest classification type to use – and lends itself most readily to identifying inputs that will result in services to children.

- To further complicate the task, government budgets rarely break down their expenditure per target group. So for example, it is not usually possible to see exactly how much of government spending on hospital services, for example, translates into hospital services *for children*. In budget terms, this is described as budgets that are not *disaggregated* for children. Many child rights budget studies have advocated for better budget data, and for such data to be disaggregated to show what is being targeted to children.

Measuring the social expenditure targeted at children was a real challenge. No public institution had an information system that allowed you to do it.

Enrique Vásquez, Peru



Focus 6: Budget output analysis – what is being delivered to children?

Child rights budget studies do not always extend to this focal area. As the previous pages have shown, there are already many challenges attached to analysing budget inputs in a thorough way. The data and information needed to analyse budget outputs is sometimes even more difficult to find and less comprehensive or reliable. However, where it is possible to do so, child rights budget studies can gain an added dimension by investigating the outputs produced for children through government spending. There is a logical flow between analysing budget inputs and budget outputs:

Budget INPUT analysis

Now that you know how government has allocated and spent funds on children...



Budget OUTPUT analysis

What goods and services were produced for children by using budget inputs in this way?



It makes sense to ask

Budget output analysis aims to uncover the *efficiency* of government spending on children. In economic terms, spending is seen as efficient when fewer resources are used to produce the same output or when the same level of resources is used to produce greater output. In other words, budget output analysis asks *how well* government has used the resources it had available for children. In this vein, a government that is using its budget efficiently should be able to make progress in implementing children's rights - even when it has no leeway to allocate an ever growing share of the budget pie to children.

In child rights budget work, this focal area thus calls on the study team to assess how and how well a government is delivering services to children. It may ask whether government's delivery to children is in line with the rights contained in the CRC and/or with the targets set in national policies or action plans for children. More specifically, budget output analysis has been used to address questions like:

- Has service delivery expanded to reach larger numbers of boys and girls?
- Has there been an improvement in the quality of services delivered to children?
- Do children have equal access to services and if not, is access becoming more equal over time? (Cassiem & Streak 2001: 46-47)



e.g.

Considering the number of beneficiaries reached

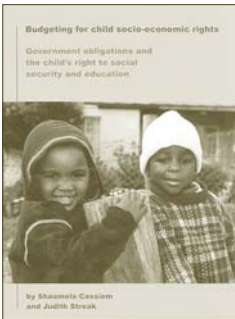
The Vietnamese child rights budget study in 2001 had a special focus on the education rights of children with disabilities. It included a case study on children with disabilities of primary school age in the Vinh Tuong district, Vinh Phuc province. The study looked at the socio-economic characteristics of the province and provided an overview of education provision in the district of Vinh Tuong. It presented statistics on primary education, and more specifically, analysed those relating to primary education for children with disabilities (disaggregated by type of disability). The study team then took a closer look at the expenses associated with providing inclusive primary school education to children with disabilities at three primary schools in the district. The analysis investigated the links between budget inputs (financial and human resources, for example teachers) and budget outputs (the number of learners with disabilities receiving inclusive primary education). In this way, the study constructed a basis for considering how budget inputs could be increased or used more efficiently to advance the education rights of children with disabilities.



e.g.

