



# CHILD-PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

*A Review of Global Practice*

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## Introduction

Child rights budgeting is a current international human rights policy priority. It has been the focus of a day of general discussion and resolution of the United Nations Human Rights Council<sup>1</sup> and a recommendation of the European Commission.<sup>2</sup> The Committee on the Rights of the Child (hereafter ‘the Committee’) has consistently recommended that States parties develop child budgets as a key aspect of implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (‘UNCRC’). Most recently, the Committee has developed a general comment on *Public Budgeting for the Realization of Children’s Rights (art. 4)*.<sup>3</sup> This provides further guidance to governments and other non-state actors as to how to manage public expenditure for children in order to realise the rights of all children.

A core focus of all of the human rights guidance on children’s budgeting is the participation of children in all stages of budgetary planning and decision-making. The Committee’s general comment 19 on public budgeting and children’s rights has provided specific guidance on children’s participation in budgeting as follows:

### **Right to be heard (art. 12)**

*52. Article 12 of the Convention establishes the right of every child to freely express his or her views in all matters affecting him or her, and for those views to be given due weight in accordance with the child’s age and maturity.<sup>4</sup> States parties should regularly hear children’s views on budget decisions that affect them, through mechanisms for the meaningful participation of children at the national and subnational levels. Participants in those mechanisms should be able to contribute freely and without fear of repression or ridicule and States parties should provide feedback to those who participated. In particular, States parties should consult with children who face difficulties in making themselves heard, including children in vulnerable situations.*

*53. The Committee recalls that “investment in the realization of the child’s right to be heard in all matters of concern to her or him and for her or his views to be given due consideration, is a clear and immediate legal obligation of States parties under the Convention ... It also requires a commitment to resources and training.”<sup>5</sup> This underlines the responsibility of States parties to ensure that there is funding to achieve the meaningful participation of children in all decisions affecting them. It recognizes the important role played by officials of the executive, independent ombudspersons for children, educational institutions, the media, civil society organizations, including children’s organizations, and legislatures in assuring children’s participation in relation to public budgets.*

*54. The Committee recognizes that budget transparency is a prerequisite for meaningful participation. Transparency means ensuring that user-friendly information is made publicly available in a timely manner in relation to the planning, enactment, execution and follow-up of budgets. This includes both quantitative budget data and relevant information about legislation, policies, programmes, the budget process timetable, motivation for spending priorities and decisions, outputs, outcomes and service delivery information. The Committee*

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<sup>1</sup> UN Human Rights Council (2015) *Rights of the child: towards better investment in the rights of the child*, A/HRC/RES/28/19. See also Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2014) *Towards better investment in the rights of the child: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, A/HRC/28/33.

<sup>2</sup> European Commission (2013) *Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage*, Commission Recommendation of 20.2.2013.

<sup>3</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2016) *General comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children’s rights (art. 4)*, CRC/C/GC/19.

<sup>4</sup> See also general comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard (2009).

<sup>5</sup> See general comment No. 12, para. 135.

*underlines the need for States parties to budget for and provide contextually appropriate materials, mechanisms and institutions to enable meaningful participation.*<sup>6</sup>

*55. To enable meaningful participation in the budget process, the Committee stresses the importance of ensuring that States parties have in place legislation and policies for freedom of information that include, or at a minimum do not exclude, children and child rights advocates from the right to access key budgetary documents such as pre-budget statements, budget proposals, enacted budgets, midterm reports, in-year reports and audit reports.*

*56. The Committee recognizes that a number of States have experience in engaging children in meaningful participation in different parts of the budget process. It encourages States parties to share such experiences and identify good practices that are appropriate to their contexts.*<sup>7</sup>

This study has been developed to contribute to the Committee's call for examples of good practice that are appropriate to context. While there is a plethora of work taking place in this area globally, there has been a lack of research that reviews these processes and their effect collectively. The study's aim is to collate examples of good practice on children's participation in budgeting and to harness the rich learning from the many and varied initiatives that are already under way across the world. In doing so, it builds on previous research conducted by the authors of this report in 2015.<sup>8</sup> This research collated the views of nearly 2,700 children in 71 countries on public expenditure for children's rights and was used to inform the Committee's General Comment. This study highlighted strong support for government engaging with children when making decisions about expenditure.

Children involved in the 2015 research considered that they were well positioned to advise governments on how to make decisions about spending for children's rights because they understood the impact of this spending in their lives. The **key features of good participatory practice from the children's perspectives** can be summarised as follows:

- accessible information;
- respectful support from adult facilitators;
- consultations conducted at a time and in a location that was appropriate for the children; and
- adults who listened to children's views carefully and provide feedback.

Children believed that governments should include the views of children from diverse ages and backgrounds and localities, as well as the organisations that worked with them and on their behalf. Children argued that these should reach out in particular to those with disabilities and those who do not speak the majority language. Children recommended that governments should follow up on the proposals made by children during budgeting discussions, whether that is through government consultations or through more formal mechanisms for children submitting their proposals (e.g. youth parliaments discussing municipal spending), and offer feedback to the children about why decisions were taken to implement (or not) the children's recommendations. They emphasised that adults should involve children in monitoring the impact of spending.

In the 2015 study, 9 per cent of the children who completed the survey had direct experience of participation in budget decision-making. Often this was as part of youth councils or via non-governmental organisations. Of this sample, 90 per cent enjoyed the experience, and 80 per cent

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<sup>6</sup> See article 13 (1) of the Convention.

<sup>7</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child (2016) *General comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights* (art. 4), CRC/C/GC/19. paras 52-56.

<sup>8</sup> Lundy, L., Orr, K. & Marshall, C. (2015) *Towards better investment in the rights of the child: the views of children*, Belfast: Plan International and Eurochild.



felt that the adults listened to their views, which in turn made the children feel empowered and valued. However, only 53 per cent felt that changes were made based on their views. Examples of positive action included: seeing policy change; governments carrying out further work based on children's input; and the realisation of physical buildings/services. However, such positive examples were in the minority. Often, when these children were asked what they would improve about this process, they cited action/change.

## Research questions

The current study drew on this existing knowledge base as a framework to investigate and identify the key learning from existing examples of child participatory budgeting in different global contexts. With a view to addressing the gaps in the existing knowledge base, the study had the following objectives:

1. to identify through literature and a stakeholder questionnaire the existence, perceived effectiveness and enabling factors of child-participatory budgeting initiatives at national, sub-national and municipal levels
2. to investigate the operation of existing child-participatory budgeting initiatives in the countries selected as case studies
3. to identify the enabling factors for effective child-participatory budgeting initiatives and views of stakeholders as to how existing processes might be enhanced.

Drawing on the views of children, young people and adult stakeholders who have experience of child-participatory budgeting, the research addresses the following overarching question: **how can children be involved in decisions about public expenditure in ways that are effective, inclusive and impactful?**

## Methods

This report is based on information gathered through a variety of methods to include as many examples of child-participatory budgeting processes as possible. The study contained two parts: a **scoping review**, to draw together the range of initiatives that exist globally, and a small number of **in-depth case studies**, to explore in more detail how these processes have worked and to what effect. The research team at the Centre for Children's Rights designed research methods and instruments accordingly and in collaboration with Plan International.

Methods used to conduct the **scoping review** included: a review of relevant literature; a call for information;<sup>9</sup> targeted email correspondence with adult representatives of known initiatives; an online survey of adults with knowledge or experience of child-participatory budgeting initiatives (conducted in English, French and Spanish). The review considered more than 30 examples of child-participatory budgeting initiatives globally.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> This call for examples was distributed through regional and international networks (e.g. Child Rights Connect, Child Rights International Network (CRIN) and Eurochild), civil society organisations with global reach (e.g. Plan International and Save the Children) and through individuals (both government and civil society) with knowledge or experience of this area.

<sup>10</sup> We received 42 survey responses in relation to 23 child-participatory budgeting initiatives globally.

Four **case studies** were facilitated in Croatia, Guatemala, Kenya and Togo.<sup>11</sup> The examples were drawn from the initial scoping of child-participatory budgeting processes and selected to include geographic diversity as well as diversity of approach (e.g. long-term, sustained and partnership engagement with city-level authorities; multi-year programme of work across three countries in Central America, which included child participation in municipal budgeting processes; short-term and temporary engagement with local authorities at budgetary planning and evaluation stages).<sup>12</sup>

The research team at the Centre for Children's Rights, in collaboration with Plan International, developed interview and focus group instruments to be used by facilitators in each country context. The Centre for Children's Rights provided an information pack with relevant background materials, ethical guidance and sample consent forms to use with all respondents.<sup>13</sup> Meetings were held remotely with the facilitators to introduce the aims of the study and to respond to any questions about the methods and suggested approach. The research team remained in contact with local facilitators throughout the fieldwork process to ensure consistency and clarity of approach.

Local facilitators conducted interviews and focus groups in local languages, translating the research materials where appropriate and in some cases with additional assistance from Plan International. Interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded, and recordings were transcribed and translated into English where resources were available. Facilitators completed and returned to the research team in English or Spanish the summary response forms that the interviews and focus groups conducted.<sup>14</sup>

Facilitators were asked to conduct between one and three focus groups with children and/or young people who had been involved with the child-participatory budgeting process<sup>15</sup> and five to six interviews with adult stakeholders/participants with knowledge or experience of the initiative (e.g. civil society staff, teachers/head teachers, government representatives). In total, the case studies included responses from: 39 children (21 girls and 18 boys, aged 11 to 17), 30 young people (15 young women and 15 young men, aged 16 to 35) and 24 adult stakeholders.<sup>16</sup>

The Centre for Children's Rights adopts a child rights-based approach to research conducted with children and young people.<sup>17</sup> For this study, the research team drew on the responses of nearly 2,700 children and young people in 71 countries about how governments should or could involve the views of children in decision-making about public expenditure.<sup>18</sup> These responses were taken

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<sup>11</sup> Case studies were facilitated by: Ana Jantolek (Society 'Our Children' Opatija, Croatia) and Karlo Škorić (translation, Children's Forum Opatija); Shira de León (Plan International Regional Office of the Americas); Hernest Ondigo (Plan International Kenya); Ali Essoh (Plan International Togo).

<sup>12</sup> Initiatives in the Philippines, Bangladesh and Wales were also approached as potential case studies, though time and resources (e.g. capacity to translate the materials into local languages) prevented these from being conducted. The Welsh case study included in this report was developed through documentary materials and email correspondence with the facilitators.

<sup>13</sup> The research team would like to thank Dr. Lucy Royal-Dawson for her contribution to these materials.

<sup>14</sup> The Ethics Committee of the School of Education at Queen's University Belfast approved the research design.

<sup>15</sup> Inclusion criteria set the minimum age of respondents at 10 years, but there was no upper age limit to account for older young people who were reflecting on their experiences as child participants.

<sup>16</sup> Croatia: FG1: 7 girls, 5 boys (aged 11-14); FG2: 5 young women, 3 young men (aged 16-26); Interviews: 6 adults; Guatemala: FG1: 2 girls, 2 boys (aged 14-17); FG2: 1 girl, 1 boy (aged 15-16), 2 young women, 4 young men (aged 18-35), 1 adult; FG3: 2 girls, 2 boys (aged 13-17), 1 young woman, 2 young men (aged 19-35), 1 adult; Interviews: 1 girl (aged 17), 6 adults; Kenya: FG1: 8 girls, 8 boys (aged 12-17); FG2: 3 young men, 3 young women (aged 18-35); Interviews: 6 adults; Togo: FG1: 4 young women, 3 young men (aged 17-21, aged 13-15 during participatory budgeting); Interviews: 4 adults.

<sup>17</sup> Lundy, L., and McEvoy, L. (2012) 'Children's rights and research processes: Assisting children to (in)formed views' *Childhood* 19(1): 129-144.

<sup>18</sup> Lundy, L., Orr, K. and Marshall, C. (2015) *Towards better investment in the rights of the child: the views of children*, Belfast: Plan International and Eurochild.

into consideration in developing the wording and scope of the focus groups to be conducted with child and youth participants of budgeting processes in this study.

## Structure of the report

Section 1 presents an **overview of examples** considered within the study. This offers a look at the breadth of initiatives that have taken place globally in recent years.

Drawing upon this overview of examples, Section 2 considers global practice under four thematic headings: **supportive, inclusive, effective** and **accountable**. These themes emerged from the research as key enabling factors for good practice in child-participatory budgeting.

Following this are **three in-depth case studies** (Croatia, Guatemala and Kenya) and **two short case studies** (Togo and Wales), which provide an opportunity to explore in more detail five examples in which children and young people have participated in budgeting processes at municipal, county and district levels.

## Section 1: Overview of global practice

Children and young people are participating in budgeting processes in many ways and in many communities around the world.

The following table reflects the range of examples considered within this report, and though this is not an exhaustive list of the initiatives globally, the examples considered here reflect the breadth of work (at all stages and levels of the budgeting process) that has been undertaken in recent years.

**Table 1.** Examples of child-participatory budgeting from global practice

Location	Participants	Organisations involved	Brief description
Albania, multiple locations	~200 active participants across four locations; aged 12-18  Gender ~ 1:1	'Voice 16+' Child Led Groups, Save the Children, other civil society and government organisations	Child Led Groups have been working to bring the voice of children into the implementation of children's rights in Albania since 2000. Within a broader advocacy and participation agenda, groups have influenced budget processes at local and national levels, including through securing funding for specific project proposals for children in local budgets and participating in the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth's 2014 consultation on its youth action plan and budget allocation. <sup>19</sup>
Bangladesh, Jaldhaka	~125 children and young people; aged 10-16  Efforts to include a gender balance = 1:1	Plan International Bangladesh	In 2016, each of the 11 unions in the Jaldhaka sub-district of the Nilphamari district conducted an open budgeting process with community members, including children and young people. Child participants raised concerns about prevention of child marriage, recreational activities, early childhood education and sexual harassment of girls. They then presented these issues at <i>upazila</i> (sub-district) level. Each union government allocated a specific budget (~11,800 euro) to address the children's priorities, though there were no guidelines for how this would be spent. <sup>20</sup>
Croatia, Opatija	25 children in each council since 2001; aged 11-14  Efforts to ensure a gender balance = 1:1	Society 'Our Children' Opatija	Participants serve as elected representatives of the Children's City Council of Opatija for two years. Two children (one girl, one boy) are elected from each class in the local primary school, and two children are elected from the rural areas surrounding the city. As representatives, child councillors consult with other students on priorities for municipal spending and present their priorities to the

<sup>19</sup> Save the Children (2015) *Evaluation report: 'Voice 16+...' the Child Led Group Initiative*.

<sup>20</sup> Survey response, 2016; email correspondence with Plan International Bangladesh; *Report on a participatory child budgeting exercise in Rangpur, Bangladesh* (unpublished, written by Plan International Bangladesh).



			mayor and municipal authorities in four to five regular meetings per year. The children also have a budget of their own (~1,600 euro) to allocate to the winner of an annual competition for a project to benefit children. Established 2001. <sup>21</sup>
El Salvador, Cabañas	20 young people; aged 15-26  Gender = 11F and 9M	Plan International El Salvador	Participants gave their views indirectly to government officials through consultation(s) about budgetary allocation. <sup>22</sup>
Ghana, Aseewa, Eastern Region	45 children and young people; aged 13-22  Gender = 20F and 25M	Plan International Ghana and District Assembly	Children and young people analysed the District budget, presented their priorities to District-level decision makers, monitored the implementation of projects and gave feedback on spending. Participants were selected by their peers in the Rights of the Child clubs to represent them at the Budget Advocacy group. In 2015, representatives conducted a social audit of children's priorities in their communities and engaged with District Chief Executives and other heads of department to locate more district budget to address these issues. <sup>23</sup>
Guatemala, Chiquimula	15 children; aged 11-18  Gender ~ 1:1	Save the Children and local partner organisations	Participants conducted a diagnostic audit of the municipal public policy and decided upon priority issues to present to the municipal authorities. <sup>24</sup>
Guatemala, Alta Verapaz		Plan International Guatemala and CHILDHOPÉ	'Building Democracy in Central America project', conducted in Santa Catalina La Tinta, San Pablo Tamahu and San Miguel Tucurú (2012–2014). Child representatives conducted situational analyses of child rights priorities at community level to inform municipal-level budgeting, focusing on: health, nutrition, water and sanitation, education, protection from violence, recreation and participation. <sup>25</sup>
Honduras, Jesús de Otoro		Plan International Honduras and COIPRODEN	'Building Democracy in Central America project', conducted in the municipality of Jesús de Otoro in the department of Intibuca (2012–2014). Child representatives conducted

<sup>21</sup> Survey responses, 2016; case study interviews and focus groups; email correspondence with facilitators; public brochures and materials from Society 'Our Children' Opatija. For more information: [www.dnd-opatija.hr/en/home](http://www.dnd-opatija.hr/en/home)

<sup>22</sup> Survey response, 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Survey responses, 2016; Minimade, V. (2015) *Report on Activities Carried out by the Y-BAGUM from 2<sup>nd</sup> To 11<sup>th</sup> April, 2015*, Plan International Ghana.

<sup>24</sup> Survey response, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Survey responses, 2016; case study interviews and focus groups; email correspondence with facilitators.

		<sup>26</sup> network of child rights organisations	situational analyses of child rights priorities at community level to inform municipal-level budgeting. <sup>27</sup>
India, multiple locations			In some areas, School Management Committees consult with students about their priorities when making school development plans, and some children and young people are involved in monitoring and evaluating essential services in school (e.g. WASH – water sanitation and hygiene – facilities and midday meal programmes). <sup>28</sup>
Indonesia, Banda Aceh	~50 young people; aged 18-25	Aceh Student Ambassador Association	Young people participated in a forum to share their views about their concerns regarding the environment. Participants lobbied the Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs to clean up the beach and save the mangroves in Aceh province. <sup>29</sup>
Indonesia, Grobogan	4 young people; aged 15-25 Gender = 3F and 1M	Village Government Sendangharjo	Acting as representatives of other young people, the participants made proposals to the village government for sports equipment and recreational activities. <sup>30</sup>
Ireland, County Roscommon	27 children and young people; aged 12-17 Gender = 16F and 11M	Roscommon Child and Youth Council ( <i>Comhairle na nÓg</i> ), Youth Work Ireland, Roscommon County Council	Youth Council committee members contribute to Comhairle programme planning by reviewing annual reports and suggesting adjustments to proposed spend and budgets for the following year. Committee members may also adjust the budget throughout the spending year in response to over/underspending. <sup>31</sup>
Kenya, Kwale County	26 children and young people; aged 14-17 Gender = 11F and 15M	Plan International Kenya	Representatives from youth organisations took part in training on county-level budgeting and service delivery procedures. They used social accountability tools to negotiate priority issues with service providers. County authorities received support and training to involve children and young people in planning and delivery processes. <sup>32</sup> This process built on previous work involving children and young

<sup>26</sup> COIPRODEN (*La Red de Instituciones por los Derechos de la Niñez*).

<sup>27</sup> Plan International Honduras report (unpublished) of activities for Plan International submission to OHCHR follow-up report on Investment in the Rights of the Child (2015).

<sup>28</sup> Email correspondence with Plan International India.

<sup>29</sup> Survey response, 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Survey response, 2016.

<sup>31</sup> Gunn, A.M. (2016) *Co. Roscommon Comhairle na nÓg: Young people's ownership of spend with regards to public funds*, (unpublished, written by Youth Work Ireland).

<sup>32</sup> Survey responses, 2016; case study interviews and focus groups; email correspondence with facilitators.

			people in a social audit of priority rights issues (2014–2017). <sup>33</sup>
Nicaragua, multiple locations	~1,500 children and adolescents	Plan International Nicaragua and CODENI <sup>34</sup>	‘Building Democracy in Central America project’, conducted in 10 municipalities in: Managua, Ciudad Sandino, San Marco, Ocotal, León (2012–2014). Conducted a situational analysis of child rights priorities to inform municipal and national-level budgeting. Improved the online consultation platform of the CODENI Observatory of Human Rights to be able to consult more easily with children and young people in 153 municipalities in Nicaragua on issues of municipal investment. <sup>35</sup>
Nicaragua, multiple locations	~10,000 children; aged 7-17 Gender ~ 1:1	Alliance Group for Investment in Children and Adolescents (GAI) <sup>36</sup>	Children and young people participated as communicators, advocates and consultation respondents in the ‘Before approving the budget... Get in my shoes’ campaign (2006–2011), which emphasised increasing the health budget to 5 per cent of GDP and education to 7 per cent of GDP. The campaign was led by a broad coalition of civil society organisations and endorsed by the Local Commissions for Children and Adolescents and the Network of Child-Friendly Municipal Governments. <sup>37</sup>
Philippines, Caloocan City	15 children; aged 13-17 Gender ~ 1:1	Samahan ng Mamamayan – Zone One Tondo, Inc (Z)OTO, Alternative Budget Initiative, WomenHealth and Save the Children	Children were supported by a partnership of organisations to assess government programmes, establish priorities for changes to the budget and present their views directly to national and local government representatives. Participants asked questions directly of the heads of national health department and local government and gave their feedback. <sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Plan International Kenya is also supporting child-participatory budgeting work in Tharaka-Nithi County.

<sup>34</sup> CODENI is the Nicaraguan Coordinating Committee of the Federation of NGOs that work with Children and Adolescents.

<sup>35</sup> Plan International Nicaragua report (unpublished) of activities for Plan International submission to OHCHR follow-up report on Investment in the Rights of the Child (2015).

<sup>36</sup> CODENI (Nicaraguan Coordinating Committee of the Federation of NGOs that work with Children and Adolescents), Save the Children, UNICEF, Terre des Hommes (TDH-Germany), Plan International Nicaragua, International Solidarity Denmark (SII), Christian Children’s Funds from Canada (CCFC), Ombudsman Office for Human Rights – Special Ombudsman for Children and Adolescents (PDDH), Network of Municipal Governments Friends of the Children and the Adolescents of Nicaragua, the Forum for Education and Human Development of the Initiative for Nicaragua (FEDH-IPN), the National Coordinator of Municipal Commissions of Children and Adolescents (CMNA) and the University of Central America (UCA). (Source: CODENI (2010) *IV Supplementary Report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: 2004–2007*.)

<sup>37</sup> Survey responses, 2016; Perez, P. (2016) *Examples of good practices of child participation in the development of national budgets, municipal or community* (unpublished, written by Plan International Nicaragua);

<sup>38</sup> Survey response, 2016.

Philippines, Occidental Mindoro	~7 from each village; ages 15-18  Gender ~ 1:1	Plan International Philippines	Participants presented plans to the city council for support, and some members were invited to participate in planning and decision-making discussions. <sup>39</sup>
Tanzania, Mwanza	28 children from each Junior Council; aged 8-17  Efforts to include a gender balance = 1:1	Plan International Tanzania, Mwanza Youth and Children Network	Children selected representatives from the Junior Councils to present their priority issues about development initiatives to policy makers, through a radio programme and at public events. The Mwanza Youth and Children Network supported the initiative through child rights training. <sup>40</sup>
Togo, Sotouboua	25 children; aged 13-15	Plan International Togo	The Violence Against Children club took part in a four-day training session, and a selected group then took part in a series of meetings with the Mayor and other public officials. The Municipal authorities explained the budgetary process and listened to children and young people's proposals to increase the amount spent on child protection. <sup>41</sup>
Uganda, Kampala and India, Delhi	~345 children and young people; aged 13-18  Gender = 170F and 173M	Plan International	As part of the 'Because I am a Girl' urban programme, participants used a 'gender-sensitive, child-centred and inclusive' community scorecard method to assess the availability and quality of city services that guarantee children's (especially girls') free and safe movement in the city. The initiative focused specially on improvements that would support marginalised and excluded girls and young women to enjoy their rights. Based on the findings, adolescent girls facilitated meetings between community members and service providers in both cities, and the process resulted in the addition of streetlights (and replacement of broken ones); cleaning of public parks; and improved maintenance of girls' public toilets. <sup>42</sup>
United Kingdom, Swansea, Wales	114 children in 2016; aged 7-18  Efforts to include a gender balance = 1:1	Swansea City Council	Since 2014, the Swansea City Council has consulted with children and young people during annual budgetary decision-making. As part of the city's commitment to give 'due regard' to the UNCRC, children from local primary and secondary schools have

<sup>39</sup> Survey response, 2016.

<sup>40</sup> Survey response, 2016.

<sup>41</sup> Survey responses, 2016; case study interviews and focus groups; email correspondence with facilitators.

<sup>42</sup> Plan International (2015) *Good Practices on Children's Right to Participate in Government Budgeting: A Plan International Inc. Contribution to the OHCHR Follow-Up Report on Investment in The Rights of the Child*. The 'Because I am a Girl' urban programme seeks to build safe, accountable and inclusive cities for adolescent girls. The work was piloted in Delhi and Kampala but will include India, Egypt, Vietnam, Uganda and Peru.

			participated in workshops focused on how to make efficiencies in public spending in the context of austerity measures and reduction in funding for public services. <sup>43</sup>
United States of America, Boston, Massachusetts	More than 4,000 children and young people voted in 2016; aged 12-15	City of Boston and the Participatory Budgeting Project	In 2014, the City of Boston committed to spend \$1 million of its capital budget on projects selected through the 'Youth Lead the Change' process. Children and young people (aged 12-25) participated by offering ideas for how to spend the money, as volunteer Change Agents working to develop the ideas into specific proposals, by voting on projects to be funded and as volunteer Steering Committee members, who set the guidelines, monitored and evaluated the spending. This process is repeated annually and is ongoing. <sup>44</sup>
United States of America, Seattle, Washington	More than 3,000 children and young people voted in 2016; aged 11-25	City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods and the Participatory Budgeting Project	More than 3,000 children and young people voted in 2016 on 19 project proposals that had been developed by volunteer youth delegates (aged 11-25) in the 'Youth Voice, Youth Choice' process. The City of Seattle committed \$700,000 of the city budget to fund the winning projects, which needed to be completed with funds from that year's process and cost between \$25,000–\$300,000. A Steering Committee of children, young people and adults designed the process, recruited volunteers, mobilised participation, facilitated workshops and will monitor and evaluate project implementation and future processes. <sup>45</sup>
United States of America, Washington D.C.	2 young women; aged 18-20  Gender = 2F	Plan International USA	Participants acted as representatives of Plan International USA's Youth Advisory Board and worked with the senior management team to align the youth engagement budget with the advisory board's priorities. <sup>46</sup>
Zambia, varied locations		Save the Children Zambia	Child Participation in School Governance project supported children in more than 159 schools to participate in school budgeting processes between 2006–2011. Children participated as school council representatives on the schools' general purpose and finance

<sup>43</sup> Survey response, 2016; Swansea City Council (2016) *The Big Budget Conversation 2016* (unpublished report).

<sup>44</sup> See for example: Youth Lead the Change Steering Committee (2014) *Youth Lead the Change Participatory Budgeting Guidebook*. For more information: <https://youth.boston.gov/youth-lead-the-change/>

<sup>45</sup> See Seattle Department of Neighborhoods and the Participatory Budgeting Project (2015) *Youth Voice, Youth Choice: 2015-2016 Rulebook*. For more information: [www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/programs-and-services/seattle-participatory-budgeting](http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/programs-and-services/seattle-participatory-budgeting)

<sup>46</sup> Survey response 2016; email correspondence with facilitator.



			committees and were involved in local-level budget tracking, monitoring and evaluation. <sup>47</sup>  In one example, 35 participants (aged 8-17; 18F and 17M) conducted consultations with other children in order to represent the priority issues in their area. These participants took measures to include the views of girls and young women and children with disabilities. <sup>48</sup>
Zimbabwe, Harare (work also conducted in Malawi, Swaziland and Zambia)	~1,000 children in each country; aged 12-18  Efforts to include a gender balance = 1:1	Child Rights Network for Southern Africa	Participants were part of child-led groups, supported by a civil society network. They raised priorities for the citizens' budget and presented evidence about the state of their rights. Civil society members established the platform for participation, compiled children's priorities into submissions to the government and lobbied government representatives to include the children's views and priorities in the budget, especially at national level. <sup>49</sup>
Zimbabwe, multiple locations	360 children; aged 12-18  Gender = 200F and 160M	Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children, Harare Junior City Council, Bulawayo Junior City Council	Junior city councillors took an active role as facilitators, mobilisers and respondents in this initiative, which began in 2013. They discussed budget allocation at both national and local levels and made proposals for the 2015 national budget based on research they conducted with more than 3,000 children (aged 9-18) in five of the ten provinces of Zimbabwe. <sup>50</sup>

## Section 2: Enabling factors for good practice

The Committee on the Rights of the Child recognises that child-participatory budgeting initiatives are occurring in many locations throughout the world and encourages 'States parties to share such experiences and identify good practices that are appropriate to their contexts'.<sup>51</sup> As examples of State-initiative child-participatory budgeting increase, it will be particularly useful for States to reflect on and share effective practice to enable them to fulfill their obligations within the UNCRC and other international commitments.

<sup>47</sup> Email correspondence with facilitator.

<sup>48</sup> Survey response, 2016.

<sup>49</sup> Survey response, 2016 and email correspondence with coordinator in South Africa.

<sup>50</sup> Survey response, 2016 and email correspondence with facilitator. *See also* Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children (2014) *2015 National Budget Consultations – The Children's Submissions: Encouraging child participation in the National Budget Process*, Terre des Hommes and SOS Children's Villages.

<sup>51</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child (2016) *General comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights* (art. 4), CRC/C/GC/19, para 56.

This report reviews a wide range of activities in which children and young people have participated in budgeting. Most of this work has been initiated and resourced by civil society organisations, though often conducted in partnership with local, regional and national authorities. The study sought examples of good practice, and what follows are some **thematic lessons for good practice** from the range of examples that were considered. The lessons from these initiatives come both from successful examples and those that highlight the need for an alternative approach in the future. This section draws upon examples from global practice to highlight how child-participatory budgeting can be **supportive, inclusive, accountable** and, ultimately, **effective**. Examples of specific and broader outcomes from good practice are discussed under the theme of 'effective' practice.

## Supportive

Child-participatory budgeting relies in most cases on the support from those with a commitment to respectful, inclusive, transparent and accountable working with children and young people. While the concept of participatory budgeting continues to be adapted for use globally,<sup>52</sup> these processes tend to emphasise the participation of adults as citizens.<sup>53</sup> Children's participation in public decision-making continues to rely heavily on the support of adults who are able to facilitate access to adult-led processes and who are willing to share information with child participants in an accessible way.<sup>54</sup> Most of the examples considered within this study depended on work done by adults (champions from either civil society or government) to create a particular space for child and youth involvement in budget decision-making.<sup>55</sup> Most of this work was being done by civil society organisations dedicated specifically to the promotion of child rights or child and youth participation in public decision-making.

Children in this study emphasised the importance of working with adults, often civil society staff members, who supported them to understand their rights, the budgeting process and how to effect and monitor change. Budgeting and public policy-making are complex processes, and child participants noted that they benefited considerably when information was presented in accessible and understandable formats. In many cases, these organisations were also supporting decision makers to make budgeting processes more transparent and participative for children and youth.

Although civil society representatives have historically taken the lead in supporting both child participants and duty bearers in these processes, there is a growing number of examples in which a culture of child and youth participation has become embedded in State structures. At present, active engagement of State actors in these processes is occurring mainly at local (city/municipal) level, which suggests that local authorities are well-positioned to promote child-participatory budgeting initiatives in the future.

## Role of civil society

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<sup>52</sup> See Wampler, B. and Hartz-karp, J. (2012) 'Participatory Budgeting: Diffusion and Outcomes across the World', *Journal of Public Deliberation* 8(2): article 13.

<sup>53</sup> In rare examples considered for this study, children participated alongside adults in participatory budgeting processes, though they also highlighted the importance of adult support to facilitate their involvement (e.g. to understand the budgeting process or to provide a separate space to discuss their issues and priorities).

<sup>54</sup> See Orr, K. et al. (2016) *Enabling the exercise of civil and political rights: the views of children*, Belfast: Save the Children. There is an additional concern that adults consider the complexity of budget decision-making an additional barrier to children's interest in or capacity to engage with these process.

<sup>55</sup> This may relate in part to the methods used in the study, which focused on publicly available documentation and an electronic call for examples (i.e. survey responses and information) sent through child rights networks and government representatives with remits for children's participation.

Non-governmental organisations have played a vital role in enabling child participation in budgeting. Broadly, this can be described as ‘creating a platform’ for child participation through a whole range of activities that support child and adult participants to engage meaningfully and effectively prior to, during and after budgetary decision-making.

Examples of the support that civil society organisations have provided include: finding or providing funding and resources; recruiting, supporting and mentoring child and youth participants; providing specialised training sessions (in appropriate and accessible language) for child and youth participants about their rights, policy-making and budgetary decision-making; building and maintaining relationships with key decision makers at local, regional and national levels; working with parents, community members and decision makers to challenge stereotypes about children and support their understanding of children as valuable contributors to budgeting processes; building the capacity of decision makers to engage with children’s views and priorities; building technical capacity of decision makers to enhance the accountability and transparency of budgeting processes; feeding back to child and youth participants in accessible ways; supporting follow-up monitoring and evaluation.

### Accessible and understandable information

In many cases, adults described the importance of developing and using child- or youth-friendly materials to support participants to engage with budgeting processes. In the **United States**,<sup>56</sup> this included a youth-friendly budget template that showed examples of how the money for youth engagement activities had been spent in previous years. Participants reviewed prior spending alongside their Youth Advisory Group’s current priorities and advised that some funding should be reallocated for training new advisory group members and group retreats. In **Croatia**,<sup>57</sup> members of the Children’s City Council (aged 11 to 14) worked with civil society facilitators to develop an accessible brochure, entitled ‘The Budget for Little Ones’, which explained how city budget money had been used on services for children each year.<sup>58</sup>

Alongside the value of child-friendly materials, respondents from many of the examples described the important role of adults who supported child and youth participants by answering questions and facilitating discussions about complex and technical information. In **Togo**,<sup>59</sup> for example, participants were presented with municipal-level budgets, laws and policies, which facilitators explained.

*For me it was not easy understanding the subject, but the facilitators made lots of efforts to get us to understand. They were very observant and would pause to make sure we understood.*

(F aged 18)

### Knowledge and capacity

One of the challenges for supporting children and young people to participate in budgeting is that civil society organisations themselves do not always have experience, knowledge or expertise to engage with the complexities of budgeting processes. The Child Rights Network for Southern Africa described the ‘main barrier’ to effective and inclusive child participation to budgeting in **Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe** as the fact

<sup>56</sup> Survey response, 2016 (Washington, D.C.)

<sup>57</sup> For more information about the work of Society ‘Our Child’

<sup>58</sup> Civil society organisations have developed many tools for building children and young people’s capacity around budgeting and public policy-making (see Appendix 1 for a list of relevant resources).

<sup>59</sup> Focus group conducted for case study with child and youth participants (aged 17 to 21).

*... child rights players did not consider this as an area of interest. As a result there are few with the knowledge of how to influence decision-making in this sphere... those civil society players in this thematic focus then end up without necessary support from the rest of the child rights sector.*<sup>60</sup>

In **India**,<sup>61</sup> many organisations engage with national budgeting by analysing the Union Budget from child rights and gender perspectives and using these findings to influence relevant allocation to promote child rights and gender equality. However, these organisations were not yet involving children and young people in these processes.

## Building a culture of participation

Decision makers' previous experience of or training in child participation and children's rights was a strong supportive factor for meaningful and effective engagement in budgeting processes. In **Zambia**,<sup>62</sup> 'local leaders, traditional and elected, were already trained to appreciate the need for child participation and hence they created space for children to be part of the budgeting process' at multiple levels of decision-making. Both civil society and government representatives in **Croatia**<sup>63</sup> explained that children's involvement had become an expected and valued step in the city council budget process, which subsequently supported further groups of children to participate in future budget cycles.

Thus, although decision makers' *lack* of awareness and understanding about how to involve children's views was considered a key barrier to effective child participation, evidence from longer-term initiatives demonstrates the ongoing effect of building this capacity. The most helpful factor supporting child participation in the **Philippines**,<sup>64</sup> for example, was noted as the 'openness of government to involve children' in the process. In **Nicaragua**,<sup>65</sup> where Municipal Commissions for Children have had the main responsibility for investment in children for 20 years, a civil society representative considered 'the willingness of local governments to listen to and respect the opinion of children' as the most important enabling factor for child participation.

## Inclusive

The number of children involved in the initiatives considered in this report varied widely, from as few as two youth representatives at strategic board meetings to thousands of children's views included through broadly inclusive consultation exercises. The latter typically worked through or strengthened existing school councils across a part or the whole of a country to extend the reach of the programme. In some cases, the project worked hard to include the *views* of particularly marginalised groups (e.g. rural children, children out of school or living on the street, ethnic minorities) through wide consultation and peer research, while other projects sought to include individual children who themselves had experiences of marginalisation as *participants* (e.g. girls and young women, children with disabilities).

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<sup>60</sup> Follow-up email correspondence with coordinator.

<sup>61</sup> Follow-up email correspondence with survey respondent.

<sup>62</sup> Survey response, 2016.

<sup>63</sup> Survey responses, 2016; case study interviews with key stakeholders.

<sup>64</sup> Survey response, 2016, Caloocan City.

<sup>65</sup> Survey response, 2016.

Children and young people are participating in budgeting processes globally as: **representatives** elected by children and young people specifically to participate in the budgeting process or as members of child and/or youth councils or parliaments (e.g. school councils, children's city councils and youth parliaments) who were then involved in the process; **members of youth groups or networks** supported by civil society organisations; **individuals**, representing their own views.

## Acting as representatives

In **Ghana**,<sup>66</sup> children in Rights of the Child groups selected members to represent them in the Budget Advocacy group. Most of the representatives were themselves from low-income families in deprived communities, and they gathered information on the issues affecting children in their areas to bring this to the heads of department in district budget decision-making. In **Guatemala**,<sup>67</sup> facilitating organisations invited children and young people through to attend youth assemblies to elect representatives to take their views forward on budgetary issues.

In **Zambia**,<sup>68</sup> participants became involved in the budgetary process as members of children's clubs and school councils. They were therefore not elected or selected to represent children's views *about budgeting*, but the facilitating organisation encouraged participants to think about 'representing other children who were not present'. As representatives, members conducted consultations with wider groups of children in their areas to assist their participation to be 'representative of the true picture of issues affecting children and young people in the different situations in their areas'. Similarly, junior councillors and parliamentarians were elected in **Zimbabwe**<sup>69</sup> to represent other children in a range of issues. Since this role was school-based, facilitators noted the challenges for the participants for including the views of those not attending school.

## Acting as individual citizens

In some cases, children and young people engaged in participatory budgeting processes alongside adults or through specific youth processes. For example, Open Budget Declaration processes in **Bangladesh**<sup>70</sup> are participatory exercises that involve all sectors of society at multiple levels (ward, union, *upazila*) of decision-making.<sup>71</sup> In 2016, children and young people in all 11 unions of the Jaldhaka sub-district contributed to decision-making on how a block grant from the district budget would be spent. At ward level, child participants shared their budget priorities,<sup>72</sup> identified the budgetary implications for these decisions and compiled a list to be presented at union level. Participants brought these proposals to the open budget declaration discussions at the union level, and the most widely supported issues from all the union *parishads* (councils) were presented at the *upazila* level. Attendees and participants at all levels of these discussions heard and considered the priorities put forward by the child representatives.

In **Wales**,<sup>73</sup> Swansea city officials invited wide participation from children with diverse backgrounds and explained that they encourage participants to 'act on their own behalf rather than representatives from groups'. Support mechanisms were in place 'to enable' each child and young

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<sup>66</sup> Survey responses, 2016.

<sup>67</sup> Survey responses, 2016; case study interviews and focus groups; email correspondence with facilitators.

<sup>68</sup> Survey response, 2016.

<sup>69</sup> Survey response, 2016, Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children

<sup>70</sup> Survey response, 2016; email correspondence with Plan International Bangladesh; *Report on a participatory child budgeting exercise in Rangpur, Bangladesh* (unpublished, written by Plan International Bangladesh).

<sup>71</sup> Plan International Bangladesh (2016) 'Process of Open Budget Declaration'. Examples from the Jaldhaka sub-district of the Nilphamari district in north-west Bangladesh.

<sup>72</sup> These included: prevention of child marriage, early childhood education in community centres, recreational activities and prevention of sexual harassment of girl children.

<sup>73</sup> Follow-up email correspondence with facilitator.



person to attend and participate in the consultations. As one official explained: 'The key for us is that we involve children and young people only if they would like to be involved, and our mechanisms are inclusive and supportive to enable this to happen.' In other cases, such as **Zimbabwe**,<sup>74</sup> participants acted on their own behalf because there was not sufficient time or resource for them to conduct peer research or outreach to consult with a wider group of children and young people.

## Including marginalised views

Many of the same barriers that exist for child participation in public decision-making generally were also raised for participatory budgeting, including: lack of resources to reach large numbers of children or include those in rural or remote areas; language barriers for non-majority language speakers; lack of confidence and/or skills in children unaccustomed to giving their views; lack of capacity and skills on the part of the decision makers to establish mechanisms for hearing the views of children in adult-centred processes. Some civil society representatives noted an **additional challenge** for child-participatory budgeting, that adults supporting children's rights implementation do not always have the expertise or experience in complex and technical budgeting processes to facilitate and support children's engagement in budgeting.

One respondent noted that it is not common in the **Philippines**<sup>75</sup> for children to be heard in public decision-making *generally*, especially those from economically marginalised areas. The budgeting project<sup>76</sup> therefore offered a unique opportunity for children to 'interact directly with heads of the national health department and local government. They were able to ask questions directly about the programmes of government and to give their feedback.' In **Kenya**,<sup>77</sup> some representatives in the Kwale County Children Assembly sought the views of marginalised children (e.g. children with disabilities, children who had left school to work, girls with experience of early pregnancy) in their schools and communities through individual interviews and meetings with them prior to presenting priority issues to the county director of budgets.

Gender equality is a critical piece of inclusive practice. Most of the initiatives reported that efforts were taken to include an equal number of female and male participants. The clearest example of this was in **Croatia**,<sup>78</sup> where one girl and one boy are elected from each class to the Children's City Council. More often, respondents simply noted that attempts were made to include the views of female and male children. This may relate in part to the call for examples being sent through children's rights networks, but the figures reflected these efforts. However, while it appears that girls and young women are participating in budgeting processes in approximately equal *numbers*, further information is needed about the extent to which girls' and young women's views are given and considered equally to boys and young men in budgeting decisions, and the extent to which they feel comfortable to raise gendered issues as concerns within these spaces. What is clear from this study is that particular measures are taken in many cases to ensure that girls and young women are included as participants, in addition to further measures to support them and include their views in line with the aim of gender equality. For example, in **Zambia**,<sup>79</sup> girls and young women 'were given space' to present their views in the discussions and included in consultations conducted by their peers 'to ensure a greater voice and interaction for female children... who often don't get the opportunity to participate in such forums'. Elsewhere, facilitating organisations sought to identify and address particular obstacles to girls' and young women's participation (e.g. confidence to share their

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<sup>74</sup> Survey response, 2016 and follow-up email correspondence with coordinator, Child Rights Network for South Africa – Zimbabwe case study.

<sup>75</sup> Survey response, 2016, Caloocan City.

<sup>76</sup> Supported by Samahan ng Mamamayan – Zone One Tondo, Inc (Z)OTO, Alternative Budget Initiative, WomenHealth and Save the Children.

<sup>77</sup> Focus group responses in case study conducted for this study.

<sup>78</sup> Survey responses, 2016.

<sup>79</sup> Survey response, 2016.

views with decision makers or about technical issues involved in budgeting; holding meetings in secure locations).

In all cases, it is important for child-participatory budgeting processes to include – both the views of and as participants – those who are often excluded from public decision-making. Further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of measures that seek to include these views.

## Including large numbers of children and young people

Youth participatory budgeting processes in the **United States**<sup>80</sup> have established opportunities for large numbers of young residents (aged 11 to 25) to participate at various stages and with various levels of commitment in processes to allocate an agreed portion of the city budget. Roles and responsibilities include: proposing ideas for projects; acting as a delegate to discuss, research and revise ideas into specific projects; casting a vote from the final proposals; monitoring and evaluating the outcome as a member of a steering committee. Fewer children participate as delegates and members of the steering committees, while the initial call for project ideas and subsequent voting engage the views of thousands of youth residents of the city.

In **Zimbabwe**,<sup>81</sup> participants undertook a large questionnaire-based consultation about the ‘most critical issues to be addressed by the 2015 national budget’ with more than 3,000 children (aged 9 to 18) in five of ten provinces across the country. The survey was conducted through primary and secondary schools in English, Shona and Ndebele, and it sought to move ‘away from formal structures such as Junior Parliament and Junior Councils’ to include the views of a wider group of children. In **Nicaragua**,<sup>82</sup> CODENI established an online platform for conducting social audits for municipal-level investment with children and young people in all 153 municipal areas of the country.<sup>83</sup> Child and youth participants analysed and discussed the results to understand the rights that were not being met, focusing specifically on the practical and strategic needs of girls and young women, and then developed advocacy plans for improving municipal investment in children.

## Accountable

Most child-participatory initiatives are occurring at planning stages, with children and young people presenting priorities for public spending in advance of an agreed budget. When these priorities appear in public policies or funding is allocated directly to the projects proposed, it can be easy to see the effect of children’s involvement. However, concerns remain about the lack of appropriate and accessible feedback from decision makers, and it can be difficult to monitor and track spending through publicly available information.

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<sup>80</sup> For example, the Participatory Budgeting Project has provided technical assistance to the City of Boston and City of Seattle to conduct youth participatory budgeting activities with thousands of children and young people since 2014. For more information, see: <https://youth.boston.gov/youth-lead-the-change/> and [www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/programs-and-services/seattle-participatory-budgeting](http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/programs-and-services/seattle-participatory-budgeting)

<sup>81</sup> Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children (2014) *2015 National Budget Consultations – The Children’s Submissions: Encouraging child participation in the National Budget Process*, Terre des Hommes and SOS Children’s Villages.

<sup>82</sup> Plan International Nicaragua report (unpublished) of activities for Plan International submission to OHCHR follow-up report on Investment in the Rights of the Child (2015).

<sup>83</sup> CODENI is the Nicaraguan Coordinating Committee of the Federation of NGOs that work with Children and Adolescents (*Federación Coordinadora Nicaragüense de Organismos No Gubernamentales que trabaja con la Niñez y la Adolescencia*); strengthening this existing platform for use in the social auditing process was part of the ‘Building Democracy in Central America’ project, funded by the European Union.

Few examples emerged in which child and youth participants have taken a role in monitoring the implementation of public spending.<sup>84</sup> While this is the case, commitments secured in local or national budgets remain vulnerable to a lack of follow-up or actual spending. There is a need for increased transparency, monitoring and evaluation of how agreed budgets have been spent, including the effect on realising the rights of children.

## Follow-up and feedback

When child participants were involved in a substantive programme of work through a civil society organisation, these facilitators often fed back to the groups the information that they had received, translating this into appropriate and accessible language where necessary. In some cases, child and youth participants have themselves collected and disseminated information about the process or the results of their involvement to other children in their communities or schools.

Where participants were elected specifically to represent children and young people – often at a municipal level – there were often further structures and processes in place for them to cascade their learning from any training they received and to feed back the results of the process directly to other children and young people in the community. In the **Philippines**,<sup>85</sup> young representatives who participated in the NGO trainings and workshops updated other members of their youth organisations throughout the process. In **Guatemala**,<sup>86</sup> representatives delivered training sessions to children and young people in the community with the information they learned through their training about public policy-making and budgeting at a municipal level.

In many cases, however, children and young people received little or no feedback about the outcome or effect of their participation. This was a result of, for example, an overall lack of transparency in budgetary decision-making, a lack of specific information published or disseminated from the relevant authorities and the ending of project funding so that civil society facilitators were no longer available to support child participants.

## Budget analysis, monitoring and evaluation

There are considerably fewer examples of child and youth participation in the analysis, monitoring and evaluation stages of the budgeting cycle. This relates in part to the disproportionate number of initiatives funded and supported by civil society programming rather than sustained mechanisms for child participation embedded in public budgeting processes. In exceptional cases, these projects have included funding and support for participants to evaluate the outcome of their involvement in the budgeting process (e.g. by tracking whether public services and provision had improved), but even in these cases, there were few opportunities to share this information with decision makers to affect subsequent planning processes. This is an area of work that requires additional attention and consideration.

There are, however, some examples in which children and young people monitored and evaluated public service delivery and presented their findings to local authorities. In **Ghana**,<sup>87</sup> children and young people have taken an active role in monitoring how projects agreed in the District Assembly

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<sup>84</sup> Participatory budgeting processes in Boston and Seattle include children and young people (aged ~11-25) on Steering Committees, whose remit includes monitoring and evaluation of the projects funded by the City. These processes have been running since 2014 and 2016, respectively, and may offer strong examples for the future.

