
“Investing in Children’s Rights and Protection for a Sustainable Zambia”

Submitted to the Chairperson of the Budgets Committee on 13th October, 2017
2017 Children's Parliament Communique on the 2018 Budget

COMMUNIQUE ON THE 2017 CHILDREN'S PARLIAMENT/WORKSHOP

The children of Civil Society for Poverty Reduction, Media Network for Child Rights and Development and SaFaids and JCTR with support from Save the Children and National Assembly of Zambia, convened the Children's Parliament on the 2018 National Budget in the Lusaka City Council Main Chambers on 12th October, 2017.


Below is a summary of the children's submissions on the 2018 Budget:

1. Education and Skills Development

**Strengths**

i. The continued school Infrastructure is commendable including the promise of teacher recruitment will also improve the learning environment for most children.

ii. The policy commitment of improving Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in schools and integrating it within the Smart Zambia Initiative is progressive.

**Weaknesses**

i. The government has concentrated on infrastructure and recruitment of teachers without having a concern on the school fees that keep on increasing each year. The Budget does specifically say how many teachers will be recruited in 2018 or how many we have recruited in 2017. This will affect how children hold the Ministry of Education accountable for their promise in the 2018 National Budget.

ii. The 2018 National Budget Presentation was an opportunity for the Minister of Finance to share the corrective measures that government had put in place to address the non-delivery of Free Sanitary Towels for school girls as promised in the 2017 Budget. However, the Budget has fallen short of this expectation from children, even though, as of August, 2017 no free sanitary towels had been delivered in any government school.

iii. According to the Cairo protocol and the Dakar framework of education which Zambia is a signatory to, it is required that the education sector is allocated a percentage of 20% plus of the national Budget. Zambia has historically failed to fulfill this commitment and disappointingly, the resource allocation to the 2018 Education sector budget has dropped from 16.5% in 2017 to 6.1% in 2018. A reduction in the education sector share of the national resources is an indication
that Education as a priority has reduced by 0.5 percentage points for the government in 2018.

**Recommendations**

i. Even with so much emphasis on the issue of school infrastructure, cases of poor structures are affecting some pupils especially during the rainy season where roofs get blown off and walls collapsing. This is a hazard for children and often affects their access to education during school terms. Thus, we recommend that children in these communities are consulted in the design and also monitoring of the quality of these construction projects.

ii. Budget allocation to the education sector must be progressing towards fulfillment of our International commitment to both education and children. Increasing the education sector budget share of the national budget by 1% every year means that we would have fulfilled the Cairo Protocol and Dakar Education Framework resource allocation requirements by the year 2021, when the the 7th National Development Plan comes to an end.

iii. The Budget must also outline how it will address the exploitative school fees in government schools which is hindering most children, especially in rural areas from progressing into secondary school and even further to tertiary education. The fees must therefore, be normalized, because in as much as education is an investment for government it should not be a business for the School.

iv. Government should put all the necessary Information communication technology equipment in schools especially in rural areas before introducing it in the curriculum if we are not to experience what happened in 2015 where children slept at school for two days due to computer shortage. Even this year there are reports of some secondary schools in Lusaka District not having adequate Computers to conduct ICT exams for Grade 9s, for example, according to a media report, in Matero a well-wisher had to donate 20 Desktop Computers to help out at school.

### 2. HEALTH

**Strengths**

The steady increase in allocation of funds in the health sector from 8.3% in 2016, 8.9 in 2017 to 9.5% in 2018 which is encouraging and should change the service delivery and procurement of drugs.

**Weaknesses**

i. Patients in government hospitals and clinics are still referred to private pharmaceuticals for drugs. This in contrast with the yearly increase allocation to
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procurement and supply of drugs as indicated in the last three National Budgets. Most children cannot afford these drugs from the private shops as they are expensive.

ii. Apart from HIV/AIDS, there is still a lot focus on curing than prevention in the Health Budget, especially diseases affecting children from 0 to 18 years old. There are few resources committed towards sensitisation and most of it just done on International Commemorations where people participate in March pasts and not consistent throughout the year.

