

**Independent Evaluation
of the
Child Friendly National Budget Initiative**

**Final Report
December 2012**

For Save the Children Zimbabwe

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We hope that this report will make a valuable contribution to the future direction of this important initiative, and to the wider efforts to improve the lives of children in Zimbabwe.

Any inaccuracies in the information presented are wholly the responsibility of the authors.

21st December 2012, Harare

List of Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
ART	Antiretroviral Therapy
BEAM	Basic Assistance Education Module
CFNBI	Child Friendly National Budget Initiative
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNU	Government of National Unity
GoZ	Government of Zimbabwe
GURA	Gweru United Residents Association
HIV	Human Immuno Virus
HO	Head Office
IDASA	Institute of Democracy in South Africa
JC	Junior Council
JP	Junior Parliament
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoHCW	Ministry of Health and Child Welfare
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
MP	Member of Parliament
NANGO	National Association of Non Governmental Associations
NPA	National Plan of Action
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PPC	Parliamentary Portfolio Committee
PRF	Poverty Reduction Forum
SADC	Southern Africa Development Committee
SCZ	Save the Children Zimbabwe
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USD	United States Dollars
Z-CYBN	Zimbabwe Child and Youth Budget Network
ZNCWC	Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children
ZWRCN	Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre Network
\$Z	Zimbabwe Dollars

Executive Summary

The Child Friendly National Budget Initiative (CFNBI) was conceived in 1999 as a partnership project of nine NGOs in Zimbabwe, under the auspices of the National Association of Non Governmental Organisations (NANGO). CFNBI took shape as a project in 2000, and has been funded by Save the Children Zimbabwe (SCZ) since that time. UNICEF provided funding to support decentralisation of the project from 2003-05, and is providing new funds to CFNBI in 2012.

The project's primary goal has been: "Local and national budgets that are responsive to children's issues". It aims to influence the allocation and utilization of resources in favour of child welfare. It has five main components:

- **Research** - Analysing national and local budgets together with other stakeholders from a child-friendly perspective, to inform advocacy and lobbying
- **Advocacy** - Influencing national and local policy-makers to allocate and utilize resources to the benefit of children
- **Child participation** - Enhancing child participation in local and national budgeting processes, linked to community empowerment and participatory budgeting
- **Media** - Improving media reporting on child-friendly budgeting, disseminating key messages and increasing project visibility
- **Regional links** – Strengthening regional networks to share good practice around child-friendly budgeting, with the intention of influencing SADC member countries

Relevance

The project has been highly relevant in the Zimbabwean context. It has sought to raise the profile of children's issues in the context of a severe decline in the level of child welfare in the country, resulting primarily from the macro-economic crisis and the HIV-AIDS epidemic. It has highlighted the importance of budgeting for children in a situation where there have been multiple pressures and demands on the fiscus. And it has contributed to a "demystification" of the budget process, adding its voice to those who have challenged the highly restrictive nature of national and local budgeting processes.

Efficiency

The project has benefitted from a high level of commitment among staff at implementation level, and this continues today. However, financial and human resources for the project have been thinly stretched over a wide range of objectives and this has reduced the efficiency of the project, along with some disbursement problems. There is limited participation by the five regions in project planning, and possibilities for innovation at the regional level are constrained by the activity-based budgeting and disbursement system. Mobility and IT issues are also compromising delivery at regional level.

Project planning and strategy development are not taking place jointly between the three partners to the project (NANGO, SCZ, UNICEF) and this reduces efficiency. Project staff have

observed weaknesses in their monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, which also make it difficult to track and assess results at different levels. The quality of project reporting has also declined in recent years, and reporting is currently done separately to SCZ and UNICEF. Project governance began well with active engagement of an Advisory Board in the initial phase, but this has diminished in quality as Board members have disengaged from their role.

