



INVESTMENT IN CHILDREN ADVOCACY STRATEGY FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA

2016-2020

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...money answereth all *things*...

Ecclesiastes 10 verse 19

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FOREWORD

Most governments in Southern Africa are in the process of coming up with progressive legislation that set a tone for the protection and fulfilment of children's rights. This can be exemplified by the Child Protection Act in Namibia which took a long time to be implemented into law and the Child Protection Act of Swaziland which encapsulates children's rights as cited in international instruments such as the UNCRC and the ACRWC. It therefore can be said that the child rights movement in Southern Africa is getting into an era where accountability should be at the centre of the interventions. The promulgation of child friendly laws in the region shows that governments have become increasingly conscious of their obligations to their citizenry, and to the larger international community. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and the Universal Periodic Review have effectively widened the horizon of state accountability beyond national borders into that of regional and global compact.

The rights enshrined in child rights instruments inevitably put a budgetary obligation on State parties for their implementation. It can be argued that a national budget is a powerful economic policy instrument, offering a major opportunity for governments to influence income distribution and address the causes and impact of poverty – and of course, ensure child wellbeing. The budget therefore forms the nexus between obligations made by the state and their translation into wellbeing outcomes. Be though as it may, the budget process is a politically-charged process, which makes it hard for less vocal, and yet demographically sizable, sections of the population like children to influence the process or make their legitimate claims on resources. As a result, there is need for child rights organisations to be coordinated and put the issue of budgetary responsibility on the public agenda.

This strategy therefore forms part of the key initiatives in the child rights sector of Southern Africa to be coordinated in holding state parties accountable so that the obligations they have made both at international and national levels become a reality to the lives of millions of children in the region. This strategy also seeks to complement the efforts that are being made by regional duty bearers such as SADC secretariat through the SADC Minimum Package of Service for OVC &Y by providing ideas of strategies that can be used mainly at national level by child rights players in lobbying for increased investment in children.

INTRODUCTION

This advocacy strategy is being developed in the background of many southern African countries having promulgated child friendly laws that domesticate the provisions of the UNCRC and the ACRWC. This means that child rights discourse will have to shift its paradigm from lobbying for laws and structural infra structure since this now has been achieved. Going forward, the child rights discourse should now focus on how those laws become a reality to the lives of children, especially the children in contexts of vulnerabilities. As such focus now in the child rights sector should be on social accountability, investment in children and child rights monitoring. Ample focus on these will place the child rights civil society on a pedestal where they become governance oriented for the realisation of children's rights. Indeed the discourse has moved from a needs based approach to programming to a rights based approach. In like manner, the paradigm has also shifted from lobbying state parties to domesticate laws to a discourse where the state institutions have to be strengthened to deliver on the state's obligations to children. One way of making that happen is through focus on investment in children.

“The situation of children in southern Africa demands that governments prioritize investment in children. Currently, it can be said that there is general under investment in children amongst southern Africa state parties. For those that are allocating recommended amounts to children's issues, in some countries, there are no strong institutions to ensure a judicious use of those resources to curb inefficiencies, illicit financial flows and payment of ghost workers. According to the Global Financial Integrity the developing world lost \$859 billion in 2010 through illicit financial flows.¹ Out of this figure 61.2 percent of cumulative outflows came from Asia. Latin America, the Caribbean and the Pacific accounted for 15.6 percent, with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) at 9.9 percent, developing Europe making up 7.0 percent of illicit flows, with the balance flowing out of Africa (6.3 percent).² If this money was spent on children it could have saved the lives of 86,000 children under 5 each year or 1.4 million children over the period of the MDGs (2000-2015). Illicit financial flows hit hardest on poorest children, majority of which live in middle income countries with highest outflows.³

Investment in children has also been compromised by ballooning government debt in a number of countries and growing budget deficits in the face of multiple competing priorities. On average, low income countries spend 30-40% of their annual revenue to debt servicing.⁴ Borrowing is one way of financing public investments in children. It is thus not necessarily a bad thing to do. However, if not done prudently, it can result in an unsustainable debt burden that negatively affects children. Sub-Saharan Africa for example spends approximately \$13.5 billion every year on debt repayments.⁵

¹ UNICEF, 2008, State of Africa's Children

² Kar A and Freitas (2012), Illicit Financial Flows from Developing Countries, Global Financial Integrity, Washington DC

³ Save the Children, 2012, Born Equal, How reducing inequality could give our children a better future, London

⁴ Save the Children, (2013)

⁵ Ibid

As the child rights sector, it is imperative that we understand these issues so that we will be able to lobby governments for increasing of fiscal spaces so that adequate resources are accorded to our constituency- the children. The prerogative to increase fiscal space for social and economic investments has never been greater. Poor children and their families have been hard hit by the unabated wave of food, fuel and employment shocks. Having exhausted available coping mechanisms, they are also likely to be disproportionately affected by reduced public support as well as the different cost-cutting measures that governments are undertaking.⁶

On the contrary, when the populations are most in need of public assistance, the fiscal space is shrinking significantly. Finding fiscal space for critical economic and social investments is necessary for sustained equitable results for children and human development, particularly during downtimes. This rationale is not only based on the complementary effects of human capital to physical capital more generally, but also on the fact that children's deprivations can have irreversible adverse impacts on their future capabilities and, in turn, the prospects of their countries.⁷ This strategy is intended to serve as a guide for child rights civil society in southern Africa, regional duty bearers and development partners to identify possible funding avenues to boost investments in children. The suggested strategies are not meant to be exhaustive, but provides generic guides which can be tweaked to meet county contexts

Reasons to invest in children

There are at least four powerful arguments as to why governments should invest in children rights:

1. **The rights argument:** This is based on Article 4 of the UNCRC, which notes that *States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation.*
2. **The posterity argument:** national budgets should ensure that children get the best start in life, have access to school, are protected from violence and exploitation, live free from HIV/AIDS, for example, and grow up healthy to realize their full potential. Budget tracking should look beyond income and consumption data and service delivery, to identify the key structural, social and political constraints – as well as economic constraints – at the household and societal level that hinder children's development.
3. **The demographic imperative argument:** In Africa, children under age 15 account for 41 per cent of the population in 2015 and young persons aged 15 to 24 account for a further 19 per cent.⁸ In the spirit of guaranteeing a blissful future for the southern African states, investment in children must be amongst the primary focus of state parties. True investment in children places premium on hearing the voices of the children in structuring

⁶ UNICEF (2011), Identifying Fiscal Space: Options for Social and Economic Development for Children and Poor Households in 182 Countries, New York

⁷ Ibid

⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015). World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables. ESA/P/WP.241.

the local and national budgets. As such, children should be provided with platforms as a significant population for them to articulate their views.

