

PRESS RELEASE

CHILD BUDGET IN BANGLADESH

Save the Children and Centre for Services and Information on Disability successfully launch “Child Budget in Bangladesh” Report

Dhaka, 16 June 2014 –

Save the Children International and the Centre for Services and Information on Disability successfully launched the ‘Child Budget in Bangladesh’ Report on Saturday 14 June 2014, at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel, Dhaka. The Honorable Finance Minister, Mr. Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, MP, was the Chief Guest. The event was also attended by Special Guests Mr M. A. Mannan, MP, Honorable State Minister for Finance and Planning, Mr Shawkat Ali Badsha, MP, Member of the Parliamentary Caucus on Child Rights and Chariman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock and Mr Tariq-Ul-Islam, Secretary, Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs. Also present were Ms Rasheda K. Chowdhury, Executive Director, CAMPE, and Mr Pascal Villeneuve, Representative, UNICEF Bangladesh.

The purpose of the event was in essence to launch the report, but from a more long-term perspective, also to make progress on achieving a meaningful and collaborative child budgeting framework in Bangladesh, with the input from key policymakers, academia, non government organizations such as CSID and child rights organizations such as UNICEF and Save the Children.

The lively event was opened by Mr Michael McGrath, Country Director, Save the Children. In his Welcome Address, Mr McGrath congratulated the Government on its proposed allocation of Tk. 50 crore for projects that enhance children’s welfare in this budget for FY 2014/15. He also welcomed the Government’s commitment to budgeting for children, which the Ministry of Finance proposes to implement on a pilot basis from FY 2015/16. “A child budget will not only present a clearer picture of budget allocations to children, but also track expenditure over time and – most importantly – provide a way to assess the impact and efficiency of such expenditure,” said Mr McGrath. He highlighted that what is required is a detailed child budget, based on a commonly accepted framework, for policy makers to be able to track the full range of expenditure for children against population growth, economic growth and international standards.

Dr Shaikh S Ahmed then gave a presentation on the Report. In sum, the report aims to advance the existing dialogue and literature on budgeting for children in Bangladesh. It captures the current situation, and considers the legal and constitutional basis for such an initiative. The report also proposed two approaches that could be used to advance this: steps for designing a more child-focused budget, and a guideline for analyzing budgetary allocations for children.

Ms Chowdhury and Mr Villeneuve subsequently provided their comments. Ms Chowdhury congratulated the Honourable Finance Minister for his commitment to implement a separate children budget from next year. “It will help us to track, among other things, the status of enrolment and education for all children,” said Ms Chowdhury. Mr Villeneuve mentioned the importance of using evidence-based approaches to prepare the child budget and how effective coverage must ensure that no child is left behind. He also pointed out that the Bangladeshi economy is expected to grow by 7.3% next year, and expressed his hope that this growing fiscal space would lead to more child interventions.

Special Guest, Mr MA Mannan MP, reminded us that “children are our future”, so planning and resource allocation must consider them with due importance. The other Special Guests also addressed the audience. Mr Tariq-Ul-Islam welcomed the government’s commitment to a child budget, noting that “we need support to implement the child budget next year,” Mr Badsha echoed these sentiments.

The Chief Guest of the event, the Honorable Finance Minister Mr Muhith, then shared his vision for going forward. After he congratulated Save the Children and CSID for developing hosting the dissemination seminar, he explained that the child budget would be similar to the gender budget that the Government currently produces. "To develop a child budget, we need the support of those organizations working with children, such as Save the Children and UNICEF," said Mr Muhith. He also commented on other child-related issues such as the need to provide better shelter for street children, as well as improving nutrition for children.

The event was then closed with a Vote of Thanks by Professor Nazma Shams, Chairperson, CSID. She claimed that the ultimate goal was to give each and every child a better life. "We are confident that this document will open up new avenues for the Government to formulate a meaningful child budget so that opportunities for children are enhanced, and this will lead them to become proud and responsible citizens," said Professor Shams.

Going forward, Save the Children and the Centre for Services on Information and Disability offer their support to the Ministry of Finance and the Government of Bangladesh in the efforts to make child budgeting into a reality. In that regard, SCiB and CSID are greatly encouraged by the Honorable Finance Minister's Budget Speech in which he expressed the Government's commitment to rolling out a child budget in FY 2015/16, and his restatement of this promise at the event.

SCiB and CSID are confident that the successful launch of the 'Child Budget in Bangladesh' Report was a constructive step forward towards this shared goal. Other steps that could progress this initiative include:

- **Revise the MTBF** by encouraging line ministries to include a child rights impact assessment, such as a narrative description called 'Child Reporting' similar to the present 'Poverty and Gender Reporting'
- **Implement the new budget classification system for more child-sensitive budgeting** so that child-sensitive budgeting for children is built into it from the outset
- **Strengthen and broaden public participation in the budgeting process** by consulting civil society organization and research institutes in developing a framework for a detailed child budget

These measures cumulatively offer multiple benefits such as featuring children more centrally in the planning and resource allocation process; improving transparency of public investment in children; allowing us to monitor macro-economic policy decisions and their impact on children; overall resource allocation for children as a percentage of the budget and GDP.

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To access a brief of the Child Budget in Bangladesh Report, please access the following link:

For a copy of the full Child Budget in Bangladesh Report, please e-mail the contacts listed above.