Effectiveness

The project's initial phase (2000-2009) took a sound strategic approach that focused on regular engagement with key policy-makers, and capitalized on linkages between the five components. While the project lacked in-house technical capacity on the economics side, resulting in some weaknesses in budget analysis, it was nevertheless effective at raising the profile of children's issues in the context of budgeting through its advocacy, media campaigns and public dialogue meetings. As a result, it was given formal Consultative Status by the Ministry of Finance (MoF), as well as sector ministries and parliamentary portfolio committees (PPCs), which was a significant achievement. It became a widely recognised initiative in the SADC and African regions.

At local level, the project embarked on a decentralisation phase in 2003, supported by UNICEF. The focus was on engagement with policy-makers through a District Consultative Workshop model that brought policy-makers, civil society and children together to discuss budget issues from a child-friendly perspective. It succeeded in raising awareness on these issues within communities and contributed to a "demystification" of the budget process.

The focus on child participation gradually increased during this period, culminating in the formation of the Zimbabwe Child and Youth Budget Network (Z-CYBN) in 2006 which enhanced ownership of the agenda by children. The project increased levels of knowledge and awareness of budgeting issues among children, and in some locations it was able to facilitate an interface between children and policy-makers, although these interactions did not amount to participation in the local budget process itself.

Towards the end of this phase (2007-09), the project faced significant challenges due to the operational environment for NGOs and the volatile political and macro-economic context. Nevertheless, it managed to sustain a level of engagement with social sector policy-makers at national level through to mid-2009, and found ways of continuing to deliver at local level through pre-budget consultation meetings which is to be commended.

The evaluation observed a major shift in the project's strategic approach and focus from mid-2009 until now. The project moved away from the interface with policy-makers and a holistic approach based on the five components, towards a much narrower focus on child participation as the primary objective. Training of children at local level became the main focus of activity. The interface with social sector ministries, media campaigns and SADC regional networking were no longer visible in project reports, although a level of engagement with the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee (PPC) for Public Finance was maintained. Post-budget analysis was carried out in 2012 looking back at trends from 2009 – this was technically sound, but it was not linked to advocacy with policy-makers and has not been well disseminated.

In our view, this shift has significantly reduced the overall effectiveness of the project. Child participation is a crucial component of the project, but it cannot achieve the project's goal by itself. Children value the training they receive for their own personal development and confidence, but they do not feel there are sufficient platforms for them to engage in advocacy following the training, or that they are having an influence on actual budget processes. Linkages with research and advocacy are essential for child participation to be truly effective.

Impact

The evaluation identified some important output-level and process achievements by the project. However, its goal-level impact on national budget allocations is more difficult to prove due to weak documentation of its advocacy work, and the lack of a robust M&E framework. Attribution is also difficult given other players (e.g. donors, NGOs, UN agencies) in the children's sector and social sectors, and non-availability of some key informants for interview.

Project reporting on increased budget allocations to social sector ministries has generally been weak, with some gaps and inconsistencies in the information presented, and a tendency to report based on nominal figures and initial allocations, rather than real figures and revised budget estimates. This undermines the credibility of some of the project's impact claims.

Social sector ministry allocations as a proportion of the national budget have varied over the years. Trend analysis shows that the Ministry of Education's proportion declined in 2000-08 and increased in 2009-12. The trends for the Ministries of Health and Social Welfare are the reverse, with their proportions increasing in 2000-08 and declining in 2009-12. Specific line items relevant to children have been insufficient when compared to the need (e.g. children in difficult circumstances, children on the street) and this was the case up to 2012. The evaluation was not able to validate the project's claims that new line items for children were introduced as a direct result of its advocacy work.

The Ten Point Plan has been the main advocacy channel used in recent years. Its influence on national allocations appears weak based on the targeting and timing of its presentation to the PPC for Public Finance and MoF, but the level of influence was again difficult to verify.

At local level, some local authorities have responded positively to create specific budget lines for Junior Councils, supporting their participation and fund-raising activities. However, limited success has been recorded in increasing child participation in actual local budgeting processes and influencing service provision for children. As a result, the evaluation was not able to directly attribute changes in local budget allocations in the social sectors (e.g. health, education, social welfare) to the project's influence.