4. ***The economic argument:*** When national budgets prioritise children, there will be a high return in that investment as the children will live to fulfil their potential as well as contribute to the development of their societies.
5. ***The political argument:*** A child sensitive local and national budgets subsequently contribute to peaceful societies and strengthens the social contract between citizens and their governments.
6. ***The moral and social argument:*** Investing in children is the right thing to do, it contributes to equal and happy societies. Inadequate social investment and high levels of inequality and poverty undermines children's rights hence investment in children can reduce inequality and ensure that adequate services are delivered to children

For investment in children to be a reality, several challenges that bedevil SADC countries have to be dealt with. Some of the issues that would need to be done include strengthening public policies, regulatory frameworks and finance at all levels, unlocking the transformative potential of people and the private sector, and incentivizing changes in financing as well as consumption and production patterns to support sustainable development.⁹ Further to this, appropriate incentives, strengthening national policy environments and regulatory frameworks and their coherence, harnessing the potential of science, technology and innovation, closing technology gaps and scaling up capacity -building at all levels are essential for the shift towards sustainable investment in child wellbeing. There are key enablers which need to be in place for the foregoing to be a reality. Some of the enablers include ensuring freedom, human rights, good governance, rule of law, peace and security, combating corruption at all levels and in all its forms, and effective, accountable and inclusive democratic institutions at the subnational, national and international levels.

There is need for the realisation that investing in children is critical to achieving inclusive, equitable and sustainable development for present and future generations. In doing this, there is need to affirm the importance of promoting and protecting children's rights while ensuring that no child is left behind. The strategy will reinforce the need to have impeccable policies and robust mobilisation and effective use of domestic resources as this is the primary way in which sustainable development can be achieved. International assistance should not be the backbone of development initiatives in southern Africa, instead, it should only supplement domestic efforts. Such a situation can be reached when revenue collection and administration systems are enhanced through modernized, progressive tax systems, improved tax policies and more efficient tax collection.

⁹ Addis paper

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Child rights discourse shift

With wholesome laws being developed by the state parties in southern Africa, child rights activists' attention should shift towards making the state parties more accountable. This is coming from a backdrop where the Mo Ibrahim Index has shown that there is modest progress in governance over the last few years as a result of several international and external factors influencing political and legislative reforms.¹⁰ This has meant relative improvement, albeit at a slow pace, in transparency, accountability and citizens' involvement in executive functions and administrative processes. Accountability, as one attribute of good governance, refers to the obligation of public officials to be responsible for their decisions and actions, through checks and balances usually built into constitutions.¹¹

Governance and child rights nexus

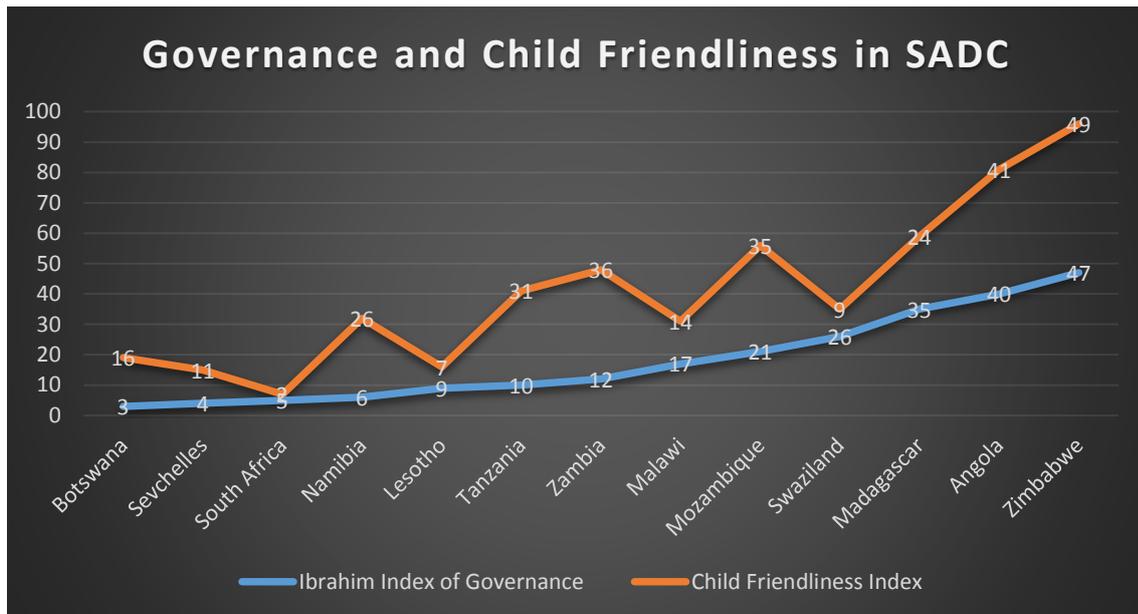
Despite such efforts, many African countries still have poor governance systems characterised by dominance of the executive body and dysfunction of the system of checks and balances. Children's rights cannot be fulfilled without effective, transparent and accountable governance mechanisms to improve service delivery in order for children to realise their rights.¹² Mass media, which potentially plays a key role in holding public officials accountable for their actions, is often censored by African governments, especially on issues related to governance and accountability. This has resulted in limited accountability and inadequate overall performance of these governments in complying with their obligations to promote and progressively realise the human rights of all citizens, including the rights of vulnerable groups such as children.¹³ Below is a chart that is showing the trends of governance in some SADC countries and the ACPF child friendliness Index. The graphs shows that for the countries that are faring well in governance such as South Africa, Seychelles and Botswana, they are also doing well in their child friendliness. Countries such as Zimbabwe, Angola and Madagascar did not score favourable marks on governance and this was the case as well on child friendliness. There are however some countries which have dissonance between governance scores and child friendliness. This is a result of some initiatives which the country would have done in the midst of weak institutions and yet they manage to, for example, fight child mortality like is the case in Malawi.