<sup>85</sup> Survey response, 2016, Caloocan City.

<sup>86</sup> Case study interviews and focus groups.

<sup>87</sup> Survey responses, 2016; Minimade, V. (2015) *Report on Activities Carried out by the Y-BAGUM from 2<sup>nd</sup> To 11<sup>th</sup> April, 2015*, Plan International Ghana.

budget have been implemented. For example, the Youth Advocacy Group of Upper Manya (Y-BAGUM) visited and assessed the effectiveness of kitchens used for a school feeding programme. After speaking with the assistant head teacher and reviewing the school's concerns, participants provided feedback to the District Assembly.<sup>88</sup> The children's recommendations have been considered in district-level budgetary decision-making for further development initiatives, and Y-BAGUM has been invited to participate in the annual budgeting process.

## Effective

It is important that much of this study and surrounding discussion about child-participatory budgeting has focused on the *process* of involving children and young people in budgeting. These are the procedural and logistical challenges that States face in establishing and maintaining child-participatory budgeting, so there is a need to explore the lessons learned for *how* to engage with children in such decisions. However, it is also important to examine the *effect* that children's participation has had on budgeting processes to ensure that their involvement is contributing to the broader aim of implementing and realising children's rights. This section reviews some specific achievements secured as a result of children's participation and some of the remaining challenges for achieving or monitoring change.

Generally, child-participatory budgeting processes are most effective when decision makers with responsibility for mobilising, allocating and disseminating public funds are committed to hearing children's views and taking their views into account. In some cases, civil society and youth-led advocacy has succeeded in raising the awareness of decision makers to the extent that they have modified budget allocations in response to issues raised. In others, government representatives have been committed to child participation from the beginning of the process, either through sustained partnerships with civil society, inviting children and young people to share their views through consultation or by setting aside a particular portion of the budget for participatory budgeting processes. In both situations, decision makers have explained that they feel better equipped to allocate the budget once they understand the priorities of children and young people.

## Affecting change at a local level

In some cases, direct changes were made to budget allocation as a result of children's influence. Children's participation in more than 159 schools in **Zambia**<sup>89</sup> influenced 'major procurements' and 'other expenditures' in their schools, as well as allocation of funding to construct sanitation facilities. In **Croatia**,<sup>90</sup> the Children's City Council of Opatija has encouraged the City Council, for example, to construct 29 playgrounds; improve and equip a local beach area for children; establish a professional children's support team in the city (social educator, speech pathologist and rehabilitation specialist); place child safety signposts around children's play areas; and improve the district school libraries with new books.

In **Bangladesh**,<sup>91</sup> all union *parishads* (councils) within the *upazila* (district) were declared child marriage-free areas; significant portions of the block grant were allocated to the priorities of the children at union level; and actions were taken to make the way to school safer for girl children.

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<sup>88</sup> District core team includes: District Chief Executive, Coordinating Director, Planning Officer, Budget Officer and, occasionally, District Directors of Ghana Health Service, Ghana Education Service and Department of Social Welfare.

<sup>89</sup> Survey response, 2016.

<sup>90</sup> Society 'Our Children' Opatija (unpublished report) *Children's Participation in Society 'Our Children' Opatija, Croatia*. Results from the Children's City Council's recommendations since 2001.

<sup>91</sup> *Report on a participatory child budgeting exercise in Rangpur, Bangladesh* (unpublished, written by Plan International Bangladesh).

Furthermore, child participants fought for and achieved a dedicated room for their work. A member of the Golna Union Parishad [UP] child forum explained their request for a dedicated room for ‘sitting and reviewing our situations and progress... so that we can discuss our issues and perform our planned activities smoothly and in an organised manner’. In response to this concern, the UP Chairman provided a room for the child forum to meet, stating ‘it is not enough’ to agree a budget through participatory methods, ‘rather work together to create a safe and child-friendly environment in all aspects of our family and community’.

Although there seems to be greater potential to influence change at municipal or county level, the priorities that child and youth participants raise are not always within the remit of this level of governing. For example, the Kwale County Children Assembly in **Kenya**<sup>92</sup> identified a wide range of concerns about the realisation of children’s rights in four sub-counties of Kwale, but some issues, such as highway road safety and the effect of radicalism on the security and safety of children living in socioeconomically marginalised areas, fell within the remit of the national government.

## Challenges for national-level change

It was both easier to see, and to achieve, tangible results in local or municipal-level budgeting processes, than at a national level. The Child Rights Network for Southern Africa noted that in **Zimbabwe**,<sup>93</sup> there was more flexibility and potential for children to influence changes at local level than in the more fixed national budget:

*While the national budgeting processes are complex and involve a lot of stakeholders, the municipal budgets are not as complex. There are more opportunities of influencing allocations there than they are at national level. We observed that focusing on this can have direct impact on children in the short term.*

Although the Minister for Finance acknowledged the issues that young participants raised during the development of the national budget, he argued that he could not make any meaningful changes or reprioritise the budget in response to their involvement. Although child participation did not result in an immediate change in this instance, parliamentarians raised the child participants’ concerns during the parliamentary debate.

## Allocation of specific funding

Participatory Budgeting has a long history of engaging city residents’ views to improve budget allocation,<sup>94</sup> and recently, this process has been adapted in some places for use with child and youth residents. In the **United States**, cities such as Boston<sup>95</sup> and Seattle<sup>96</sup> have allocated specific annual funding for participatory budgeting processes (e.g. \$1 million each year in Boston; \$700,000 in Seattle’s first year, 2016). Supported by the Participatory Budgeting Project, these processes support and encourage children and young people (aged around 11 to 25) to propose ideas; to act as volunteer delegates to discuss, research and refine proposals; to vote in large-scale selection processes; and, as Steering Committee members, to monitor and evaluate the implementation of

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<sup>92</sup> Case study interview with key stakeholder.

<sup>93</sup> Survey response, 2016 and email correspondence with coordinator.

<sup>94</sup> Participatory Budgeting (PB) is a form of deliberative democracy and direct representation in which residents or citizens propose, discuss, refine and vote on how a portion of public funding will be spent. Most PB occurs at municipal level and is derived from the Porto Alegre model, developed in Brazil in the late 1980s, though its use by thousands of cities today means the administration varies widely, *see for example*: Ganuza, E. and Baiocchi, G. (2012) ‘The Power of Ambiguity: How Participatory Budgeting Travels the Globe’, *Journal of Public Deliberation* 8(2).

<sup>95</sup> For more information, *see*: <https://youth.boston.gov/youth-lead-the-change/> and [www.participatorybudgeting.org/boston/](http://www.participatorybudgeting.org/boston/)

<sup>96</sup> For more information, *see*: [www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/programs-and-services/seattle-participatory-budgeting](http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/programs-and-services/seattle-participatory-budgeting)



the process. Cities commit to allocate the agreed funding to the winning projects, which have addressed: youth homelessness; WiFi connectivity in public areas; improved facilities, access to and safety in public parks; road safety for access to school; provision of laptops to local high schools.

## Broader outcomes

In many cases, children and young people's participation in budgeting initiatives resulted in the establishment or strengthening of democratic structures for future engagement. In **Zimbabwe**,<sup>97</sup> despite the challenge of achieving demonstrable change at national level, some local authorities established and continue to support formal child participation structures for local-level decision-making. The 'Building Democracy in Central America' programme, funded by the European Union and led by Plan International in **Nicaragua, Honduras** and **Guatemala**,<sup>98</sup> included an aim to build the capacity of local authorities to use municipal public policies as a tool for planning and managing public spending. The involvement of children in these processes resulted in specific allocation and reprioritisation of the municipal budget towards children's programmes while also enhancing transparency in budgetary decision-making more broadly.

The motivation for involving children and young people in decision-making included, in many cases, the aim of building their capacity for citizenship. In **Ghana**,<sup>99</sup> for example, children acted as representatives of low-income communities to draw the attention of district-level decision makers to the priority issues for children in their areas that required additional budget allocation.

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<sup>97</sup> Survey response, 2016 and email correspondence with coordinator.

<sup>98</sup> Plan International (2015) *Good Practices on Children's Right to Participate in Government Budgeting: A Plan International Inc. Contribution to the OHCHR Follow-Up Report on Investment in The Rights of the Child*.

<sup>99</sup> Survey responses, 2016; Minimade, V. (2015) *Report on Activities Carried out by the Y-BAGUM from 2<sup>nd</sup> To 11<sup>th</sup> April, 2015*, Plan International Ghana.

## Section 3: Case studies

This section explores five examples of child-participatory budgeting in more depth. As States move towards promoting, facilitating and funding child participation in budgetary decision-making,<sup>100</sup> it is useful to review existing models and learn from their successes and the challenges these faced. The following case studies were selected for further study based on their geographic diversity and structural approaches to involving children and young people in budgeting processes.

In **Croatia**, a Children's City Council (aged 11 to 14) has effected change for children in the city of Opatija through sustained, open and respectful engagement with the Mayor and officials of the City Council of Opatija. The Children's Council makes proposals for the city budget at regular meetings and allocates their own funding annually to a project that they determine will most benefit children. This initiative has been supported by Society 'Our Children' Opatija since 2001 and offers an example of how sustained engagement of children in public budgeting contributes to effective planning and implementation of priorities for children.

In **Guatemala**, children and young people (aged 14 to 17) were selected by their peers as representatives specifically for this project. They received and then delivered to other children training about their rights and policy-making, conducted a situational analysis of priority rights issues in their communities and achieved municipal-level public policies that acknowledged these concerns. As one of three countries involved in the 'Building Democracy in Central America' project,<sup>101</sup> this is an example of the successes that can be achieved through directed funding to build children's, young people's and decision makers' capacity to engage with children as rights holders and citizens in policy-making. It also demonstrates the challenges for overcoming institutional resistance to child participation through short-term projects.

In **Kenya**, teachers selected 26 children and young people (aged 14 to 17) from local schools in four sub-counties of Kwale County to act as representatives in a budgeting project supported by Plan International Kenya. Participants took very seriously their role as representatives and interviewed and met with many children in their communities before attending a two-day workshop about their rights and public budgeting. During this process, they identified priority issues to present to the Director of Budgeting for Kwale County, and this discussion was broadcast on local radio. The study took place prior to the enactment or implementation of the budget, but it demonstrates the value of child participants bringing their concerns directly to government officials at the planning stages.

In **Togo**, 25 children (aged 13 to 15) participated in a training workshop with Plan International Togo to learn about their rights and identify priority issues to present to decision makers in the City of Sotouboua. Child and adult participants agreed that this process would have been strengthened by children's continuous or more long-term engagement and more time to prepare in advance.

In **Wales**, children and young people (aged 7 to 18) from local primary and secondary schools have been invited by the Swansea City Council to participate in annual budgetary decision-making since 2014. This is an example in which adopting the UNCRC into city policy-making has contributed to a culture of child participation. It is also an example in which the State has asked children and young people for their advice, and priorities, in the reduction of public spending during a period of austerity measures.

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<sup>100</sup> UN Human Rights Council (2015) *Rights of the child: towards better investment in the rights of the child*, A/HRC/28/L.28.

<sup>101</sup> This took place in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua with the support of Plan International, local non-governmental organisations and funding from the European Union.

## Case study: Croatia

# Embedding participatory practice: Children's City Council Opatija

### Aims of the project

The Children's City Council Opatija was established in 2001 as a mechanism for supporting children to express their views to adult decision makers about children's priorities for facilities and services in the city of Opatija. The initiative is based on Article 12 of the UNCRC and seeks to ensure that children's views are considered in decisions that affect them.

*We wanted for children to become equal members in the local community, not only declaratively [or] just to say that we do all for children without asking them what they think and what they need.*  
(City official, Opatija)

### Who was involved?

Children's City Councillors are elected by their classmates as representatives to the Council. Applications to be considered during an election are open to all children from 4th to 7th grade every two years. After an election campaign, two representatives (one boy, one girl) are elected from each class. Two children from remote and disadvantaged areas of Opatija (Dobreć, Oprić and Ika) and children from marginalised groups (children with disabilities, children from single-parent families and ethnic minorities) are also included on the Council. As one councillor explained, 'We advocate for children in the city, listen to their opinions and if we can, we achieve them' (M aged 12).

### What was done?

Participants serve a two-year mandate as children's councillors, which allows time to participate in two budget cycles. During this time, educators from Society 'Our Children' Opatija facilitate workshops and training with the councillors about children's rights, communication skills, project management, and how to monitor and implement the projects that have been secured already in the city budget. Councillors conduct peer research and consult with other children in the city about the priority issues for children and young people.

The Children's City Council holds four to five sessions per year with the mayor, deputy mayor and the chairman of the City Council. At these sessions, the children's councillors make proposals for the city budget and ask the decision makers prepared questions about public spending. Decision makers discuss with the Children's Council the relevant parts of the city budget that relate to the proposals the children have made and explain what will be funded. Media representatives are present at the sessions and report on the children's proposals to the public.

*[In] sessions we were able to ask questions and [make] suggestions then adults would give us answers. If they do not have a ready answer or do not know the answer, they would answer our last or past questions at next meetings.*  
(F aged 13)

In addition to reviewing and making proposals for the city budget, the Children's City Council has a small annual budget of 12,000 kn (around 1,600 euro) to allocate to a project they consider the most useful for children. The children's councillors publicise the results of the children's involvement through radio and print media and directly to other children on a monthly basis.

## Effect of children's involvement

Child participants were very encouraged by the response of adult decision makers to their proposals and questions. They felt that their views were being heard and taken into consideration in decision-making, and they felt that the adults were clear about any limitations to achieving what the children proposed.

*We presented our proposals on meetings and adults have accepted very well our proposals and tried to do as much as they can, and if they have not managed to do it in one year, they moved it to the other and made it.*

(F aged 14)

Since 2001, the Children's City Council has effected many positive developments in the city, including for example: construction of 29 children's playgrounds and a skate park; equipped district school libraries with new books; removed barriers on sidewalks that prevented their use by children with disabilities; built a sports hall; made playgrounds and areas around schools safer for children through banners, sign-posting and public awareness campaigns; establishing a safe place for children outside the city centre to spend time together.

*The problem then, was [a] place for gathering of young people and children because there was no space in those areas for such activities, they wouldn't have anywhere to gather except on the road. I applied on CCC to solve it and therefore children vote for me. Adults... didn't know about this problem and eventually they ensure funds and have arranged a place for young people and children where they can gather in this remote area. This is a direct example that adults resolved problem, which we children presented to them.*

(F aged 26, former Councillor, remote area)

Image 1: 'The Budget for Little Ones' – child-friendly brochure about city council spending for children

**And WHAT is provided for CHILDREN?**

ACTIVITY	ACTIVITY
Pre-school education Regular and additional preschool program and education 7.438.870 HRK	Elementary education Regular programs of elementary school education 1.122.082 kn Additional programs of elementary school education (Children's City Council, Eco school, events for children...) 2.245.457 kn 3.367.539 HRK
High school and other education High school and other educational program (Club 4+, Youth Council, scholarship programs, rewarding the pupils and professors, youth support, co-financing bus tickets...) 841.800 HRK	"Opatija – healthy city" The Croatian Healthy Cities network, educational programs, regular work of NGOs, programs for children and youth, sports and recreational programs, energy efficiency program 377.500 HRK
The program of public needs in culture Culture (libraryship programs 1.987.590 kn...) 9.363.740 HRK	Technical Education Technical education programs (Photo and video sections, film culture and IT, youth transport unit...) 71.000 HRK
Sport and recreation Amateur sports encouraging programs 5.858.880 kn, program vrhunski sportaši 170.000 kn, sports events program 380.000 kn 6.408.880 HRK	Social care and health care Social welfare of children and youth 770.000 kn, children with disabilities 340.000 kn, health care for children 222.250 kn... 3.878.650 HRK
Administrative Department for communal The construction and maintenance of facilities and 301.725.740 HRK	and environmental protection communal infrastructure devices, fire protection

**1 HRK = 0,13 EUR  
1 EUR = 7,67 HRK**

**THE BUDGET FOR LITTLE ONES**

**WHERE THE MONEY COME FROM AND WHERE DOES IT GO FROM THE CITY BUDGET**

**What is the City?**  
This is a community of 11.759 citizens (children, adults, elderly...) living in 10 settlements: Dobré, Opatič, Ika, Ičić, Poljane, Opatija, Pabri, Vepirac, Mala Učka i Vela Učka.

**Why the City of Opatija has its budget (the City Treasury)?**

- to clean up the city, arrange parks and beaches, to ensure the functioning of the water supply and sewage, to transport garbage.
- for the work of kindergarten, for organizing leisure activities for citizens (sports clubs, the Society "Our Children" Opatija, extracurricular activities for children, Club for senior...)
- for the work of library, for organizing exhibitions, concerts, theater shows, book printing...
- for us to have a fire department, the Red Cross, to help those in need...

**Who is running the City?**  
Every citizen and every citizen group (children, youth, elderly, residents of IČič, residents of Učka...) has its own needs. To ensure the fulfillment of citizens daily needs (water supply, waste disposal, transport, kindergartens, help for weak and ill...)

The city is governed by:  
City council 17 councillors elected by citizens to represent their interests and needs  
Mayor with two deputy mayors which is elected by councilors to represent all citizens and supervises the work of all departments, enterprises and institutions.

**Who decides on WHAT to spend?**  
CITY COUNCIL  
People who are elected by the citizens to represent their opinions

**WHAT is the money from the City Treasury being spent on??**

1. Administrative Department for communal and environmental protection street lighting, water supply, sewerage, landscaping parks and roads, street cleaning, fire department...	62
2. Department of finances and social activities landscaping, schools, sports, culture, social welfare, health	33
3. City Office employee salaries, electricity, water, paper, phone costs, computers...	4
4. Department of urban planning construction of water supply and sewerage, equipping of kindergartens, schools, sports facilities...	1

**Who is paying the money into the City Treasury?**  
Hotels, shops, businesses, citizens, state government, users of city property, (rental, sales, concessions...)

## Broader outcomes

Children and young people who had been representatives in the Children's City Council noted that they learned 'a lot' about the use of public money (allocation, saving, efficient spending) and how to invest in projects that would benefit children in their city. They also felt that they had learned about representing other children in their classes and their communities, and many went on to participate in the Children's Forum after being children's councillors.

The Children's City Council Opatija has been operating since 2001, and there is now a **strong culture of children's participation in the city budgeting process**. Children are aware that the

Children's City Council has had an effect on tangible improvements in the city which supports a belief that children's views are respected and taken into consideration.

After years of consistent and positive engagement, **children feel strongly that their views will be heard in decision-making**. Children heard about the successes achieved through the initiative and wanted to take part directly or share their views with their representatives in school.

*Children know that their suggestions, if they are persistent enough, will be achieved and realised in the city budget or their own budget. They know it from experience of past children's councillors. (Journalist, reported on the sessions)*

*I decided to participate because I thought it was very interesting, the feeling that I can do something for friends and colleagues was excellent. Indeed, when I got there I saw that a lot can be done and that adults listen to children and they respect our opinion.  
(F aged 17)*

Adult decision makers also believed their engagement with the Children's City Council **helped them to make more efficient and effective decisions** about services for children because they were informed by the priorities and views of children themselves.

*The process is very helpful in facilitating to adults so they can understand the current needs of children, because members of the City Council are older and can't understand exactly the current needs of children.  
(Deputy Mayor)*

## Enabling factors for inclusive and effective practice

Child participants listed the following supportive factors for their participation: the **support of the mentors** in Society 'Our Children' Opatija, **accessible materials and information** developed to help children in the city understand the budget and the **open, respectful and responsive attitudes of decision makers** during their direct engagement.

Child participants appreciated the **open and honest engagement** with decision makers. City officials answered the children's councillors' questions in full or were prepared to bring further information and answers to subsequent meetings. Children felt that their proposals were respected and considered seriously, and they were informed clearly if their suggestions could not be realised:

*It is good that adults always listen to us and they explain it nicely if something can't do it and why they can't do it.  
(F aged 13)*

*At the each meeting is the mayor or his deputy. We ask questions that they try to answer. They always give us substantial answers so we know that they are listening.  
(M aged 12)*

The Children's City Council work with Society 'Our Children' Opatija to produce an annual **brochure for children** about who is responsible for public spending and how the city budget has been spent for children's benefit. Both adult and child participants highlighted 'The Budget for Little Ones' as a valuable resource for children to help them understand how the city budget affects them.

In addition to the specific resources developed to inform children and young people about the city budget during workshops and sessions, some participants explained that they referred to **materials available on the city website** to confirm or clarify remaining queries.



## Learning

A key supportive factor for effective practice in this example was the **continuity and sustained support for children's engagement**. City officials noted the extent to which the children were able to contribute more effectively to the process after spending some time as councillors and in the workshops with Society 'Our Children' educators. Child participants also recognised that the process could be confusing or 'boring' at the beginning, and one former councillor (F aged 26) explained that they had been impatient when 'some things [could] not immediately be done'. However, participants gained confidence through the training and understanding about the value of their involvement once they had learned more about and engaged with the process.

Moreover, the continuity of the process since 2001 meant that everyone involved – adult decision makers, children's councillors and children being represented through this process – were accustomed to the idea that children would be consulting on and presenting priority issues to the Mayor and city officials each year with requests for suggested spending.

Everyone involved in the Children's City Council initiative agreed that the process created **respectful and open opportunities for children to engage directly with adults** who made decisions that affected their lives in the city. The mayor, deputy mayor and city officials had a clear commitment to respond to the children's requests with clear answers about what could be achieved within the budget and took direct actions to address these proposals. Some adults noted that there were very rare occasions during which the decision makers appeared to make promises that were unrealistic, and this is something to be cautious about to ensure that child participants are informed accurately and completely about the effect of their involvement.

# Case study: Guatemala

## The 'Building Democracy in Central America' project

### Aims of the project

This project aimed to strengthen technical capabilities of municipal authorities to budget for children, adolescents and youth; to support children and young people to analyse the problems that affect them and submit proposals and actions aimed at reducing the gaps of inequality; and to develop Municipal Public Policies for Children, Adolescents and Youth reflecting the budgetary priorities of children, adolescents and youth. The project ran between 2012 and 2014, was supported by CHILDHOPE and Plan International Guatemala and funded by the European Union.

### Who was involved?

This project involved around 75 children (aged 14 to 17) from urban and rural communities in the municipalities of Santa Catalina La Tinta, San Pablo Tamahu and San Miguel Tukurú in the department of Alta Verapaz, Guatemala. Participants were from Spanish and Maya Q'eqchi' speaking families. Participants were elected at an assembly of child and youth organisations by other children and young people. They were responsible for representing the views of children and young people in their municipalities and feeding back the information they had learned through the training workshops and engagement with municipal authorities.

*When representing my village, I feel proud and want to make a good role, representing other young people of the village and that they feel proud of my representation.*  
(Former participant, F aged 17)

### What was done?

Children were involved at each stage of the development of the Municipal Public Policy for Children, Adolescents and Youth. The participants conducted a situational analysis of rights priorities; established proposals for budgeted programmes to address these priorities; presented the proposals to the Municipal Council; raised awareness among their peers of their rights.

Participants took part in a series of training workshops about the rights of children and young people and on how to develop public policy. They were supported by CHILDHOPE and Plan International to conduct a situational analysis of the rights priorities of children and young people in the municipality through peer research in their schools and communities. Their focus was on the rights to: health, nutrition, water and sanitation, education, protection from violence and recreation. Participants then identified the priority rights issues in their areas and worked with facilitators and members of the municipal authority to prepare draft proposals to present to the City Council.

This project sought to effect change in three municipalities in Guatemala. Municipal authorities did not have a background of engaging with children and young people in the development of their budgetary plans, nor was there a strong record of taking into account the issues that children and young people faced. Prior to the establishment of the Municipal Commissions of Children and Youth, there was a lack of coordination between government institutions in collecting information about the experiences of children in the municipality (e.g. lack of police reporting of violence against children). These factors created a situation in which municipal-level planning had not been informed by the most relevant evidence and had overlooked the priorities of children and young people.

There were two distinct roles for adults in this project: those who facilitated the training sessions and supported the participants to analyse and bring forward proposals; and municipal authorities who

agreed the public policies. The children and young people used multiple strategies for engaging the interest of public authorities and were ultimately successful in presenting their budgetary proposals to the municipality.

## Effect of children and young people's involvement

Children and young people's meaningful participation in this process was **essential to the establishment of the Municipal Public Policies for Children, Adolescents and Youth**. These policies were developed as a direct result of the participants' situational analysis of the priority rights issues for children in their municipalities and their considerable effort to bring these priorities to the attention of the municipal council.

As one former municipal councillor explained, the **children and young people's priorities were considered and included** in the Municipal Public Policy in direct response to the participants' presentation at the Council:

*A group of young people presented themselves at a meeting of the Municipal Council and at a meeting of [Municipal Development Commission] to inform us about the problems they experienced as young people, and asked for support to carry out some activities. Among the issues they raised were violence and drug-addiction. In the Council meeting it was agreed that they must be given support.*

(Former municipal councillor)

However, participants initially faced resistance when attempting to raise their concerns. One young person explained:

*Some decision makers take us into account, but those who do not say that young people do not have the ability to participate. We have seen that they do not treat us well. Last year, the mayor did not listen to us... it is like a ladder going up and up.*

(Former participant, F aged 17)

Furthermore, many respondents noted the challenges of monitoring the delivery of the commitments made in the public policies because there were not clear guidelines for monitoring and evaluation, or for the role for children and young people in this process.

This initiative resulted in: the approval of Municipal Public Policies for Children, Adolescents and Youth in three municipalities;<sup>102</sup> establishment of the Municipal Commission on Children, Adolescents and Youth; the Municipal Commissions on Children, Adolescents and Youth are monitoring the municipal public policy, presenting it to new public authorities. The project placed significant emphasis on how the municipal public policies should be used to plan for and manage funds, as well as track spending, which improved accountability of spending.

## Broader outcomes

All of the respondents believed the training workshops were beneficial at both an individual level for the participants and for **creating opportunities** for the wider community of children and adolescents **to learn about their rights and policy-making** when the participants delivered trainings.

*...the trainings received in the capacity-building processes helped them not only to have knowledge but also to have confidence in themselves, to know their rights, know their reality,*

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<sup>102</sup> A budget of \$12,662,620 was allocated across the three municipalities (San Pablo Tamahú, San Miguel and Santa Catalina Tukurú) for a period of four years.

*that there is a whole national and international legal framework that supports them, among others. (Project coordinator)*

*They trained us, they taught us, and they told us we were to put into practice what we had learnt. What we suggested got done. It gives me satisfaction to know I am capable of doing this work. (Participant, aged 14 to 17)*

*Before this, I thought only adults could do budgeting. (Participant, aged 14 to 17)*

As representatives, child and youth participants took very seriously their role in feeding back to their peers in their communities. This led to **broader awareness-raising about children's rights** and the potential role for child advocates to participate in budgetary decision-making. The mother of one participant suggested that in the future, the children could deliver the programmes at a community level because the participation in public policy-making was relevant to all members of the community.

One of the main challenges to the realisation of children's rights in the area is the lack of effective data collection and recording about the issues facing children and young people. This project **established an evidence base about the realisation of children's rights in the area** by supporting participants to gather information directly from children, young people and communities. For example, the national police service 'did not report situations of violations', so there was a dearth of information about this. During the children's situational analysis,

*...the children identified the violations they suffer. If we had had only the information from the institutions we would not have identified the dimension of the problems affecting children and adolescents.*

*(Project worker).*

A municipal official noted the value of this community-level data collection in the case of education as well:

*Adolescents performed a diagnosis in their own communities to raise figures of children and adolescents that were not in the education system. This was an extremely valuable exercise.*

*(Municipal adviser).*

## **Enabling factors for child participation in budgeting**

Children and young people's involvement in this initiative was enabled through the following factors: **resources**, including a space and materials for training sessions and funding for staff time and outreach to rural areas; **support from civil society**, which delivered training workshops about rights and public policy to participants, raised awareness of children's rights in rural areas and offered technical support and encouragement to municipal authorities. In some cases, **encouragement from parents** supported children to participate because they believed in the benefits of learning about rights and taking part in public decision-making.

**The role of the facilitating organisations was critical to the success of this project.** As one participant explained:

*The facilitators were there, providing information and helping us, spending time with us and giving classes so we could learn about more new topics. We always felt secure.*

*(Participant, aged 14 to 17)*

CHILDHOPE and Plan International Guatemala facilitated a strong series of training workshops, in which they provided information about rights and public policy in an accessible way (in both K'iche' and Spanish), often offering additional support and explanation if a participant needed it; offered motivation and encouragement to participants, many of whom joined the project with little confidence to engage in public decision-making or peer research; and maintained open communication with parents and teachers, including when parents raised concerns about the use of their child's engagement in the project.

### Learning for good practice

The most significant challenges for this initiative involved overcoming resistance to viewing children as valuable contributors to public decision-making, which existed within the communities and the municipal structures. The project **built the capacity of children and young people to see themselves as active participants in decisions that affect them**, supported parents and community members to encourage their children's participation and used a variety of techniques to raise awareness within the municipal structures of the potential for children's engagement with budgetary decision-making. Through the commitment and encouragement of civil society facilitators and some strong support from parents in the community, this resistance to viewing children and young people as active participants was challenged during the project.

However, it is **difficult to achieve longer-term change through a time-limited project**. Participants gathered critical and unreported information about the experiences of children's rights in the community, encouraged municipal authorities to take these priorities into consideration in public policy-making and achieved key commitments to improving services for children in the municipalities. Yet while some follow-up monitoring processes were in place, many of those involved believed the project was a necessary and useful initiative that should have continued beyond the terms of the initial funding. This example demonstrates the value of building child and youth participation into budgeting processes in a more sustained and ongoing manner.

## Case study: Kenya

# Youth Action for Open Governance: Kwale County Children's Assembly's input into the budget planning process

### Aims of the project

This project aimed to strengthen the capacity of children and young people to engage in county-level decision-making and to support local authorities to strengthen transparent and participatory budgeting in accordance with the Constitution of Kenya. The project aimed to promote transparency and accountability in budgeting processes through the use of social accountability processes (e.g. social audits, tracking public expenditure through community score cards) and working with local media to inform the public of children's priorities and government commitments.

Plan International Kenya led the project in partnership with local media and government agencies between 2014 and 2016. Through integrated efforts among its Child Protection and Governance projects, Plan built the capacity of stakeholders, lobbied decision makers and created opportunities to discuss development priority items in county budget allocation. This case study reviews the contribution of the Kwale County Children's Assembly to the county budgeting process in 2016.

### Who was involved?

The project involved 26 children and young people (13 girls and 13 boys, aged 14 to 17) from four sub-counties in Kwale County. Children were **selected through their schools**, with children reporting that teachers chose the children who would have the confidence to speak about these issues in public:

*It wasn't easy... many wanted to go so the teacher was confused and said we couldn't go all of us because there were only three chances, so he had to choose the ones with confidence when talking and not the ones which are shy.*

(F aged 13)

*... everyone wanted to go so it required the teachers to select the active ones who participate in school in so many and different things, so the teacher was able to identify the best.*

(F aged 14)

The children who participated had a **very clear and strong sense that they were there to represent the views of other children**. Many reported that they were able to collect these views in school assemblies, while others acknowledged that it is a challenge to represent all children.

*I had not gone there to represent my views but the views of other children because I had the opportunity to take the views of the other children because in the school we have things like Barrazas [Community meetings].*

(M aged 13)

*Actually I was so much excited to represent my fellow even though I had the fear because it was my first time there, and I was to go explain what was affecting us as youth in front of the crowd and be transparent... I got the courage and confidence of representing my fellow.*

(M aged 17)

Mechanisms for including the views of their peers varied between schools and participants, though some participants described in detail their efforts to meet with children in their school and community



to hear their priority issues. In some cases, participants took specific measures to meet with and hear the views of children whom they perceived as being particularly excluded, including children with disabilities, girls who had early pregnancies and children who had left school.

## What was done?

The child participants took part in a **two-day workshop** organised by Plan International Kenya, during which they discussed and determined their budget priorities. Children were very positive about this workshop, in particular the efforts that were made to ensure that they knew they could express their views freely, that they understood everything and that it was made enjoyable through the use of games and breaks.

*It was easy because they used appropriate language, Kiswahili mufti, and ... they were handling us like 'eggs', something which even at home we are not handled that way. So we understood everything. We were being taught in a humble way and after one or two hours you go out for a short break, and also eating was good, we ate to satisfaction.*

(M aged 15)

The children prepared a **detailed Memorandum of Understanding** which set out their views on what had been achieved and where investment was needed (see Image 2). Many issues were discussed,<sup>103</sup> and participants noted the difficulty of including in their priorities all the concerns they had heard from their peers. The group then **presented their priorities to the Director of Budget of the County**, who welcomed their contribution. This conversation was recorded and **broadcast on local radio** to facilitate greater transparency in decision-making at local level.

**Image 2.** Memorandum of Understanding – presented by Kwale County Children Assembly

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<sup>103</sup> Issues included: child safety and insecurity, including concerns about kidnapping; access to justice; drug abuse; access to appropriate healthcare, especially in hospital; road safety; education, including the right to nutrition and non-attendance of children living on the street; rights of children with disabilities; support for children to participate in leisure and play.

**KWALE COUNTY CHILDREN ASSEMBLY MEMBERS MOU ON KWALE COUNTY BUDGET FOR FY16-17 ON 13/04/16**

**Date: 13/04/2016**

To

Chairman

Kwale County Budget and Economic Forum

CC Governor-County Government of Kwale

Chairman- Budget and Appropriation Committee of Kwale County Assembly

We the children of Kwale County Children Assembly herein acknowledge the efforts that County Government of Kwale has put in place since 2013 to initiate different project in our communities in Kwale County. During this period we have seen different development activities done or started across our county namely:

1. Number of students joining high school has improved. For example, free education has been provided for the pupils learning in National Schools.
2. Child marriage has slightly reduced among school children in Ukunda while in Kinango it has increased.
3. Environmental conservation e.g. planting of trees in primary schools though in community there is still high level of tree cutting.
4. Trade activities in our market centers like Ibiza.
5. Street lights that enable people to walk at night in Ukunda, Kwale town.
6. Inauguration of dispensaries in Kinango, Pongwe, Bwiti, etc.
7. Security cameras in Supermarkets, shops on road e.g., Check Point in Ngombeni.
8. People are recognized by their talents e.g. Youth Talent explosion at Maweni in Ukunda, dancing hall in Kinondo.
9. Irrigation projects like Nyalani Dam.
10. More Governmental Offices in the rural community.
11. Freedom of children to say their voices e.g. in Mkwakwani Primary in Ukunda and St. Josephs in Kinango; children report issues to their president who then reports the issues to the deputy Head Teacher.

As much as the above projects have been initiated in our communities, still there is need to improve or initiate other projects e.g.:

NO	Issues	Justification	location	example	Recommendation
1	Insecurity	<p>Most children and their parents in Kwale live in fear because there are few security lights mostly in rural areas and peri-urban areas. Thugs and armed gangs also attack people at night.</p> <p>Young boys are trafficked with promise of being given monetary rewards, good education.</p> <p>Corrupt police officers who take too long to respond to public cry in case of security incident.</p> <p>Most police officers are not motivated to serve the people but seek recruitment to enrich themselves.</p>	<p>Ukunda, kinango, Kwale</p> <p>Kinango, Msambweni, Ukunda, Lungalunga</p>	<p>In March 2016 3 children were killed in Kinango and their private parts were chopped off and bodies dumped in the forest. Still in Kinango, 8 children who witnessed a killing were abducted and up to date their whereabouts have not been established. This may need to be followed up authorities.</p> <p>Most trafficked young boys die and bodies returned home.</p>	<p>Put up more security lights.</p> <p>Address corruption among the police.</p> <p>Protect children and their parents against child trafficking, especially by engaging them in more productive activities.</p> <p>Police recruitment should be done on basis of commitment and patriotism and not bribery.</p>
	Child neglect	<p>There is increase of homeless children/ street children who don't go to school yet they or of school going age.</p>	<p>Ukunda, Lungalunga, Kinango</p>	<p>This is a common occurrence among the orphans, neglected children by parents and relatives.</p>	<p>Authorities to establish children homes to accommodate these children.</p> <p>Take them back to school.</p> <p>Disciplinary measures should be taken against such parents/ caregivers.</p>

Rights of Children with disability	There are many children with disability who are neglected /hidden. Inadequate for children with Disability. Long distance between special units and place of residence for Children with Disability. Suffer stigma and taboos associated with disability. Insufficient teachers in Special Units	Lungalunga, Kwale, Msambweni and Kinango.	For example, there is only one special unit in Ukunda Ward, 2 schools in Kinango (Kinango School for the Deaf and St. Lukes school for the blind), Msambweni (Makobe and Mwakigwena)	Children with disability should be given free medical care, free school support and more special units to be build.
Corruption on School bursary allocation	Unfair allocation of bursaries, allocation is small, bribe to get bursaries	Kinango, Matuga, Msambweni and Lungalunga	For example, parents are asked to give specific amount of money equivalent to the amount requesting for, some student are given bursary as little as 2000/=	The bursaries should be allocated fairly and a minimum bursary amount should be set.
Few Extension Officers	Most animals distributed by the County Governments died because of veterinary services and proper feeding.		Where there no veterinary officers, famers use local herbs to treat their animals which at times don't treat the animals.	Employ more extension officers
Poor Road Conditions	Most roads have pot-holes and slippery which make traveling expensive and tiring.  Local communities	Kinango-Lungalunga Nyalani to Kwale Road		Tarmac and upgrade county roads
Inadequate Water	Water is expensively sold Unreliable water access Long distances covered to water points	Lungalunga	In Lungalunga one Jerry can is sold at KES.50 per Jerry can.	Drill more boreholes/ established water pipeline in Lungalunga.

