Public Budgets: How Governments Should Spend Money for Children's Rights

Advice from the United Nations
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a set of promises that almost every government* in the world has made to all children in their country.

*A government is a group of people that runs the country.

Children have many rights:

- **Participation and Freedom**: such as free speech and religious choice
- **Relationships and Care**: in the family and when others care for them
- **Education, Rest and Play**: such as going to school and taking part in cultural activities
- **Health and Welfare**: such as visiting the doctor and having a safe and healthy home
- **Special Support**: for some groups such as children with disabilities, and protection from harm

Whenever governments make decisions, there are four very important rights they should remember. Every decision should...

- Treat all children equally
- Aim for what’s best for children
- Help children grow and be healthy
- Take children’s views seriously
The Committee on the Rights of the Child is a group of experts that gives advice to governments about how to keep the promises they made to children under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Sometimes, this group of experts writes reports called General Comments to help governments understand how to keep their promises about children’s rights.

This General Comment is about Public Budgets and Children’s Rights. It explains how governments should do their job and spend money so that children have their rights met.

Before it wrote this General Comment, the Committee got advice from children and adults all over the world.
Governments raise public money by collecting it from businesses and workers. They may also borrow money, or receive aid and support, from other countries.

Governments spend public money on everything that keeps the country running, like building roads and hospitals, training police officers and paying teachers.

Children’s Rights and Spending

It costs money to make sure children are having their rights met. All governments have public money. They have to make important decisions about how to use it.

Governments have promised to use as much of their money as possible to make sure that all children in their countries have their rights met equally.
How Governments Should Spend Money For Children’s Rights

Steps of Public Budgeting

'A Public Budget is a plan the government makes for spending money.'

Before making a budget, governments need to find out...

- How children are doing
- How much money is needed
- How spending will affect children
- What else government should do to deliver children’s rights
- What difference public spending is making to children, including different groups

Making a budget
Government makes a plan. Politicians, adults and children get to comment.

Checking what happens

- Where was the money spent?
- Was it spent well?
- What difference did it make for children?
- Did we share this information with everyone?

Spending the money

In all steps of Public Budgeting, governments need to use public money wisely. This means the money should go to the right place, be used in the right way and not be wasted. It is important that everyone can see and understand how the money is being spent and if it is making a difference to all children’s lives.
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Involving Children

Governments need to keep their promises to children through every stage of public budgeting...
- Making a Budget
- Spending the Money
- Checking what Happens

Governments should...
- share information about plans and spending so that everyone can understand
- make sure everyone, including children, can check if the government is keeping its promises to children

This General Comment recommends that governments should pay attention to children’s views on public spending. It includes advice from children all over the world...

- Provide budget information in ways that are easily understood
- Publish records of how the money is spent
- Do not forget to include children with special needs in your budgets
- Spend money fairly and wisely
- Investment in our families is also an important way of securing our rights
- It is impossible for you to invest in us if you do not ask us what to invest in! We know, you should ask
- Plan well. There should be enough budget to provide for the rights of all children
- Don’t spend money on something that is useless – be efficient, save money
- Give more money to minority children and children who need it most
- Ask us if we think that your decision is wise before spending!
Produced by the Centre for Children’s Rights, Queen’s University Belfast, with advice from a group of children aged 10-14 and the Child Rights Connect Working Group on Investment in Children and with funding from Save the Children Norway and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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