Sustainability

While achieving sustainability does not appear to have been a focus of the project to date, there are opportunities to take this forward in the next phase. At national level, there are opportunities to participate in social sector ministry planning processes (e.g. a planned Task Force on child health in the MoHCW).

At local level, opportunities exist to establish formal platforms for children to participate in local budget processes. If funded by local councils and integrated into their structures, these could become sustainable. CFNBI has already begun to form some strategic partnerships with local organisations that are already engaged in budget advocacy work (e.g. Residents Associations). Formalising and/or scaling up partnerships with these organizations, aimed at infusing a child-friendly perspective into their activities, would also help to increase sustainability.

Recommendations

In conclusion, the evaluation team regards the CFNBI as a highly relevant initiative in the Zimbabwean context that has the potential to achieve significant impact for children. However, achieving its goal will require a number of important improvements to the project's approach. Most crucial among these are:

- A joint vision and strategy shared by SCZ, NANGO and UNICEF, drawing on the holistic approach used during the project's initial phase
- A robust M&E system and significant improvements to the quality of regular project reporting and monitoring
- Adequate financial resources and staffing to deliver at national and local levels, including strengthened technical capacity in (i) economic and budget analysis, and (ii) advocacy and communications
- Exploring options for moving towards more of a partnership approach with GoZ in the medium term, with the aim of increasing the project's influence

For 2013, a two-pronged approach is recommended: Firstly, **at national level** a concerted effort should be made to **strengthen engagement with policy-makers, particularly in the social sector ministries** who develop initial budget bids, as this is a crucial entry point. Reviving the media component is critical for raising the project's profile. The research and analysis component should be closely linked to a clear, well targeted advocacy strategy that uses multiple channels and builds strategic partnerships to strengthen the project's voice.

Secondly, **at local level** the focus should be on **deepening the work in a number of selected locations where the project already has good relations**. A model to successfully influence local budgets should be developed and tested, bringing together research, advocacy and child participation into a holistic approach. If proven to be effective and well documented, this would provide a basis for seeking donor funds to scale up the model in future years.

1. Project Background

The Child Friendly National Budgeting Initiative (CFNBI) was conceived in 1999 as a partnership project of nine NGOs in Zimbabwe, under the auspices of the National Association of Non Governmental Organisations (NANGO). CFNBI took shape as a project in 2000, following research into the situation of children in Zimbabwe. The research found that while the policy and legal framework for child welfare and child rights is generally in place, there is inadequate allocation and utilization of available resources for the benefit of children.

The project's goal has been articulated in different ways since its inception, and at the highest level it has aimed to contribute to reducing child poverty, and to fulfilling child rights.¹ The goal has been defined most clearly as "Local and national budgets that are responsive to children's issues".² Its aim from the outset has been to influence budgeting processes in order to increase the allocation and utilization of resources towards children's issues. As highlighted in NANGO's presentation to the evaluation team:

"In essence, the main objective of the Child Friendly National Budget Initiative is to contribute to the general understanding of and support for children's rights by advocating generous funding to children's welfare through lobbying policy makers to formulate child friendly budgets."

The project was conceived as an advocacy project where lobbying of policy makers was viewed as central to influencing resource allocations for children. There are five main components:

- **Research** - Analysing annual national and local budgets together with other stakeholders from a child-friendly perspective, to inform advocacy and lobbying
- **Advocacy** - Influencing national and local policy makers to prioritize resources towards social sectors that benefit children
- **Child participation** - Enhancing child participation in local and national budgeting processes, linked to community empowerment and participatory budgeting
- **Media** - Improving media reporting on child-friendly budgeting, disseminating key messages and increasing project visibility
- **Regional links** – Strengthening regional networks and lobbying SADC members to prioritize services for children in their national budgets

¹ The initiative is explicitly linked to Article 4 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which requires 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 NANGO, CFNBI Quarterly Reports to SCZ, 2007

The project has linkages with NANGO's work on Participatory Budgeting, including work on expenditure tracking and the use of social accountability techniques (e.g. community score cards) funded by Oxfam. In 2005/6, it was also closely linked to NANGO's project on promoting implementation of the National Programme of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NPA for OVC), funded by UNICEF.

