

CHILDREN'S CARE AND THE NATIONAL BUDGET

Your government has a strategy to promote the better care of children within, where possible, a family environment. How do you go about including that strategy in the public budget?

IDENTIFY WHAT INVESTMENTS ARE NEEDED

Activities in any strategy require resources. If a strategy seeks to increase the number of trained professional social workers, it then becomes necessary to identify how many workers, of what type, and at what cost per worker. How will those workers be trained, and at what cost? It is also important to ensure those workers will have the resources they need to do their work – offices, furniture, equipment, and the costs to keep those operating.



LEARN ABOUT THE BUDGET CYCLE

Every government has its own process for preparing and executing the budget, and that is typically outlined in a Treasury Circular (or equivalent) with key steps and dates. It is important to begin to prepare your case as early as possible in the budget cycle, as it can be difficult to change decisions later in the cycle. A typical annual budget cycle has four stages: (i) budget formulation; (ii) budget approval and enactment; (iii) budget execution; and (iv) budget oversight. Key deadlines in the Circular must be identified and met on time.



PLAN FOR MULTIPLE YEARS TO GO TO SCALE

Most countries prepare a three to five year budget, sometimes called a Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). The first-year budget is important, but the MTEF allows you to forecast for taking a program to scale. For example, you can use the MTEF to plan for an increase in the number of trained social work staff year by year.



IDENTIFY THE AGENCIES INVOLVED AND COST

Care reform requires the engagement of different sectors, such as social welfare, education, health, justice, interior, and finance. You need to identify which ministries and departments are key to implementing the care strategy. You then need to have a dialogue with key staff, including their budget departments, on what they need to cost. Sometimes a costing tool is needed to help, and certain assumptions need to be agreed – what is the payroll for those social workers, and how much funding will their offices require? Will youth or civil society have voice during the costing, and if so, how?



MAKE THE CASE FOR THE BUDGET REQUEST

You've come up with a great budget, but you know that the government has competing priorities. Each investment should be linked to an outcome. Influential government champions should be mobilized to support the budget request. Attempts should be made to link care reform to national social policy – poverty reduction strategies, health, education, justice, etc.



WANT TO LEARN MORE?

*Changing The Way We Care*SM (CTWWC) is an initiative designed to promote safe, nurturing family care for children implemented by Catholic Relief Services, Maestral International, and key partners like Better Care Network and others. User-friendly Global Guidance on Public Expenditure and Children's Care that can be accessed at [Public Expenditure and Children's Care: Guidance Note](#)