¹⁰ Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2013 Ibrahim Index for African Governance: Data Report

¹¹ www.uneca.org/publications/economic-report-africa-2009

¹² ODI & Save the Children, 2011 p.vii

¹³ Mo Ibrahim (n10 above)

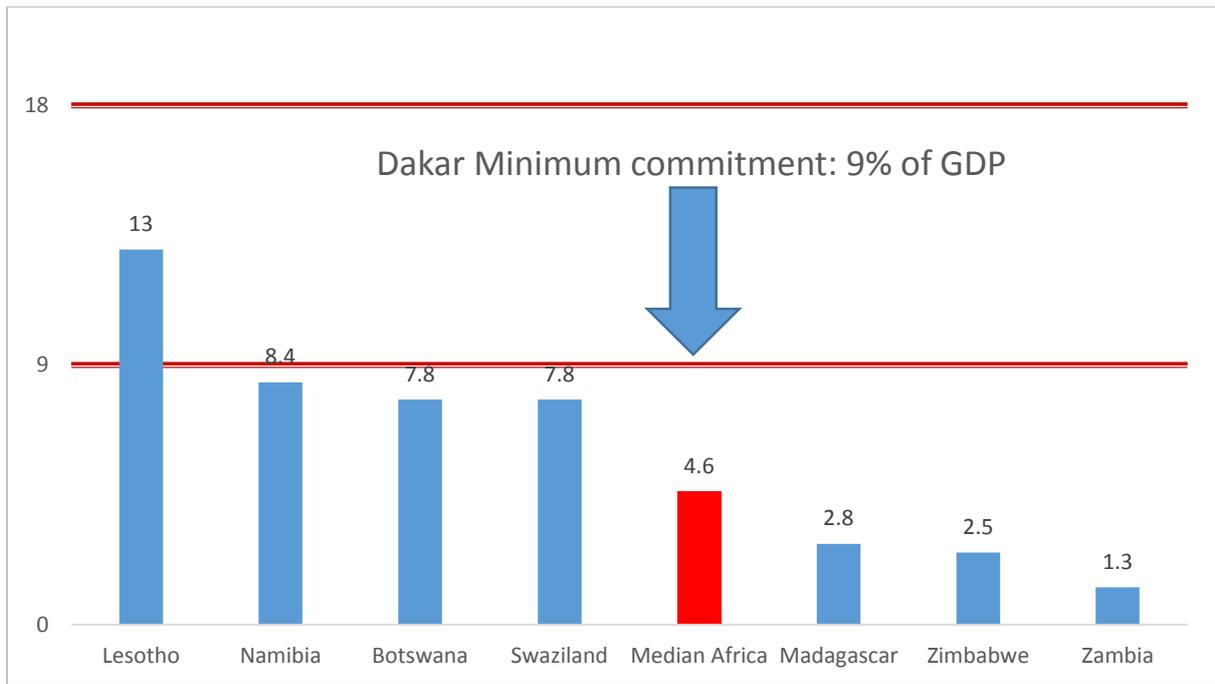


Source: Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2015) and ACPF (2013)

Budget allocations and child rights outcomes

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child appreciates the criticality of mobilizing and allocating sufficient resources towards children’s issues if children’s rights are to be realized.¹⁴ This is attested, in part, by the outcomes of the Day of General Discussion on Resources for the Rights of the Child held in September 2007 and the forthcoming general comment on public investment in children. SADC countries have generally not been adhering to set parameters on budget allocations. Below is a trend of how countries have been adhering to the dictates of the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for all which stipulated that education should constitute 9% of the country’s GDP.

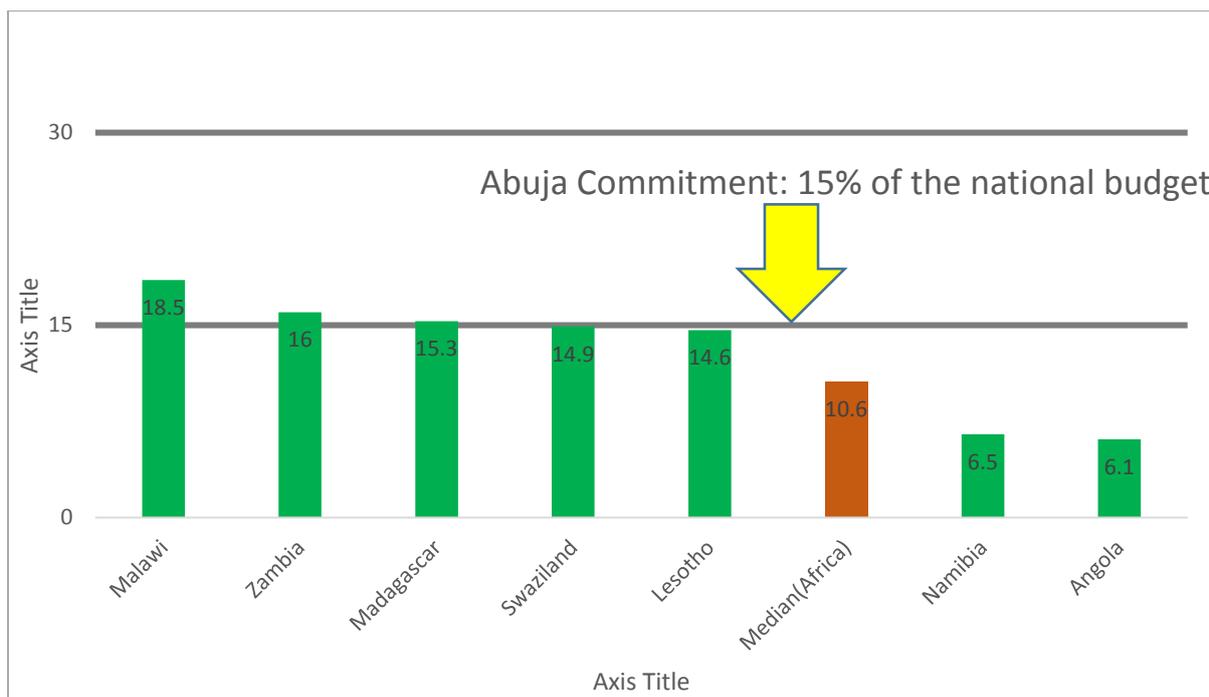
¹⁴ Save the Children, 2013, p. 6



Source: UNESCO, 2013

The graph above shows that most countries have not been meeting this commitment on education. As a result, the quality of the education in these SADC countries is compromised as institutions which are supposed to provide the basic service are handicapped by resources.

In health, SADC countries are also struggling to meet their obligations under the Abuja Declaration on Health where state parties committed to investing 15% of their national budgets on health. The graph below shows that some of the countries are doing well in meeting this obligation such as Malawi, Zambia and Madagascar while others have not been able. It must be noted however that the trends change each year the budget is announced which should make child rights movements in these countries relentless until it becomes part of the standard ways of planning.



Source: WHO, 2013

Inevitably, when the budget for health is small, this would mean that the state will not be able to meet its obligation of providing health as a basic public good. Despite the allocations not meeting set benchmarks generally, it is problematic to trace how child rights outcomes have been influenced by the allocations made. There is dearth of data which follows through allocations done by state parties to achievement of child rights outcomes. This strategy therefore pushes child rights civil society to go beyond focusing on allocations only but follow through on the efficiency of the allocations and the extent to which child rights outcomes are realised through the allocations made.

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Social accountability for child rights

The foregoing approach places accountability at the centre of child rights programming. The premise for an assessment of accountability with respect to children's rights and wellbeing is the three types of obligations postulated in child rights instruments, namely:

- i. the obligation to respect freedoms and entitlements;

- ii. the obligation to protect both freedoms and entitlements from third parties or from social or environmental threats;
- iii. The obligation to fulfil entitlements through their facilitation or direct provision.¹⁵

Accountability for children cannot be considered in isolation from the overall framework of accountability to improve governance. In this light, a national budget becomes an ideal lens through which to examine government commitment to progress and catching up by the extent to which investment is done for children's wellbeing. It is instructive to note that the budget is the cornerstone in the rhetoric-reality nexus in the realisation of child wellbeing. Both the ACRWC and the UNCRC demand resources for their implementation and realisation.

To conclude this section, improving accountability from the perspective of child rights requires coordinated measures including the following three key priority actions:¹⁶

1. Establishment of national child rights observatories. Monitoring the implementation of children's rights entails regular collection of adequate information on children's rights and wellbeing in order to track progress and accelerate action where there are gaps. Governments therefore need to establish independent and autonomous national child rights observatories mandated to coordinate efforts to collect, compile, analyse and disseminate data relating to children, in order continuously to monitor implementation of children's rights, and to devise effective strategies for improvement. There is also a need for developing special data collection programmes to ensure that the particular needs of marginalised children are captured and effectively addressed.
2. Building the capacity of law enforcement and human rights institutions and ensuring their independence. Law enforcement and human rights institutions such as child rights commissions perform better in environments where they have greater independence and are adequately resourced to undertake their mandates. Governments therefore need to ensure through laws, policies and administrative practices that these entities exercise their independence and invest in building the human and institutional capacities they need to undertake their duties effectively.
3. Facilitating the role of media in the promotion of accountability. Mass media plays an important role in promoting accountability at all levels through exposing abuse of power, shaping public attitudes and triggering action that holds duty-bearers accountable. Therefore, governments need to facilitate access to information through the media.

Focus on the fiscal space

Without sufficient resources, the provisions of these child rights instruments remain empty promises. Budgets are therefore the objective barometer of a government's policy priorities and true commitment. The increasing prevalence of expenditure contraction reflects the common

¹⁵ Lafont, C. (2010). Accountability and global governance: challenging the state-centric conception of human rights. *Ethics & Global Politics*, 3(3).

¹⁶ ACPF (2009). Budget Analysis from Child Rights Perspective, Background paper for the African Report on Child Wellbeing 2010: Budgeting for children. The African Child Policy Forum, Addis Ababa.

perception that fiscal space has largely diminished in poor countries due to lower revenue and rising debt.

However, this view is limiting and counterproductive because fiscal space is not just financing that is readily available today, but also the dynamic outcome of policy actions and reforms that governments may aggressively pursue for resource mobilization. In this sense, it is feasible to find fiscal space even in the poorest countries for increased social spending and economic investments.

Indeed, many countries—including some of the poorest—have succeeded in mobilizing significant resources for public investments during downturns. By utilizing all possible options to expand fiscal space and invest in their people, these countries have achieved a virtuous circle of sustained growth and further expansion of fiscal space; they set inspiring examples to others who have been trapped in limited fiscal space, low social investments and weak economic growth.