**Recommendations**

i. The government should be able to use part of the money in the procurement and supply of drugs for putting up good security measures to drugs in hospitals and clinics.

ii. Government should introduce a fund that is specifically to child health services in hospitals and sensitization programmes on the child health care.

iii. Most importantly we recommend the allocation toward health be increased to 15% of the budget as stated in the Abuja declaration which Zambia is a signatory to.

iv. Government should procure more modern and child-friendly equipment and also hire and train professional, qualified and child friendly personnel.

**3. Recreation, Culture and Religion**

**Strengths**

With a 0.6% allocated to recreation religion and culture we feel it is important since religion and culture are some of the aspects that add good morals and values to children therefore, we recommend that they are seriously incorporated in the children’s school syllabus and meaningful delivery of the lesson is done.

**Weaknesses**

The Budget is not very clear on how the Recreation Budget will be utilised to make up for the loss of play parks in most areas such as Lusaka. Most of the land has been sold to Shopping Malls reducing the space for children to play, make friends and stay away from illicit activities such as drug and alcohol abuse.

**Recommendation**

i. The rehabilitation of our parks and construction of more play parks be given priority as this will help more children burn stress, interact with one another and have a clear understanding of issues affecting them.
ii. The government should allocate more than 1% as compared to the 0.6% of the budget it has allocated to build recreational facilities and enhance cultural values.

iii. All the play parks or play grounds to be build or rehabilitated must also be constructed to accommodate children living with disabilities.

4. Social Protection

Strengths

It is an encouragement on the part of government under the food security pack for increasing the number of beneficiaries from 40,000 to 80,000 to support vulnerable and viable farmers.

Weaknesses

i. The government said it’s going to fully switch to an electronic social cash transfer system but this might work against the government as most of the poor who benefit from the transfers in rural areas do not have access to ICTs. The ICT Infrastructure is also not in place in some of the remotest parts of the country. This has been some of the challenges that have affected the implementation of the e-voucher where some farmers have to be accompanied by their colleagues just to redeem their inputs.

ii. The amount the beneficiaries of social cash transfer get is too little to sustain themselves for instance the increase from K72 to K90 next year cannot be enough not even for six family members for their basic needs. This compromises the living conditions for children.

iii. The reduction to the Pension fund from approximately 1.6 billion in 2017 to approximately 1 billion in 2018 will affect children who depend on their retired parents that have not yet received their dues. Even when the pension fund has been high parents still go state house for demonstrations, thus, this situation will worsen with the reduction and some children may not be sent to school by their retired parents in 2018.

Recommendations

i. We recommend that the amount for the social protection be increased from the proposed 3.2% to allow even more beneficiaries and most important is sustainability.

ii. There has been more money allocated to social protection but less money has been allocated to the social cash transfer hence we recommend that more money be allocated to social cash transfer in order to sustain vulnerable families.
5. Housing and Community Amenities

**Strengths**

The children did not discuss on the strengths of this Budget allocation.

**Weaknesses**

(i) Too many bars are very close to schools and residential areas thereby prompting children to start abusing drugs and alcohol

(ii) A lot of people are living in unplanned settlement in areas such as Misisi compound which is disastrous in times of the rainy season causing diseases

**Recommendations**

We propose that people living in unplanned settlements should be budgeted for as well as, either by making the places they already living into legal settlements or relocating them to planned settlements where living standards won’t go against some of their basic rights.

**Conclusion**

We urge parliament to ensure that they strengthen oversight on how inclusive the Budget preparation is bringing children on board. Parliament must also ensure that we have sufficient laws to guarantee children’s participation in the preparation, enactment and monitoring of national plans and budgets in Zambia.

We the Children, undersigned below place the foregoing submissions on 13th October, 2017, for consideration by the all Members of Parliament during their Debates on the 2018 Budget Report: