

CHILD RIGHTS CONNECT WORKING GROUP ON INVESTMENT IN CHILDREN

UNCRC General Comment No.19 on Public Budgeting for the Realization of Children's Rights: 29 launches contributing to awareness, partnerships, children's voices and pledges on investment in children

Introduction

Over the last three years, the Child Rights Connect Working Group on Investment in Children¹ has supported the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to develop General Comment No. 19 on Public Budgeting for the Realization of Children's Rights (art.4).

After its adoption, the Working Group has also supported the roll out of General Comment No. 19. In collaboration with the UN Committee, the Permanent Mission of Uruguay and the Delegation of the European Union, the Working Group organized a global launch of General Comment No. 19 on 22 September in Geneva. This global launch was followed by 28 regional and national launches organized by different members of the Working Group.

The launch events were organized in different ways, including through workshops and meetings with policy-makers, civil society, children and the media. They also engaged the public through social media and public events. The participation of members of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in a number of launch events contributed to making the launches a success.



Argentina
Colombia
Dominican Republic
El Salvador
Ecuador
LAC regional launch
in Mexico

Guatemala
Honduras
Nicaragua
Panama
Peru

Gambia
Rwanda
Senegal
Togo
Zambia
Zimbabwe

EU
Albania
Armenia
Bosnia & Herzegovina
Netherlands

Bangladesh
China
Cambodia
Myanmar
Philippines
Asia-Pacific regional
launch in Thailand

¹African Child Policy Forum, Child Rights Coalition Asia, Defence for Children International Costa Rica, Eurochild, International Baby Food Action Network, Plan International, Redlamyc, Save the Children, Terre des Hommes International Federation and UNICEF



What did the launches achieve?

Awareness raising

The 29 launch events contributed to raising the awareness of thousands of government officials, parliamentarians, representatives of civil society, UN agencies, academia, the media and children themselves and their communities on more and better budget allocation and spending as essential steps to realize the rights of every last child and General Comment No. 19 as the blueprint for public investment in children.

In **Mexico**, General Comment No.19 was launched during a regional meeting on public investment in children with over 300 government officials and other experts from across Latin America and the Caribbean. In **Armenia**, almost 200 representatives from national and local government, civil society, children, academia and the media attended the launch as part of the Child Rights Protection and Wellbeing in Armenia National Conference. In **Nicaragua**, 150 participants from civil society, the UN, academia, the media and children themselves attended the launch, which was the culmination of a range of activities including separate workshops on General Comment No. 19 with journalists, civil society organisations and children respectively. In **Myanmar**, 67 Members of Parliament engaged with 130 children in round table discussions. In **El Salvador** and the **Dominican Republic**, the launch events were organized as part of workshops on investment in children. In the **Philippines**, the launch was organized during national children's month celebrations and as part of dialogue on access to quality education for all children.

The public has also been engaged on the importance of investment in children. On 20 November, Save the Children celebrated Universal Children's Day by organising a global conversation on social media around more and better investment in every last child where General Comment No. 19 was also promoted. On social media we earned 24.1K impressions and gathered an engagement rate of 1.4% with investment in every last child messages. In **Bangladesh**, the launch was covered by six TV channels and eight print media. Hundreds of thousands of people were reached on Facebook and Twitter. In the **Gambia, Senegal and Togo**, the launch events were followed by one week of mobilization campaigns. In **Cambodia**, the video on General Comment No.19, produced by the Child Rights Connect Working Group on Investment in Children, was translated into Khmer and viewed by more than 2,000 people on Facebook.



Girl speaks during launch event in Bangladesh

Pledges and statements of support

79% of launches (23 out of the 29) were attended by government officials ranging from Ministry of Women/Gender/Family/ Children/Youth, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance to local government officials among others. Another key group of decision-makers engaged in the launch events were parliamentarians, attending 41% of the launches.

Policy- and other decision-makers made formal and informal pledges and statements in support of more and better investment in children and the dissemination and use of General Comment No. 19 during more than 20 launch events. Below are a few examples of these pledges and statements.

In **Argentina**, the Ministry of Economy stated that they, as of early 2017, will relaunch activities to monitor investments directed to children at national and public sector levels and advance towards child-sensitive budgeting.



In **Armenia**, the Chairman of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Healthcare, Motherhood and Child Care pledged to make a recommendation for the 2017 state budget to increase funding for screening of newborn children and to pilot projects for inclusive ECCDs.

In **Bangladesh**, the State Minister of Finance stressed the need for pre-budget discussions at national level in order to facilitate adequate allocation for children with the participation of civil society, children and other stakeholders. He also mentioned the readiness of government to finance program concepts proposed for the benefit of children.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees pledged to resubmit an initiative on programmatic budgeting initially submitted in 2016 to ensure the real needs of all children are represented in budgets and a monitoring system for public spending is put in place.

In **Guatemala**, the Chairperson of the Congress Commission for Children and Family pledged to engage the Congress on improving investment in children using the video on the General Comment produced by the Child Rights Connect Working Group on Investment in Children.

In **Honduras**, representatives from the Ministry of Education indicated that a review of the national budget would be done to try to increase allocations to improve school infrastructure, access to computer labs and English classes among others.

In **Myanmar**, Members of Parliament pledged to increase budget allocation to education as requested by children during the launch. Two days after the launch event, some Members of Parliament involved in the event engaged the Minister of Education on the

recruitment of more teachers, the upgrade of school buildings, the importance of providing the school curricula to children on time and establishing more school test offices.

In the **Netherlands**, a petition calling for strengthening the voice of children, addressing the different aspects of poverty among children, ensuring independent access to social security for children, and making the General Comment the blueprint for all investments and policies to combat child poverty was signed by six out of the seven members of the Parliament Committee of Social Affairs and Employment present.

In **Peru** and as a result of a proposal to Congress to increase children's budgets in 2017, the 2017 Public Budget Act was passed including financial transfers to the multi-sectoral plan to prevent teen pregnancy.

A number of local policy makers also made pledges related to public investment in children. In **Zimbabwe**, the Deputy Mayor of Kadoma committed to ensure greater investment in children, while the Director from the Social Services of the Durres municipality in **Albania** ensured that the municipality will continue to have participatory budget meetings with all concerned parties, including children, to ensure their rights are realized.

The Mayor of Guadalupe City in **Mexico**, also representing the Mexican Network of Child-friendly Cities, recommended that all municipalities have child-focused local budgets.

'We have to speed up the implementation of the commitment made by Beijing municipality to increase the investment of public budgeting to the social welfare and social protection to children, and also to ensure the money is used to achieve maximum, sustainable results it can achieve on the principles of 'in the best interest of children' and child participation. ... Let's work together to lead to the brightest future for all the children.'

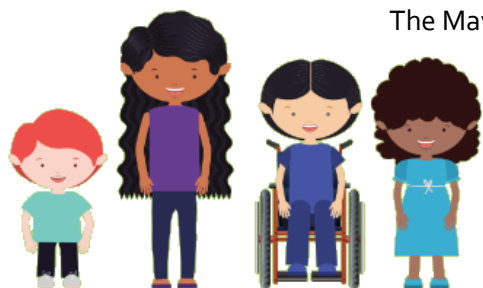
Mr. Li Hongbing, Deputy Bureau Chief,
Beijing Municipal Civil Affairs Bureau

'It should and must remain unacceptable that where a child is born must determine how far a child will go in realising their full potential; fellow countrymen and women, all children should have an equal opportunity to realise their potential and as parliamentarians, we hold the key to make this happen. Let us use that key for the children of Zambia and push for more investments in children for a better Zambia.'

Mwalimu Simfukwe, Chairperson of
Parliament's Estimates and Budget
Committee, Zambia



Girl participating in launch in Honduras



As part of the launch with the **EU**, the European External Action Service's Child Rights Focal Point committed to using the General Comment.

Children influencing decision makers

Many launch events provided children with an opportunity to get familiar with General Comment No. 19, formulate their specific asks, and share their views and recommendations with policy- and other decision-makers. Children participated in approx. 85% of the launches where they made recommendations on what governments should spend money on and the importance of involving children in budgetary processes. In many countries, children also disseminated the child-friendly version of the General Comment – now available in Albanian, Arabic, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Burmese, Chinese, English, French, Khmer and Spanish. Their participation demonstrated the added value of involving children in budgetary processes to secure more relevant interventions, something that was also recognized by different decision-makers.