RATIONALE FOR THE REGIONAL INVESTMENT IN CHILDREN STRATEGY

Developing the investment in children advocacy strategy for the first time at regional level proffers an opportunity to do a lot of introspection and environmental appreciation for effective advocacy. The strategy is meant to guide the advocacy interventions of child rights civil society organisations in southern Africa. In an environment that has multiple players who are heavily dependent on funding partners' support, the strategy can be used as a tool for fundraising. The strategy will seek to address the following:

Bringing clarity and agreement on areas of focus

Agreement on priority areas is paramount and having a clear vision for how the child rights civil society in southern Africa will collaborate and on what issues related to investment in children. Without this agreement, effectiveness will be compromised. The strategy will complement the work of SADC Secretariat's SADC Minimum Package of Service for OVC&Y and the African Union Agenda 2063. SADC documents, together with regional and international instruments such as the UNCRC and the ACRWC which the state parties have ratified will shape the priorities of this strategy

Alignment

Since there are many players working at regional level, the advocacy strategy will bring about alignment of the various players' efforts in ensuring respect, protection and fulfillment of children's rights. The strategy will seek to work with various child rights thematic networks that exist in the region on this aspect. It is the desired outcome of this strategy that all regional child rights partners' interventions on investment in children be informed by this strategy to avoid *ad hoc* solitary engagements with regional child rights duty bearers. At national level, it is anticipated that national

networks will derive their strategies from this broad document and then tailor make the national interventions to suit the contexts.

Differentiation

One of the key challenges of the child rights sector at regional level has been the inability of taking advantage of each partner's area of comparative advantage. Some partners have expertise in different thematic areas such as *inter alia* child protection, advocacy, child participation, child rights governance, education and health. It is imperative for partners to tap into each other's areas of expertise in order to harness each other's competences subsequently increase the cohesion amongst regional child rights players on their advocacy initiatives and peer learning.

Measurable Progress

Historically, it has been a challenge to monitor the work that the child rights sector has been doing at regional level. Generally, each regional partner has been working independently in addressing areas of child rights interests. The strategy will provide an opportunity for both regional and national child rights partners to collaborate and achieve demonstrable results at this level corporately using the Minimum Standards of Service as developed by the SADC Secretariat. The strategy is going to provide benchmarks for programming, assisting in tracing progress of each partner on their advocacy initiatives

STRATEGY GOAL

All children, in the SADC region especially the poorest, benefit from increased public investment and judicious use of society's resources in realizing their rights.

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The Performance Indicator is:

Number of SADC countries reporting positive changes in resource mobilization, allocation and public expenditure patterns on children.

STRATEGY OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

Resource mobilization to invest in children strategic outcome:

Regional and national child rights civil society actively lobbying state parties for expansion in the fiscal space for improved public investment in children by 2020.

Outcome Indicator:¹⁷

Number of SADC countries that report increases in resources available to invest in children through the relevant line ministries.

¹⁷ Note that in all of the indicators, each national child rights network would need to include context relevant data.

Expected results

1. Enhanced capacity of CRNSA members and other regional child rights stakeholders to carry out analysis, planning, programming and advocacy on ways of financing investments in children such as reallocating current expenditures, fighting corruption, plugging leaks of illicit financial flows, reducing external debt service; restructuring domestic debt; increasing tax revenue, primarily corporate tax, other domestic resource mobilisation and innovative financing mechanisms.
2. Increased knowledge and appreciation by state and child rights civil society of the rationale and importance of investment in children.
3. Domestic revenue mobilization, particularly through taxation, feature strongly in government and national child rights civil society positions on how investment in children can be improved.
4. Enhanced awareness on the different financing options to invest in children by policy and budget makers.

Resource Mobilisation Strategies

Provide technical assistance to national child rights networks

CRNSA and its partners will facilitate capacity building of national child rights networks for them to appreciate and effectively engage in issues relating to how public investments in children can be financed. Key issues to be covered will include taxation, debt management, borrowing, aid effectiveness and innovative financing mechanisms.

Conduct policy research

In collaboration with government institutions, the regional child rights duty bearers and national child rights networks, action research will be conducted as a means of collecting evidence for advocacy. The research findings will be widely disseminated to relevant stakeholders packaged in ways that are palatable for them. There is a tendency of producing voluminous research reports, but in this era, digital packaging is more appealing. When designing the researches, there will be effort to make it all inclusive for the stakeholders in the particular thematic area, including children as well. Some of the specific research topics could include: missed revenue generation opportunities; child rights impact assessments of specific revenue policies such as value added tax; comparative studies in financing options to generate good practices; feasibility of specific innovative taxes as well as advocacy on earmarking of specific resources for children.

Domestic resource mobilisation

There already exist a number of regional partners involved in taxation, debt, aid and innovating financing systems. This strategy will facilitate the leveraging of the partners' areas of comparative advantages in ensuring that the advocacy around these issues is child sensitive. The strategy places premium on domestic resource mobilisation especially through ear mark taxes. A government's ability to effectively collect tax is closely linked to its capability to improve investment in children. Taxation, in all its various forms, is a

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sustainable source of revenue to finance public spending on children. Linked to this will be the need to have efficient and effective institutions that can abate corruption.

Systematic learning and knowledge management platforms

The strategy provides for shared learning platforms that meet regularly and having mechanisms for peer mentorship. These platforms could be quarterly, depending on what members would have agreed. The organisations that will attend these platforms will have to package the work they are doing into succinct briefs that are palatable with other child rights stakeholders in the region. The platforms may include government line ministries. Learning platforms will be an opportunity for peer mentorship. External presenters may be invited from other platforms, should the members not have the competence in a subject they will need help in. For these platforms to be sustainable, they should add value to the members. This way, each member will look forward to the next meeting because their questions will be answered.

Improved public spending to advance child rights strategic outcome:

Public spending, especially on children in various contexts of vulnerabilities, improved in quantity and quality.

Outcome Indicator:

Number of SADC countries that report improvements in public spending on children particularly in health, education, child protection, social protection and national child rights infrastructure.

Expected Results:

1. Increased use of child focused data and analyses to inform revenue sharing and public spending decisions by policy and budget makers.
2. Improved reach and effectiveness in public spending on children by both local and national governments.

Improved Public Spending To Advance Child Rights Strategies

Create a body of evidence

Using the platforms mentioned above, the organisations in the child rights sector should collect evidence on the state of children's rights in their areas. The evidence may include but not limited to:

- Short videos: in this electronic and visual age, well packaged visual materials are more convincing. It should not be longer than twenty to thirty minutes
- Participant systematic observation on the state of affairs (systematic, participant, spot, structured and unstructured),
- Commentaries from newspapers and other media- members should produce these. If possible, get columns to write on public investment in children
- Information from consultative workshops,
- State party and non-state actors' reports to treaty bodies like the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, African Committee of Experts on the Rights and the Welfare of the Child and the Universal Periodic Review conducted by the Human Rights Commission
- Simple baseline surveys

Identifying child rights champions

Recognizing that children's issues generally do not feature highly in the priorities of government, this strategy will work to support efforts by different arms of government, CSOs and other stakeholders to raise the political profile of children's issues in public spending decisions. Deliberate effort will be made to promote specific child rights policy goals. Evidence will be provided to policy and budget makers on the economic, social and political

The strategy aspires to see policy makers who are champions for children's rights.

returns that arise from prioritizing investment in children. The strategy aspires to see policy makers who are champions for children's rights. These champions could be legislators, government bureaucrats, media or private sector who will be nuanced on the benefits of public investment in children.

Budget tracking and advocacy

CRNSA and its partners will support budget analyses and advocacy initiatives at national level. Child rights budget analysis will entail comprehensive assessment of the processes, outputs and impacts of budgets on the realization of child rights.¹⁸ This process will seek to ascertain the extent to which budgets and accompanying processes effectively respond to the short and long term development and protection challenges of children. The power of budget analysis is in that it can provide evidence to support advocacy on revenues, allocations and expenditures. The evidence generated will be used to inform lobby and advocacy for more and better spending on children.

Using the budget cycle approach

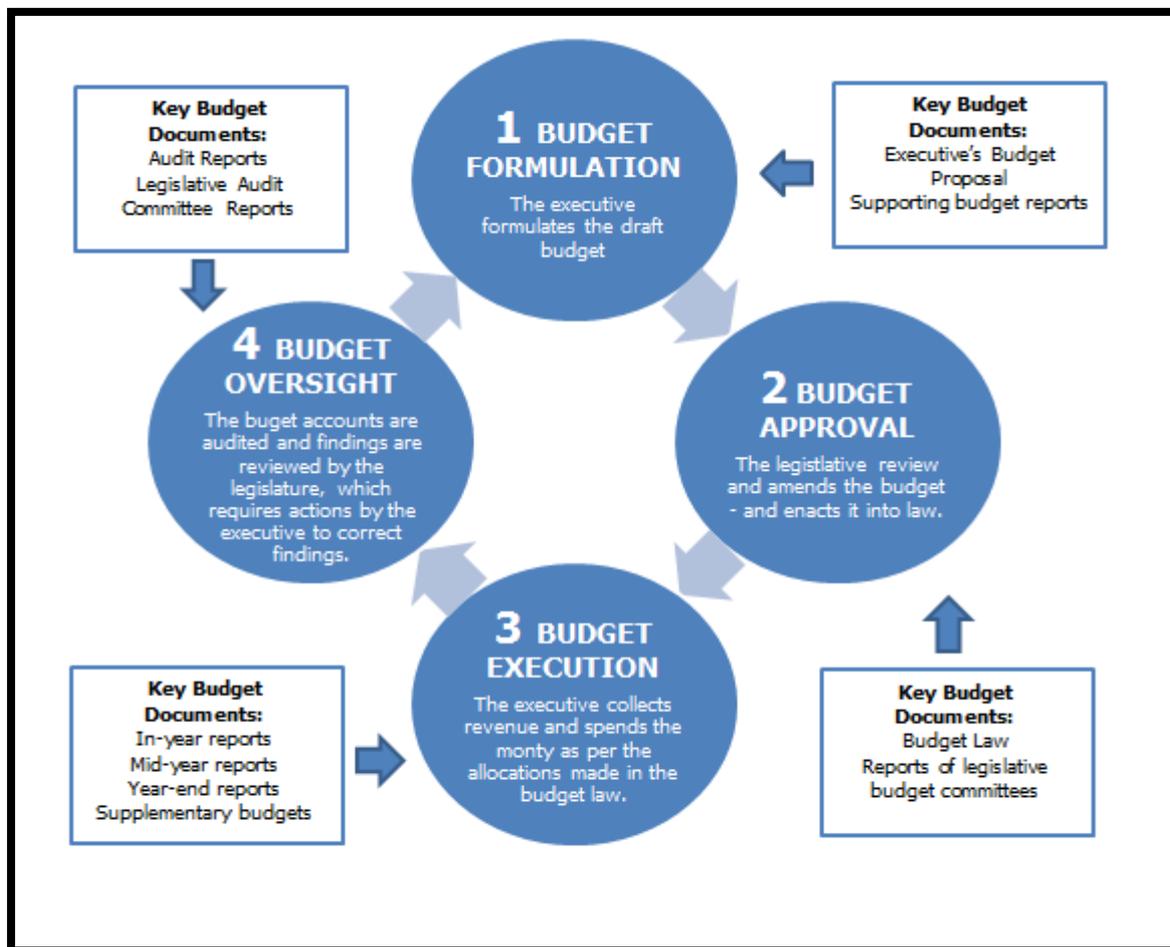
To avoid the investment in children issue to be viewed as a once off event based initiative, the strategy recommends that national child rights networks use the budget cycle approach. This will strengthen the understanding that influencing national budgets is not an event that is done when the Minister of Finance makes a presentation of the budget statement in parliament. In fact, the budget statement presented should have been influenced already in closed spaces. Further, child rights civil society should not only

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¹⁸ Save the Children Investment in Children Strategy, 2010-2015

The sector should follow through the processes to make sure that the allocated amounts are disbursed efficiently. After disbursement, the funds are managed and utilised in a fiduciary manner.



Source: NABZ Iran¹⁹

Promoting costing of child rights policies and plans

CRNSA and its partners will promote costing of child rights policies, strategies and specific initiatives. Costing is an important tool in budget formulation. It is difficult to effectively mobilize resources and make adequate and appropriate allocations when governments do not know how much it cost to deliver specific child rights.

Child Rights impact assessments of fiscal policies and budgets

One way of influencing fiscal policies and public spending is to ensure that governments conduct Child Rights Impact Assessments (CRIA). A CRIA is a mechanism to ensure that policy, budgetary and service delivery proposals are systematically assessed, before implementation, to determine the likely impact on children. The importance of CRIs is to warn policy and budget makers of the

¹⁹ <https://www.nabz-iran.com/en/content/page/lesson-one-the-budget-cycle-2>

potential negative and positive effects of public spending decisions and then devise strategies of responding to them. CRIAs have potential to improve the quality of fiscal policies and budgets.

Budget monitoring and expenditure tracking

Budget allocations alone are not enough to guarantee effective spending on children. It is crucial to also find out where and how the allocated funds actually get spent. To this end, this strategy will support budget monitoring and expenditure tracking initiatives. Results of budget and expenditure tracking will be used to inform advocacy on future spending decisions, policy and administrative reforms in order to improve the quantity and quality of spending on children.

Promoting child responsive budgeting frameworks

This strategy will encourage governments to put in place sustainable and context specific institutional, policy and administrative frameworks that enable child responsive budgeting. These will guide the nature and scope of public sector investments on children. The frameworks should aim to enhance transparency, accountability, participation as well as foster effective allocation and spending. The strategy encourages members to develop budget templates that will enable stakeholder to appreciate the proportions of the national budgets that are allocated to children. The strategy also encourages governments to institutionalize some of the issues mentioned above such as child rights impact assessments, costing of policies and strategies as well as careful and systematic budgeting that consider demographic factors, gender, situation of children and evidence on policies and programmes that work, among some of the key factors.

Using the state party reporting

It is imperative to take advantage of the reporting cycles of the SADC member states to treaty bodies. This provides a legitimate platform for partners to this strategy to raise issues of children's rights so that the state parties may make commitments. There will be need to make sure that the concluding observations from the treaty bodies become living documents in the respective countries. This means that national child rights networks would need to coordinate the efforts of the civil society organisations to make sure that implementation plans are developed. Further, the implementation plans should be developed in collaboration with relevant government line ministries.

Fiscal governance strategic outcome:

Improved transparency, participation and accountability in budget processes at both local and national levels.

Outcome Indicator: Number of countries in southern Africa where children are meaningfully engaging with investment in children issues and holding governments to account for their decisions and actions.

Expected results:

1. SADC member states meet the criterion of transparency on resource mobilization, allocation and utilization of public funds;
2. Improved public access to key budget documents, such as pre-budget statement, child friendly citizen budget, enacted budget, in-year expenditure and audit reports.

3. Sustainable structures and mechanisms for citizens, including children, to meaningfully participate in fiscal processes and government to account for their decisions in place.
4. Improved responsiveness of public officials to children's issues including in public service delivery.

Fiscal Governance Strategies

Promoting budget transparency and accountability

Partners to this strategy will work with child rights national networks in promoting fiscal transparency and accountability. This will include supporting advocacy for access to information laws and for governments to improve access by citizens to key budget documents throughout the budget cycle. Citizens, including children, should be provided with comprehensive information on past, current, and projected fiscal activities and on major fiscal risks on the realization of child rights.

Supporting social accountability initiatives

The strategy will promote social accountability initiatives by child rights national networks and various children's groups. Through social accountability, citizens (including children), organize themselves and consequently engage in actions aimed at eliciting accountability from policy makers and implementers of these policies. The strategy will take advantage of the various tools that have been developed by partners around the world such as citizens' and community score cards, public expenditure tracking surveys, child rights observatories, Information Communication Technology based service monitoring, social audits, and community based spending watch / databases, deliberative polling, participatory budgeting and children's oversight councils/ committees.

Strengthen the capacity of children as rights holders

There is need to put children at the centre of their advocacy. Their participation also has to be meaningful. This means that the sector has to prioritize building of the capacity of the children so that they can play a critical role in advocacy for their issues to be addressed. Advocacy that is led by children whose capacity has been strengthened achieves more results than when it is done by child rights organisations.