Gathering information about the quality of budget outputs

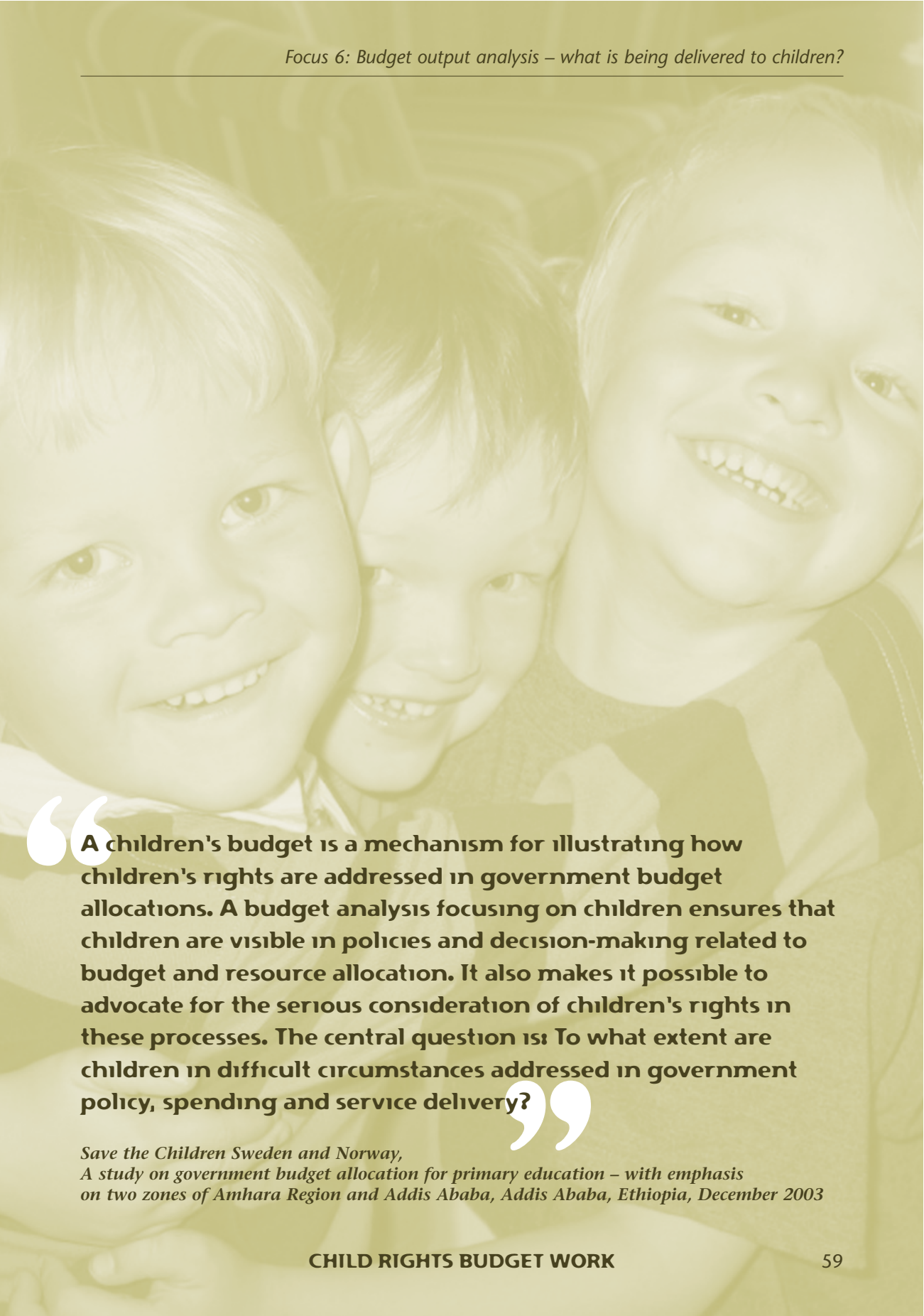
The Swedish child rights budget study had the aim of monitoring whether the provision of education in Sweden was consistent with the CRC principle of non-discrimination. It included a case study comparison of education provision between two municipalities - Malmö and Sandviken. As noted on page 52, the budget input analysis in this study compared a broad range of quantitative data relating to expenditure on education between the two municipalities. The results of this analysis were complemented by a qualitative analysis of information gained from questionnaire surveys at seven schools. The survey results highlighted children's concerns with inadequate recreation premises, insufficient numbers of adults in schools and the limited participation of children in school decision-making.



e.g.

Investigating the equity of budget outputs

The fourth South African study, *Budgeting for Child Socio-economic Rights* (2001), analysed budget outputs to children in the social security and education sectors. For each sector, the study considered whether budget outputs for children had increased in quantity, in quality and in equity. So for example, in the education sector, the analysis not only asked whether *more* children were receiving schooling and whether the quality of schooling was improving. It also investigated whether education services were being delivered without discriminating against any children. To see whether the delivery of education to children was equitable, the study investigated whether children in different parts of the country enjoyed equal levels of access to schooling. It also looked at trends in access to education for learners with special needs and for early childhood development to ascertain whether budget education outputs were discriminatory or not.



“A children’s budget is a mechanism for illustrating how children’s rights are addressed in government budget allocations. A budget analysis focusing on children ensures that children are visible in policies and decision-making related to budget and resource allocation. It also makes it possible to advocate for the serious consideration of children’s rights in these processes. The central question is: To what extent are children in difficult circumstances addressed in government policy, spending and service delivery?”

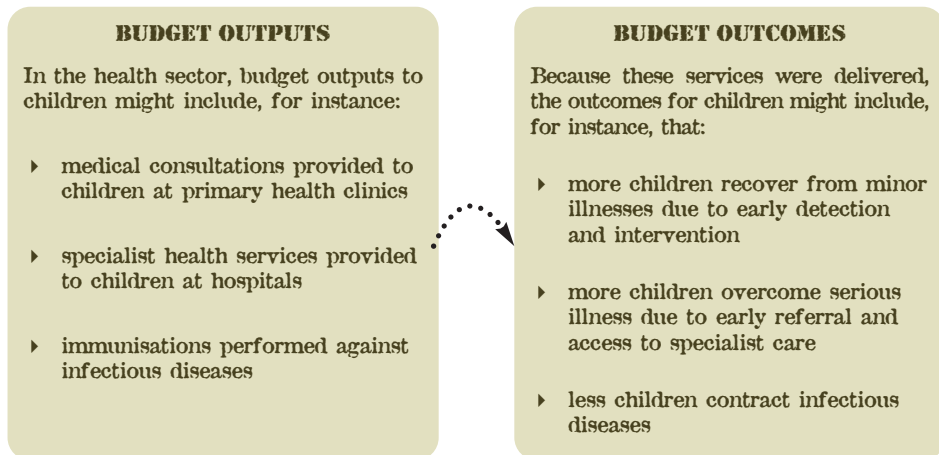
*Save the Children Sweden and Norway,
A study on government budget allocation for primary education – with emphasis
on two zones of Amhara Region and Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, December 2003*

Focus 7: What can be said about budget outcomes and impact?

In this focal area, child rights budget studies ask what outcomes have been achieved for children as a result of government budgeting and what the impact has been on the advancement of child rights.

Budget outcomes

In child rights budget work, budget outcomes are the actual effects or results brought about by service delivery to children. For example, the chart below illustrates how budget outcomes may be understood in the context of children’s health:



Looking at the chart above, it is easy to see why this focal area is the most difficult to tackle in a child rights budget study. Budget outcomes are not easy to track and measure. For example, it would be impossible to know how many children did *not* get sick because their siblings or classmates were better able to access health services. It is also problematic to assume too much about cause and effect. For instance, children may be recovering more readily from minor illnesses *not only* because they had better access to quality health care. Other changes in their environment may have contributed to the outcome, like better access to nutritious food or better ventilation in their homes.

In child rights budget work, thinking about budget outcomes is therefore quite different from analysing budget inputs and outputs. It involves discussion and cautious interpretation rather than exact measurement and analysis. Evaluating budget outcomes is rather like unravelling a complex web of factors, processes and issues that are all interrelated and influence one another in an ongoing way.

The impact on the rights of the child

Child rights budget work is a tool for monitoring government budgeting from a child rights perspective. It therefore makes sense to assess and comment on budget outcomes against the fundamental yardstick of this approach to budget work: children's rights. The critical questions here are:

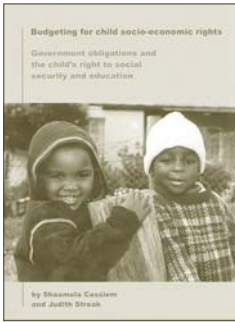
- Have budget outcomes contributed to the progressive realisation of children's rights (or a specific child right)?
- Looking at the legal framework for child rights in our country, how well has government used the budget to bring about outcomes for children that translate their rights into reality?

The answers to the questions above are rarely simple or straightforward. As budget outcomes are themselves difficult to interpret, their impact on the realisation of child rights cannot be reduced to clear-cut cause and effect relationships. However, child rights budget work involves grappling with these questions. In most instances, it is possible to draw attention to and unpack certain areas of successful intervention and/or areas of concern. For example, if more children in a country are in fact contracting infectious diseases, it seems reasonable to suggest that the government immunisation programme for children has not thus far contributed to improving the health status of children. To make progress in realising the child's right to health, it would be important for the government in question to investigate how and why its budget inputs and outputs are not bringing about the desired outcomes for children – and to take corrective action. In this way, child rights budget work can provide a powerful basis for advocacy by drawing attention to issues around the outcomes and impact of government budgeting.



Every day it becomes clearer that those who best understand the public budget are those most affected by it.

Neiara de Morias, Brazil

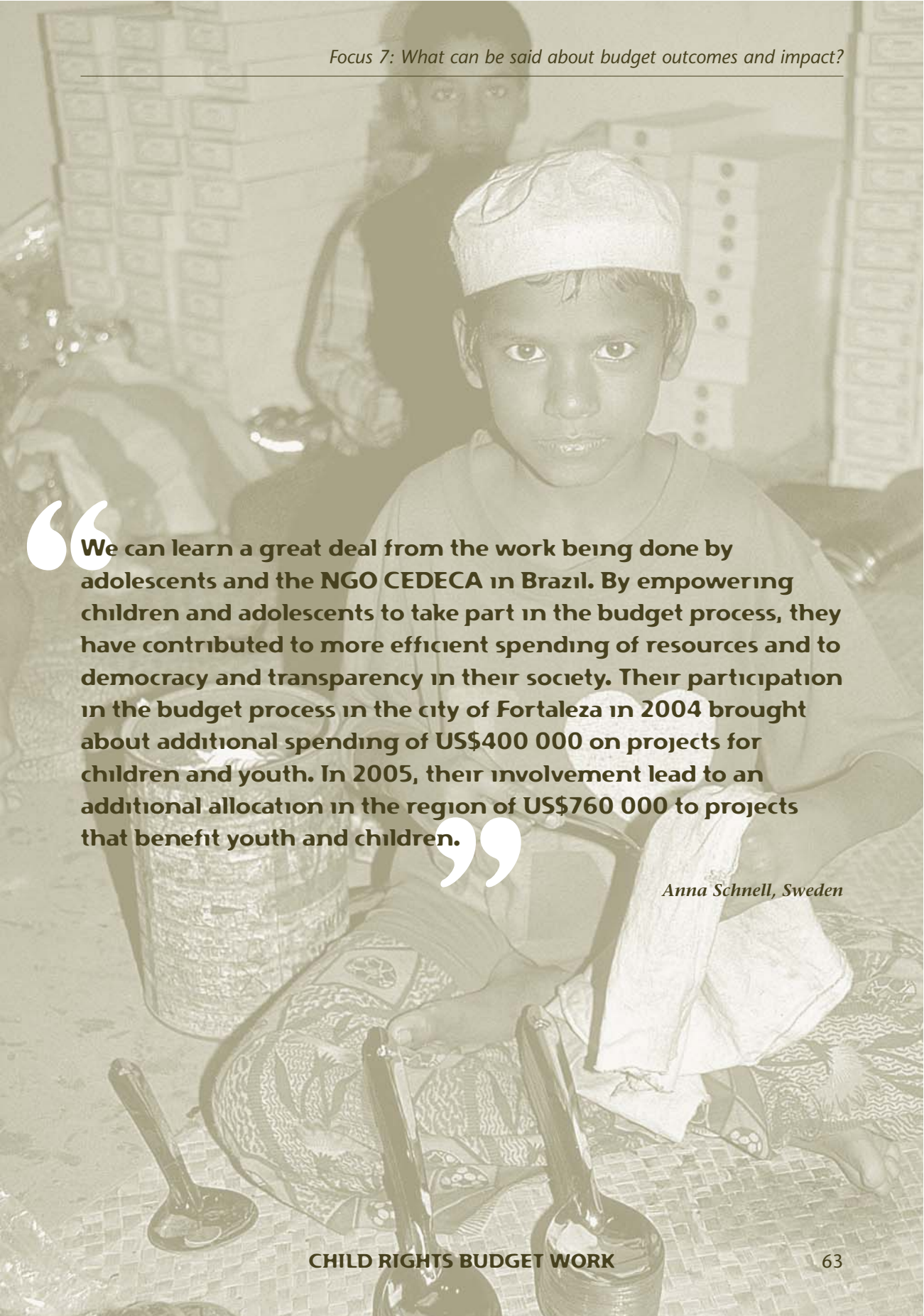


e.g. **The challenge of assessing budget outcomes and impact**

Budgeting for Child Socio Economic Rights (2001) - the fourth South African study - tackled some of the complications involved in this focal area. It highlighted a number of reasons why it was difficult to analyse budget outcomes and the impact of government budgeting on the rights of the child:

- There are time lags between budget inputs and budget outputs: the budget inputs you analyse now will only produce outputs in the future. There is also a time lag between budget outputs and outcomes. It is impossible to know exactly what inputs and outputs in the past have brought about current changes in children's lives.
- The impact of government budgeting is not only determined by its budget inputs and outputs. The demand for services – or their actual use and take up – also influences what budget outcomes are achieved.
- There is little available data that can be used to track changes in budget outcomes, especially in relation to changes in children's socio-economic and development status (Cassiem & Streak 2002: 6).

Against this background, the study explained that it could not go as far as monitoring the extent to which government budgeting was in fact realising child socio-economic rights. Instead, the study examined budget inputs (spending trends) and budget outputs (services produced) to assess *the probability* or to *infer*, rather than to conclude rigorously, whether government was making a positive contribution to reducing child poverty over time and therefore progressively realising children's rights in South Africa.



“We can learn a great deal from the work being done by adolescents and the NGO CEDECA in Brazil. By empowering children and adolescents to take part in the budget process, they have contributed to more efficient spending of resources and to democracy and transparency in their society. Their participation in the budget process in the city of Fortaleza in 2004 brought about additional spending of US\$400 000 on projects for children and youth. In 2005, their involvement lead to an additional allocation in the region of US\$760 000 to projects that benefit youth and children.”

Anna Schnell, Sweden

Focus 8: What are the key issues for advocacy?

Child rights budget work has evolved out of a desire to bring about changes that improve the lives of children around the world. This kind of work can be interesting and challenging – but it is not usually undertaken for these reasons alone. The ultimate aim of analysing government budgeting from a child rights perspective is to identify where changes are needed to advance child rights more effectively and more rapidly. As such, child rights budget work aims to produce findings that can be used to motivate and advocate for clearly identified changes and to lobby decision-makers who have the power to bring these about. It is essential for child rights budget studies – wherever they are done - to provide a bridge between analysis and action.



e.g. Drawing conclusions and making recommendations

Most child rights budget studies include a section where conclusions are drawn from the analysis and recommendations are made for changes that will benefit children. *Education and working children in Soyapango and Tacuba: A study of financial resources allocated to children in El Salvador* (2001) provides a good example. The study offered a summary of its main findings as a background for proposing a structured set of recommendations. The recommendations covered the rights of the child and economic policy in El Salvador, national budgets for education, budget research and budget reform, budget allocations for children, popular participation in budget planning, priorities in education budgets, education reforms and the education of working children.



e.g. Providing tools to raise public awareness

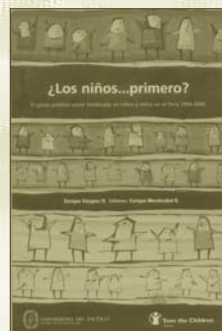
In Sweden, *The Art of Tracking Educational Resources* (2001) concluded by presenting a Children’s Checklist. This tool was designed for parents and children to examine the provision of education in their own municipalities, with emphasis on how financial resources compare to education targets. The checklist was simple, yet innovative and user-friendly; it allowed parents and children to become involved in monitoring the financing and delivery of education at the community level.

Advances can only be made if the information generated by child budget research is taken up and used by role-players in the child rights arena and in government.