In **Myanmar**, 130 children engaged with 67 parliamentarians on a number of their rights, including education, health and protection against exploitation. In **Zimbabwe**, children focused on gender equality and handed over the 'Girls' and Young Women's Ten Point Plan' to the Kadoma City Council. In **Togo**, children produced a song to deliver their messages to decision-makers.

In six countries – **Albania, Bangladesh, China, Colombia, Rwanda, Zimbabwe** - representatives from government, parliament or national councils for children made specific pledges to ensure that children have opportunities to engage in national or local budget processes.

Recommendations by children in Zambia:

Double investments in children over the next three years to help us realize the rights of every last child; by:

- ✓ Ensuring sufficient public resource mobilization such as revenue collection to support adequate budgeting
- ✓ Budget allocations must be equitable so that Every Last Child can be given a fair chance to realize their potential
- ✓ Ensuring effective and efficient spending to realize the rights of all children
- ✓ Government must publicly publish records of revenue and expenditure

Recommendations by children in Bosnia & Herzegovina:

Relevant institutions must ensure that public investment is based on actual needs and best interests of children, consultations with children, and transparency in public spending.

Recommendations by children in Myanmar:

In order to implement and realize their rights, children called for actions to increase budget allocation and spending on social sectors to Members of Parliament.

- ✓ To implement quality education
- ✓ To access basic health care services especially for remote and hard to reach areas
- ✓ To implement necessary project to eliminate the exploitation against children (child labor, sexual exploitation)
- ✓ To eliminate the drug selling and using among children
- ✓ To take necessary measures to stop armed conflict and to perform peace

Partnerships

The launch events strengthened partnerships to increase and improve public investment in children. Many launch events were jointly organized by different child rights organizations and UNICEF. The launch events also provided opportunities to initiate or deepen discussions between civil society, governments and/or legislatures. Furthermore, the events contributed to increased capacity of civil society to use General Comment No. 19 in advocacy. For example, during the **Asia-Pacific** Partnership Meeting of Child Rights Coalitions and Networks, civil society organizations from more than 15 countries were introduced to the General Comment.



The Way Forward in 2017

The Child Rights Connect Working Group on Investment in Children and its members are committed to push for more and better public investment in children based on the guidelines outlined in General Comment No. 19. In 2017, we will focus on:

- ✓ Supporting national actors to integrate General Comment No. 19, linked to other international commitments on investment in children, into national and sub-national advocacy strategies and to engage states to ensure more and better investment in the realization of children's rights as outlined in the UNCRC. To support national efforts, we will develop and disseminate different awareness raising and capacity-building tools and materials. One example is UNICEF's tool on [Child-focused Public Expenditure Measurement](#). Another example is the guidance Save the Children will develop on investment in every last child to support national actors to integrate international commitments on investment in children in national advocacy and campaigning for change.

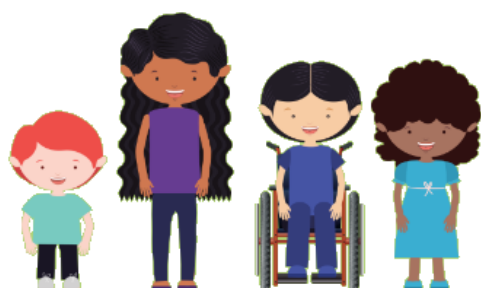


Launch activities in Nicaragua, Cambodia, Zambia and The Netherlands.

- ✓ Supporting children we work with, including children that were involved in the launch events, to take action on more and better investment in every last child. We will integrate learning and recommendations from research by Plan International and the Centre for Children's Rights on [Child-participatory Budgeting – A Review of Global Practice](#) into our engagement with children.
- ✓ In countries where supplementary UNCRC reports are being prepared, we will identify opportunities to include information on issues raised in General Comment No.19 and use recommendations made by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on public investment in children in national efforts for change.
- ✓ Continuing to influence UN and other intergovernmental bodies to strengthen their commitments on public investment in children based on General Comment No. 19 and commitments on investment in children made in the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the UN Human Rights Council Resolution on 'Towards better investment in the rights of the child' and the European Commission Recommendation on 'Investing in Children'.



This brief is supported by the following members of the Child Rights Connect Working Group on Investment in Children:



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