Ensuring value for money

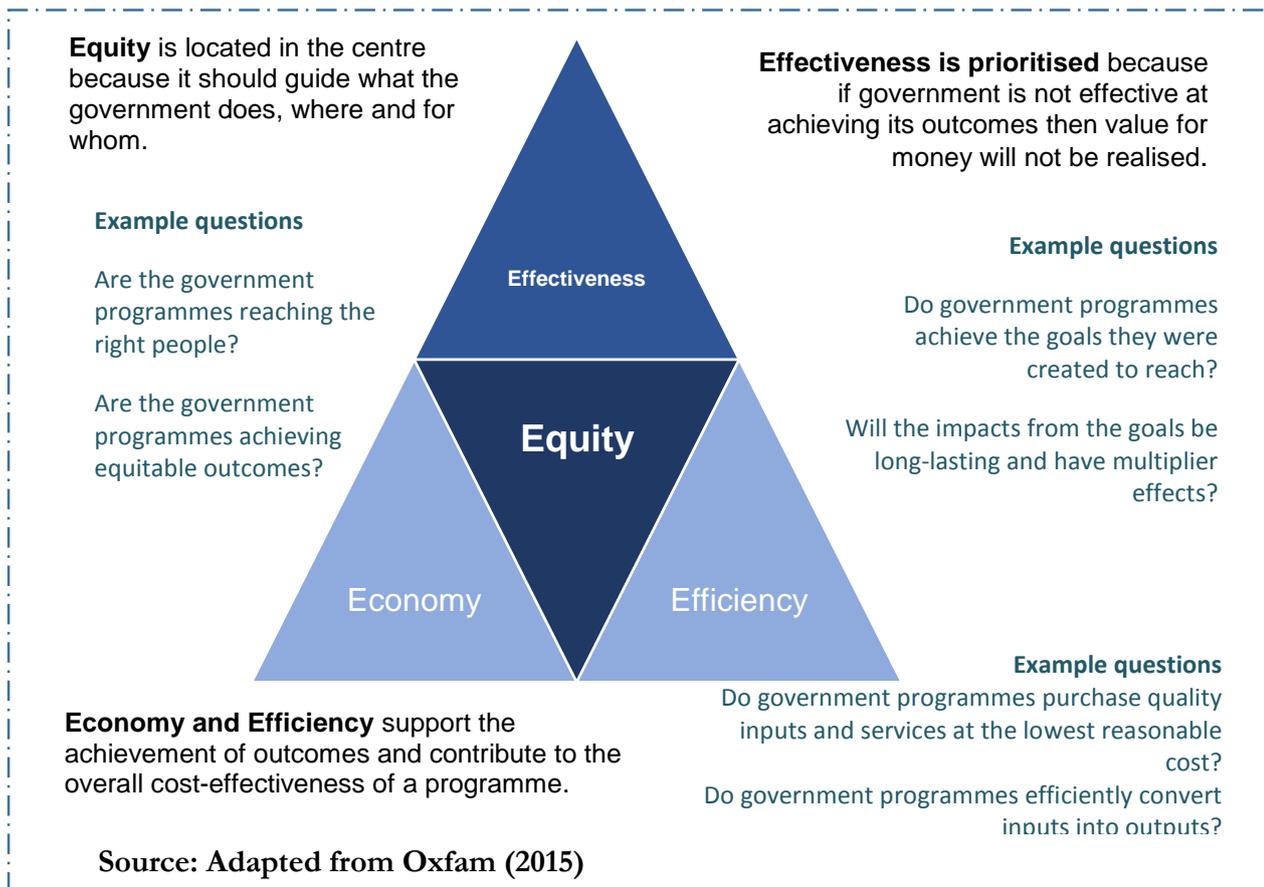
When the resources have been allocated and disbursed the relevant branches of the executive, it is imperative to ensure that there is value for money in their use. Value for money is about maximising the impact of the money spent to improve poor people's lives.²⁰ It is about addressing the following four aspects:

- i. **Economy:** the key questions to address here are on whether services and inputs needed by the government are being acquired at the best possible cost at the right quality. It must be noted that value for money does not always go for the cheapest option, but it is about the option that represents the best value
- ii. **Efficiency:** the question of efficiency will interrogate the extent to which the process of turning inputs into outputs happens smoothly with maximum results on the basis of what has been invested.

²⁰ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67479/DFID-approach-value-money.pdf

- iii. **Effectiveness:** this component looks at the extent to which the desired outcomes and goals have been achieved by the investment made.
- iv. **Equity:** this aspect explores the extent to which the targeting is done appropriately. In the case of child rights programming, this component will look at the extent to which the most vulnerable children are benefiting from government programs.

Value for money matrix



IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

Contextual differences

This strategy is not prescriptive on the exact strategies that should be done at country level. As a regional advocacy strategy, the document only points to the salient features that regional and national child rights stakeholders may consider. The strategy recognises that each context has its idiosyncrasies which would need to be elucidated by players in that context. Regional partners will work through national child rights networks at country level.

Work with the SADC Secretariat

Implementation of the strategy at regional level will be done in consultation with SADC secretariat. This is deliberate because the efforts at regional level are meant to complement the efforts of the

SADC Secretariat Children's desk which is responsible for the implementation of the SADC Minimum Package of Service on OVC&Y.

Coordination mechanisms

The regional partners to this strategy will be coordinated through CRNSA. The latter will be responsible also of building the capacity of national child rights networks on public investment in children, in collaboration with such partners as SCI, Plan International, World Vision, Terre Des Hommes, RIATT-ESA, UNICEF and other regional partners. A regional technical advisory group shall be established. The purpose of this regional technical advisory group will be to provide technical support to child rights players in SADC. Quarterly meetings for the technical advisory team will be held for planning, knowledge management and peer mentorship. These meetings will take different forms from being physical, to electronic. The team will work with the CRNSA coordinator in driving the implementation of the activities at regional level.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation will be key in measuring the successful implementation of this strategy. The strategy will put premium on ensuring that national child rights networks have their own monitoring and evaluation frameworks. The data they will collect at national level will then inform the regional framework. It is imperative to make sure that national monitoring and evaluations are also done using generally agreed tools and benchmarks for coherence and comparability of data at regional level. A midterm evaluation will be done on the extent to which national child rights networks will be using the strategy and also the progress they would have achieved visa vis their set targets.

This strategy acknowledges that advocacy results take a long time to be realised so there will be the appreciation of the milestones that the outputs will achieve. Further, the strategy will be cognisant of the problematics that are brought by attribution and contribution of the results considering that there will be several partners working in public investment in children as well as other exogenous factors beyond this strategy's control.

CONCLUSION

Governments in southern African have made a lot of commitments at regional and international level pertaining to children's rights. Most have gone further to enshrine children's rights in their national constitutions and various legislations. The region has witnessed an increase in adoption of child related laws by state parties in southern Africa. The question however which this advocacy strategy wants to contribute to answering is the resource commitment in the realisation of children's rights in the lives of the children. Without substantial resource commitment, the promises will not come into fruition. The SADC Minimum Package will not be able to provide the basic minimum acceptable standard for the children in the region. The strategy has identified several initiatives to address three key areas in public spending for children namely:

1. Resource mobilisation for public investment in children
2. Judicious utilisation of the resources
3. Fiscal governance

Addressing these three issues will go a long way in making sure that children, in their various contexts will be able to get the minimum acceptable standard of living as encapsulated in various documents such as the UNCRC, ACRWC and the SADC Minimum Package.