Judith Streak, Monitoring government budgets to advance child rights

e.g. **Highlighting where urgent action is required**

The first child rights budget study in Peru, *Children...first?* (2001) used its concluding section to draw attention to three risk groups whose extreme poverty and vulnerability call for urgent attention. These were working children and adolescents, teenage mothers, and finally, children and adolescents living on the streets. In addition, the Peruvian study made its recommendations in the form of focussed lines of action for each sector reviewed, in each case linking these to the specific needs of the most vulnerable groups of children.



e.g. **Creating a platform for children and young people to participate**

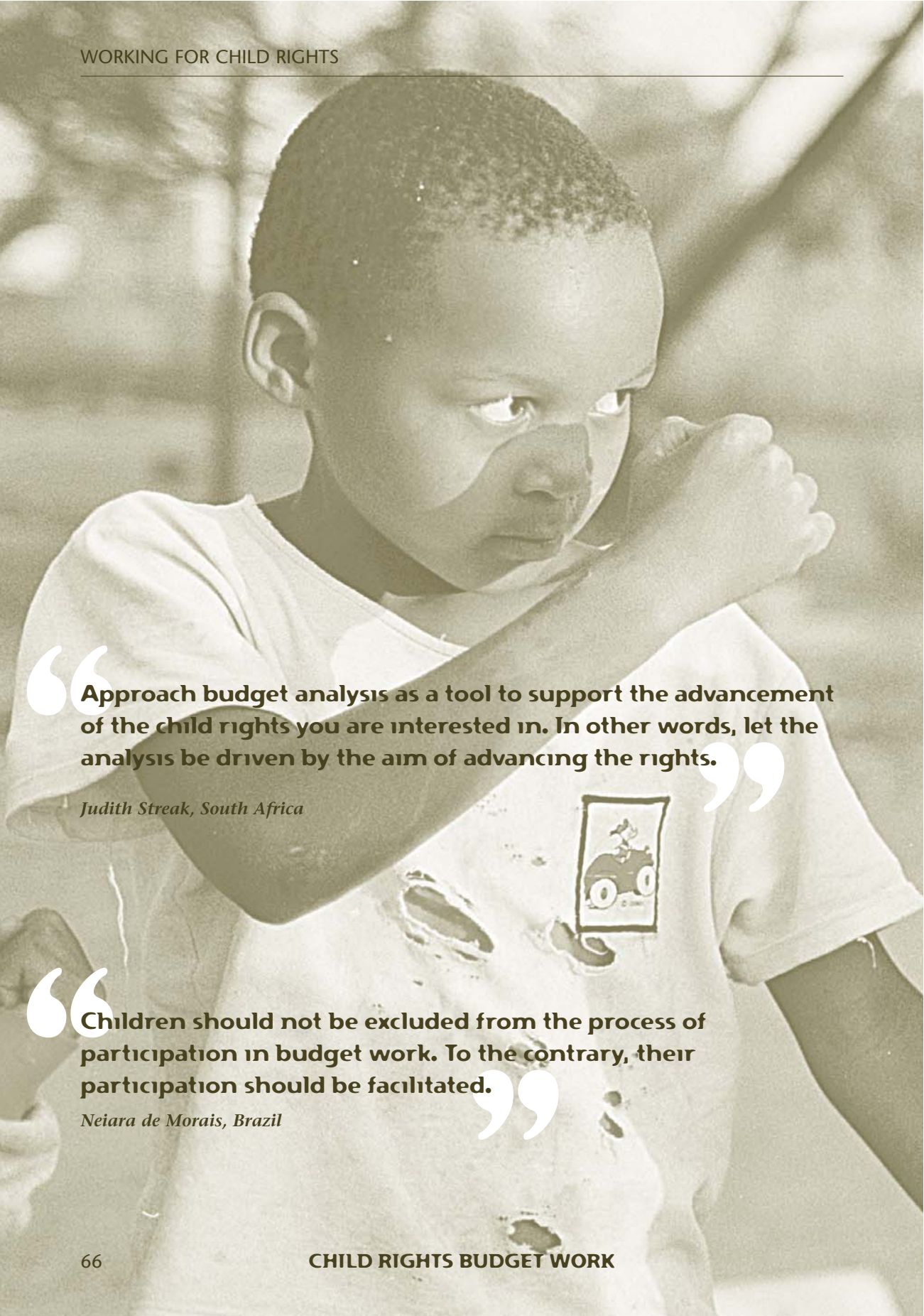
In Brazil, the non-governmental organisation CEDECA has facilitated extensive participation amongst adolescents in the budget process of the city of Fortaleza. In 2003 for example, a group of 50 young people (mostly between the ages of 12 and 18) took part in a year-long process of learning about children's rights, the CRC, conditions and resources in Fortaleza, as well as the budget system and process in their city. They themselves facilitated broader participation amongst young people through a series of community forums, where the city government's budget proposals for 2004 were analysed and debated. The adolescents collected 33 proposed amendments to the city budget and presented these to the council. Through active and informed participation in the city's budget process, the adolescents taking part in the project saw three of their proposals being accepted by the city council and included in the 2004 budget.



Children think laterally, are much clearer, are not up for re-election – so they do not have as many 'vested' interests. For example, children in Brazil recognised that their disabled friends had problems with schooling and were able to come up with a series of low-cost improvements – demonstrating in some cases that, apart from reducing discrimination, this might even save money in the medium term.

Richard Hartill, Colombia





“Approach budget analysis as a tool to support the advancement of the child rights you are interested in. In other words, let the analysis be driven by the aim of advancing the rights.”

Judith Streak, South Africa

“Children should not be excluded from the process of participation in budget work. To the contrary, their participation should be facilitated.”

Neiara de Moraes, Brazil

The information in this booklet offers a first introduction to child rights budget work. On the previous pages, you have met practitioners from different countries who are working for child rights using this approach. Examples of their work have revealed something of the terrain and offered a guided whirl-wind tour through the focal areas emerging from practice.

This last brief section of the booklet provides:

- some pointers and ideas that may help you get started in planning a child rights budget study in your own country, district or municipal area, and
- a list of resources and contacts to encourage further conversation between those interested in child rights budget work.



Planning a child rights budget study

Child rights budget work is a compelling route to explore if you are involved or interested in the implementation of children’s rights. These pages offer some hints and suggestions on how to prepare the ground for a child rights budget study of your own, based on the experiences of those working with this approach in different countries.

When you are preparing to start a child rights budget study, look beyond the mere study – think about full-scale advocacy.

Bob Muchabaiwa, Zimbabwe



Create a discourse

Child rights budget work has great potential as a basis for collaboration between child rights advocates, economists, development specialists and others with an interest in children. Look for people with different skills and expertise in your context. Get them talking about the implications of government budgeting and policy choices for children’s rights. Debate the advantages and disadvantages of a rights-based approach. Invite them to unravel the links between child rights and children’s reality. Such vibrant discourse is likely to catalyse interest in the idea of a child rights budget study and help identify a possible team to take it forward.

To design a useful and realistic research strategy, it is important to start by identifying direct and indirect links between the budget and child-related policies.

Ngo Huy Duc, Vietnam



Find out more

This booklet has merely highlighted a few aspects of the child rights budget studies undertaken in other countries. By reading the studies themselves, you will gain a much more comprehensive understanding of the terrain. Make contact with practitioners doing child rights budget work and ask questions. If you are an economist, learn more about children's rights. If you have no training in economics, develop your budget literacy. There are many useful resources that could be useful to you listed on pages 70 and 71.

Study all the formulation and evaluation processes involved in budget planning and management – because it is critical to foresee the right time for you to make your contribution.

Enrique Vásquez, Peru



Get to know the budget process

Understanding the budget process in your own country is critical. To plan a child rights budget study that can be used in advocacy, it is essential to know what decisions are taken at key stages of the process, which decision-makers are involved and how the various parts of the budget system interact. The budget process represents an important 'conversation' between civil society and decision-makers about the allocation of scarce public resources to areas of greatest priority. You may have to do some preliminary spade-work to find out what opportunities exist to begin participating in this conversation from a child rights perspective. This knowledge will help inform the tone, scope and timing of your child rights budget work.

