

## CFCI Summit 2019

### Session documentation

This document summarizes the key topics, insights and next steps arising from the CFCI Summit held from the 15th to 19th of October, 2019 in Cologne, (Germany).

<b>Track:</b>	Child friendly local governance
<b>Title of session:</b>	Child Friendly City Budgets
<b>Date and time:</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> October 2019 at 4:00PM
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<b>Name of rapporteur:</b>	Udo Mbeche Smith

#### Main topics and ideas discussed:

- **Investment in the realization of the child's right to be heard**
  - The session emphasized child friendly city budgets as an important international human rights priority, also related to the goals of the CFCI. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has consistently recommended that States parties use public budgets as a key instrument of implementation of Article 4 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ('UNCRC').
  - The engagement of State actors in these processes occurs at both national and local (city/municipal) level, which suggests that local governments are well-positioned to promote child-friendly budgeting approaches.
  - One of the themes of interest in the session was the right of children to be heard in all stages of budgetary planning and decision-making, through mechanisms of meaningful participation of children at the national and subnational levels. This requires a commitment to resources and training.
  
- **Key elements of an effective and child friendly budget system include:**
  - Ensuring that budgets respond to local authority mandates, national and local standards and policies for children;
  - Making certain that budgets are based on evidence and the contextual understanding of children's actual needs in the particular city;
  - Ensuring the participation of children, their families and communities in the budget setting, monitoring and implementation process.
  
- **The approach to city wide strategic planning and budgeting with a child lens**
  - A first step is to examine the resources the local government is allocating to programmes that benefit children, and whether these programmes adequately reflect the needs of children.
  - Beyond conducting a budget analysis, a child budget approach should help to guide the budgeting process to protect children's rights; engender social consensus and inclusiveness; determine funding needs and mobilize resources; monitor actual expenditure versus allocations; and improve transparency and governance.

- **A children’s budget initiative examines the following principles:**
  - Adequate – there is enough funding
  - Effective – funds are spent on the right things
  - Efficient – funds are used for intended purpose, and with value for money
  - Equitable – funds reach the children who need support most
  - Transparent – accessible information is available on budgets
  
- **A children’s budget initiative should follow the Local Development Planning Cycle** and examine the policy objectives or goals, convert them into associated into actions and costs, track spending and ultimately monitor the services and outcomes for children.

### Key insights, good practices and lessons shared:

The following are lessons and challenges from the panel, who consisted of representatives from the cities of *Tripoli* (Lebanon), *Bayankhongor* (Mongolia) and *Oulu* (Finland), all of whom have directly or indirectly implemented initiatives related to child budgeting.

- **Effectiveness and Efficiency:**
  - It is important to note that much of the discussion about child-participatory budgeting focused on the process (i.e. the procedural and logistical challenges) of involving children and young people in budgeting. However, there is a need to explore the lessons learned for how to engage with children in such decisions.
  - Finland’s experience sheds light on the effect that children’s participation has had on budgeting processes, such that municipalities are focusing on ensuring that children and young people’s involvement is contributing to the broader aim of implementing and realising children’s rights. It also demonstrates that spending on preventive services can be more cost effective than spending on higher cost specialised services.
  - The session was asked to examine the entire budget and identify the good lessons; and a common understanding, with different operators. In other words, the budget analysis should explore the kinds of indicators that reflect the needs of the families, then have a common plan of doing things together. This will enable decision makers to see what is happening and how budget allocations are being spent. They will also be able to determine the kind of changes needed to overcome the real technical challenges.
  
- **Accountability:**
  - 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.
  - 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.
  - In the case of Mongolia, children and youth were in consultation asked by the *Bayankhongor* Council what they would like prioritized to address child rights concerns. The recruitment and training of children and youth auditors, has played a pivotal role in

monitoring the implementation of public spending.

- Notably, commitments secured in local or national budgets remain vulnerable to a lack of follow-up or actual spending. The session underscored the need for increased transparency, monitoring and evaluation of how agreed budgets have been spent, including the effect on realising the rights of children.

- **Advocacy**

- The session noted that child-participatory budgeting processes were 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 Lebanon, the role of municipalities was defined, and the importance of advocacy and internal champions, has led to the municipalities success in overcoming institutional resistance to child participation, and bias towards spending on infrastructure. It has also helped in raising the awareness of decision makers to the extent that they have modified budget allocations in response to the city's primary goal of reducing child labour by 2022.
- The government representatives have remained committed to mobilizing targeted funding for specific activities, through sustained partnerships with UNICEF, UN-Habitat and local universities. This includes inviting volunteers to lend to their existing technical expertise towards empowering children and young people.
- The session established that the use of strong data, including the cost of services is pivotal towards obtaining a committed budget for child friendly budgetary initiatives, and in enabling decision makers to feel better equipped to allocate the budget, due to a better understanding of the priorities of children and young people.

- **Knowledge and Capacity:**

- One of the main challenges for supporting children and young people to participate in budgeting is that local government and civil society representatives do not always have experience, knowledge or expertise to engage with the complexities of budgeting processes. The most helpful factor supporting child participation in Mongolia, was the openness of the *Bayankhongor* Council to involve children in the process, and devoting one day monthly, to listen to and respect the opinion of children, at all levels (i.e. city, communities).
- This was a broadly inclusive consultation exercise, involving existing school councils across Mongolia. 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.

- **Acting as Representatives**

- The session acknowledged the presence of a representative of Mongolia's youth council, who was invited to consultations to participate in the budgeting process.
- Notably, support mechanisms are necessary to enable each child and young person to attend and participate in these budgetary processes.
- Since this role was school-based, the session noted the challenges, which some local governments may have towards including the views of those not attending school.

- **Broader Outcomes**

- The broader outcome of this is the fact that children and young people’s participation in budgetary initiatives can result in the establishment or strengthening of democratic structures for future engagement. For example, the key priorities identified by the Mongolian children such as the reduction of air pollution, has been used to influence relevant city budget allocation to promote child rights and further development initiatives.
- The session recognised that there are a lot of methodologies, which focus on child-participatory budgeting that need to be adapted. In reality, there are a lot of technical challenges to using child friendly budget processes at the local level, due to the rigidity of budget processes. There is a strong need to establish a platform for knowledge sharing, to incentivize cities who want to move in this direction.

**Next steps and actions points:**

<b>Recommendations/ Actions</b>	<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>Target Date</b>
1. Share links to resources to participants at the CFCI summit, in particular UNICEF’s new programme guidance on the local governance approach to programming	Secretariat	Immediately
2. Build / enhance the existing knowledge sharing platform for CFCI on child friendly budgets	UNICEF	2020
3. Engage cities / associations of local authorities to develop support materials that explain child and women friendly budgeting processes in accessible language, and support participants, including those municipalities who were not present at the Session, to understand the issues fully	UNICEF	2020