## Effect of children and young people's involvement

The Director of Budget committed to taking the children's views seriously and was **confident that the children's views had been influential in the determination of budget priorities:**

*I would say that almost 80 per cent of their views have been accommodated in the budget... The outcome would have differed because those areas I mentioned [sports, pre-primary education, security] would have been neglected and would not have been included in the process and our children would have felt left out.*  
(Director of Budget)

The children had mixed views on the extent to which they had been taken seriously. Many reported a sense that they had been listened to and had begun to observe tangible changes, while others were keen to wait in order to see if there would be actual change in their communities as proof that they had been taken seriously.<sup>104</sup>

## Broader outcomes

A wide range of benefits included: better targeting of the budget; developing broader public awareness of what local government is doing; and personal development for the children involved. Local authorities felt better able to make informed decisions about county budgeting, and children gained experience and confidence participating in public decision-making processes:

<sup>104</sup> Emphasis of the resulting County budget was on health, education, water, infrastructure and agriculture, see Mwabege, F. (2016) 'Mvurya gives lion's share to health, water' *Daily Nation*, 1 July 2016; Nyassy, D. (2016) 'Mvurya sets aside Sh1.7bn to transform health sector' *Daily Nation*, 2 Aug 2016. Plan International Kenya staff members felt that the children's views had been included within these priorities.

*The process I can say was almost 90 per cent helpful to the process because it now came to light what the children are thinking about their county and how the budget has helped the people with things to do with education, health. There is a positive note to children because they realised that this devolution has come with positive changes.*

(Director of Budget)

*The process was very helpful, it enabled the children [to] open their minds on their surroundings such as the communities where they are from. The process also helped them learn their responsibilities in budgeting. It allowed children to understand their role in protecting their community and their right to try and change it to a better place.*

(Teacher)

Many noted trickle-down benefits locally in terms of better sharing of information and generating interest in public decision-making and the budget. For example:

*There is improvement in the school, children are having meetings with their fellow children to present issues they discussed during the budget process. The children also pass the same messages to their parents and whenever they come home, they have questions raised by their parents.* (Teacher)

## Enabling factors

The visibility of the radio interview was a particular highlight for many participants and helped support the **transparency of the decision-making**. Many of the children and adults commented positively about the fact that the Director of Budget had spoken publicly on the radio with the children, with several reporting a belief that this would encourage him to keep his promises.

*I think he took us serious because as he was talking, his voice was heard by many people, because it was aired on radio Kaya.*

(F aged 12)

The radio presenter was also positive about the process and the quality of engagement, recommending that it should be continued and extended to include television to capture other audiences.

*[The] County Director of Budget was able to listen to them well. He gave them enough time and they all expressed themselves with no question left unanswered. His responses were specific to question i.e. situational status of the matter, whether it had been planned for, already implemented or not within their mandate, hence need for referral. The message was well driven home and a mutual understanding reached.*

(Radio presenter)

Children in both the training workshop and in the meeting with the Director of Budget appreciated the **good use of accessible, child-friendly language**.

*Even the words that were being used were not adult words. They were child-friendly words... they were words that we hear every day. Not like giving difficult words which you do not know where it comes from.*

(F aged 12)

Participants were very positive about the **support that children received to express their views freely and safely**. Several reported that they had been happy when the facilitator asked their

teachers to leave during the discussions so that they would be comfortable speaking freely and/or reassured them that their names would not be used to minimise repercussions, for example:

*The people who facilitated told our teachers to walk outside the room to allow the children to give our views because if you stay here the children will not be free, they might remain quiet.*  
(F aged 16)

## Learning

Participants were very positive about the information and support they received during the two-day training workshop, though a number of children recommended that **more preparation about budgeting processes was needed in school** so that they would be able to contribute more effectively during the participation process. As one participant explained:

*I would like to be educated on the budgeting before we attend the meeting of budgeting process. This will help us know what [the] budgeting process is [so] that it's going to be easy for us to understand better in the training and we will be able to express our problem, correctly.*  
(M aged 17)

Both the children and public officials identified the **need for more children to take part** since only a selected group of children attended from each sub-county. For example:

*According to that part of the statistic we were all there in the budgeting process but there was no one with disability to represent the disabled. We would like when budgeting next time ... to get at least one boy and one girl person who will be able to represent the other disability.*  
(M aged 13)

Despite this concern, **participants took their role as representatives very seriously**, which ensured that a wide range of issues were included in the priorities they presented to the county-level decision makers. Participants were particularly conscious about including the views of those they perceived to be excluded, such as children with disabilities, children out of school and girls who had early pregnancies.



## Case study: Togo

### Engaging directly with decision makers in Sotouboua

#### Who was involved?

The project involved 25 children and young people (aged 13 to 15) in the City of Sotouboua, Togo in 2012–2014. The participants were members of the VAC (Violence Against Children) club established with the support of Plan International Togo.

#### What happened?

Participants took part in a four-day training session about advocacy and public budgeting. At the end of this training, a selected group then engaged in a series of meetings with the Mayor and other public officials from Sotouboua city. Alongside capacity-building for child participants, Plan International Togo also undertook training with some municipality staff on children's rights and participation through PROMO ORGA, an NGO working on budget advocacy.

At the meetings with the children, the municipal authorities explained the process for determining the budget and listened to children and young people's proposals to increase the amount spent on child protection. The club was allocated \$70 to conduct an HIV awareness programme. The portion of the budget allocated to children's issues the next year was increased from 0.14 per cent to 1.14 per cent.

The City Council did not say that the increase in spend on children's services was a direct result of the children's advocacy, but the children were convinced that it had this effect:

*It was when we made a follow-up that we observed the increase in the allotment for children in the budget. We think it was based on the explanations that we provided during our advocacy that influenced their decision to increase the budget.*  
(F aged 18).

In contrast, adult stakeholders did not attribute the increase directly to the advocacy but rather the 'demand and supply'. According to the Deputy Mayor, 'Budget is about forecast. If the City Council often receives requests to implement projects related to child protection, there will always be an increase'.

Following the process, municipal authorities approached Plan International Togo and APCD (Association Peoples Culture Développement) about establishing a municipal-level mechanism for engaging children and youth in local decision-making more consistently, but this was not realised due to a lack of funding.

#### Learning for good practice

Both the children and public officials identified the need for children to have **more time to prepare** and **have ongoing input across the budget cycle**. Some of the youth participants explained that they would have preferred to have time to consult with other children in the area and develop their advocacy strategy before meeting with the municipal authorities on the final day of their training (participants, aged 17 to 21). Generally, both adult and youth participants believed the process could have been improved by **establishing a longer-term plan for participation and engagement**. A City Council representative believed that '*...the interaction between the City Council and the children*





City council officials developed consultation tools to engage with 56 secondary school and 58 primary school pupils in advance of the 2016 budget. For example, one workshop presented participants with ten budget headings for city spending with ten 'blocks' of resources allocated to each (see Image 3). Participants were asked to consider what they would do as the Executive if they were to remove 20 'blocks' (i.e. 20 per cent of the total budget). As participants described their rationale for removing greater or fewer blocks from each heading, they gave reasons for protecting spending in particular areas.

## Learning for good practice

The majority of child-participatory budgeting initiatives support children to make proposals for additional or reprioritised spending to address child rights concerns identified through social audits. In contrast, the Swansea City Council asked in this consultation for **children and young people's advice on what to prioritise as the City Council reduced the overall budget**. This is a useful example for contexts in which additional funding may not be available for the promotion of children's rights, but where the realisation of children's rights could be better achieved through redirecting or retaining funding for particular services when savings are required.

## Conclusion

Child-participatory budgeting projects are happening across the world, at various stages of public spending and involving children of different ages and backgrounds. These existing practices, some new and others in operation for more than 15 years, demonstrate that children are both able and willing to be involved in the determination and monitoring of the budgets that affect their lives and those of their communities.

For such initiatives to be most successful, the following features are key:

- Children are provided with **accessible information** about the budget process
- Children receive **support to develop and express their views** freely
- Children have the **time to process** the information and prepare their inputs
- Adults **listen to their views** and **engage with respect**
- Children **receive feedback** on what happened to their input.

The initiatives considered in this research indicate that, where there is meaningful engagement, children's views have directly influenced public spending decision-making in ways that have increased the spend for children and/or resulted in the existing allocation being directed to spending identified by children as a priority in their lives and communities. The resulting child-sensitive budgeting is perceived to produce significant gains in efficiency, equity and accountability in public spending. More generally, there is a clear sense across these projects that children's involvement in public spending has benefits for children's personal development and interest in civic engagement and enhances democratic participation generally.

## Summary of recommendations for good practice

### Recommendations for supportive practice:

- Develop materials that explain the budgeting processes in accessible language, and support participants to understand the issues fully.
- Allocate sufficient time for children to form and express their views.
- Build the capacity of adults, especially decision makers, to engage respectfully with children.

### Recommendations for inclusive practice:

- Audit and identify the groups of children whose views may not be represented and establish mechanisms to include them (e.g. participants conduct peer research and represent others' views; provide targeted assistance to make the process understandable and accessible to all; encourage a gender balance of participants, and so on).
- Establish mechanisms for collating the views of as many children as possible (e.g. social media; online; through schools or local children's councils).
- Support schools to engage with issues of public budgeting to enable school children to share views on local and national budget priorities and allocation.
- Build capacity of civil society and duty bearers around technical aspects of budgeting processes so that they may support and enable child and youth participants.

### Recommendations for accountable practice:

- Provide children with specific and accessible feedback on what happens to their input.
- Engage child participants in follow-up, monitoring and evaluation of public spending.
- Establish mechanisms to communicate developments at each stage of the budget to children in accessible formats, including by child participants to their peers.
- Develop children's capacity to understand and engage in civic and budgetary processes in the school curriculum.

### Recommendations for effective practice:

- Identify champions in local or national-level decision-making who have responsibility to mobilise, allocate and disseminate funding in response to the priorities raised by child participants (and are willing to push for these priorities where decisions are actually made).
- Establish platforms for child participants to meet with decision makers throughout the budget cycle (e.g. planning, monitoring and evaluation, follow-up and review).
- Establish monitoring and evaluation strategies from the outset to determine the effect of child and youth participation.
- Embed child participation in public budgeting through sustained resourcing.

## Appendix 1: Child-participatory budgeting resources

-- (2015) *Child Friendly National Budgeting Initiative: Facilitator's Manual*, UNICEF, National Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (NANGO), Save the Children, Barclays, Zimbabwe Youth Council.

Blyberg, A., Guerrero, J. P. and Ramkumar, V. (2012) *The power of making it simple: A Government Guide To Developing Citizens' Budgets*, International Budgeting Partnership.

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Libert Muchabaiwa, B. (2013) *Child Responsive Budgeting in South Sudan: A guide for policy makers and child focused organizations*, Government of the Republic of South Sudan and Save the Children.

Narantuya, D. and Ochirsukh, Y. (2014) *Budget Analysis for Children: Analysis of State and Local Budgets, Handbook for Adolescents*, Save the Children.