It is helpful to have individuals or organisations on board who know how government actually operates as regards planning and budgeting, and the criteria used to allocate resources to various sectors.

Petronella Mayeya, Zambia



Identify important stakeholders

Related to the point above, it is important to begin identifying and building relationships with stakeholders of government budgeting for children. For example, there may be members of parliament that would be allied to your efforts, or particular government officials that would benefit from your work. Other stakeholders may be critical in catalysing improvements in service delivery or in gaining access to budget data. You may also wish to identify key decision-makers at the international and regional levels, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, regional development banks, and key monitoring agents such as the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

“What will happen after a study is finalised must be carefully planned. How the target groups of a study – such as government – will take the study findings into serious consideration and act to make positive changes for children, must be thought through from the start.”

Comment made at the Southern African, “Imali ye Mwana”, child rights budget network meeting in Pretoria, October 2003



Check the availability of data

No matter how well you conceptualise and strategise in planning a child rights budget study, it will be impossible to implement without access to at least some reliable, useful and consistent data. Find out what budget data is published in your country and how regularly this is done. Talk to economists about the accuracy and formats of the information that is available. Identify officials who may be able to provide you with information that is not in the public domain. This knowledge will be invaluable later once your child rights budget study is under way. In the mean time, it will help you to choose a child right, target group and/or level of government that in fact lends itself to budget monitoring.

“As with any research – try not to be too ambitious. To start with, aim to answer one question well rather than try to answer too many...”

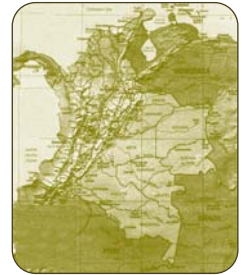
Anne Crowley, Wales



Set some parameters

You may decide early on to design your child rights budget study around a particular child right, a specific geographic area in your country and/or around a particular group or category of children. Practitioners in other countries strongly recommend setting realistic and manageable goals. It is unlikely that anyone could do justice to *all* the rights of the child (or even more than three or four) in any single study, most particularly a first-time initiative. It may also be useful to choose a children's right on the basis of advocacy potential. For example, you may be aware of a new policy or draft bill in the pipeline, which your study could hope to influence. Or perhaps there is particular scope to leverage a given ministry or department with the findings of your study. It is useful to consider all these factors during the planning phase so that your child rights budget work can have maximum impact.

“It is important to understand the historic (political) trends in financing children's services and children's rights – Why is the situation worsening in many countries? Why are many countries investing so much less per capita now than twenty years ago? This will give you important clues as to who to influence, as well as ammunition with which to do advocacy work.”



Richard Hartill, Colombia

Develop a support network

All child rights budget teams need support. This may include the need for financial support, technical support and/or assistance with public dissemination and advocacy. The growing network of child rights budget practitioners around the world may be able to provide at least some of the assistance you require. In your own country, it will also be necessary to build political support for your initiative. Some child rights budget studies have made use of an advisory panel or reference group, to provide both political insight and technical guidance.

“It is difficult, to not say impossible, to find the knowledge needed for a child rights budget study embodied in one person. A mix of people, with knowledge on children and the economy, working together will get the work accomplished. It is also a way of building economists knowledge of children's rights, and child rights advocates knowledge about the economy.”



Anna Schnell, Sweden

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Child Rights Budget Work



Civil society organisations around the world are developing many new avenues to engage with their governments and to hold them accountable. Child rights budget work forms part of this endeavour. It emerged out of collaboration between child rights advocates, researchers and economists with an interest in children and their rights. It has informed and sharpened the debate around how governments use their resources to deliver benefits and services to children. In a nutshell, child rights budget work has become a powerful means to monitor governments' commitment to children.

Against this background, this booklet is intended for:

- Child rights advocates and organisations who would like to know more about budget analysis as a tool to complement their work.
- Researchers with an interest in children's issues who want to build stronger bridges between research and advocacy.
- Economists who would like to find out how budget analysis can be used to advance children's rights.

The aim of this booklet is to offer an introduction to child rights budget work. It invites you on a brief tour of this exciting and relatively new way of working for children rights. It also hopes to put you in conversation with those doing child rights budget work in other countries.