Save the Children has supported CFNBI through provision of funding and technical advice since 2000. The level of funding provided has been modest, in the range of approximately \$40,000 – \$80,000 per year. UNICEF provided additional funding from 2003-05 to support the project's decentralisation out into the districts, and is providing up to \$205,000 in new funding to CFNBI in 2012-13.

The decentralisation of the project was further enhanced from 2007 with the establishment of the five NANGO Regional Offices. Since then, implementation has been carried out through the Regional Co-ordinators, under the direction of the Project Manager at NANGO Head Office who is also responsible for implementation of the project's activities at national level.

The strategic direction of the project was initially overseen by an Advisory Committee/Board comprising a number of civil society organisations engaged in budget influencing and advocacy work. This body ceased to function around 2008 and strategic direction is currently provided by NANGO in partnership with Save the Children and UNICEF.

2. Evaluation Methodology

In line with the Terms of Reference (Annex A), the evaluation team gathered evidence to inform the findings in this report using the following methods:

- Literature review of key project documents and other relevant reports
- Presentation by NANGO team of the project's approach, achievements and challenges
- Semi-structured interviews with key informants in Harare, based on an interview guide (Annex B)
- Field visits to the five NANGO regions for additional interviews with key informants and review of documentation
- Focus group discussions with final beneficiaries (ie. children), based around a child-focused questionnaire (Annex C)

Interviews were conducted with 49 adults, and 30 children took part in focus group discussions. Preliminary findings were presented to project staff from SCZ, NANGO and UNICEF, as well as SCZ youth advisers and Save the Children International (SCI) staff, on 28th November. A draft report was discussed with senior managers from SCZ, NANGO and UNICEF on 14th December and their feedback was incorporated into the final version. Comments were also invited from the NANGO Regional Coordinators.

Challenges that were encountered include:

- Non-availability of some key informants for interview, including Mr Mathe (key project staff member during its early years), the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education and Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Public Finance
- Limited time to conduct field visits, so that some project locations were excluded (e.g. Binga)
- Non-availability of local authorities to participate in interviews at the local level, with the exception of Patrons for the Junior Councils
- Significant gaps in the project documentation made available to the team by NANGO and Save the Children
- Limited availability of children due to the examination period which coincided with the evaluation

It is therefore important to note that there may be some gaps in the team's findings, particularly with respect to the impact and achievements of the project. The findings included in this report are those where the team considers that sufficient evidence exists, based on project documentation and/or information provided by more than one key informant. Recommendations are primarily focused on issues where the team found a level of consensus among key stakeholders regarding changes that are needed to improve the project's performance in future.

3. Evaluation Findings

3.1. Relevance

3.1.1. Socio-economic context

Two distinct macro-economic phases can be identified during the implementation of the project. The period 2000-2008 was one of economic decline, with an almost total collapse in 2008. This period was characterized by declining economic growth with the growth domestic product (GDP) falling from -7.3% in 2000 to -14.8% in 2008. Inflation became one of the major challenges of the economy, rising from 132% in 2003 to 3.2 quintillion % in 2008.³ The net effects of high inflation were reduced investments and savings, price instability, reduced purchasing power of the Zimbabwe dollar, a general fall of the living standards for Zimbabwean households and unaffordable basic social services. Export competitiveness of Zimbabwean goods was negatively affected undermining capacity of the country to generate foreign currency. In turn, this affected import capacity and supply of goods. Fuel and energy interruptions became the order of the day.

The cumulative effect of all these factors was an economy that could not provide for its citizens, leading to high levels of unemployment and poverty levels. Unemployment increased from 63% in 2003 to 80% 2008 and poverty levels increased from 53% in 2003 to 72% in 2008.⁴

³ Business Council of Zimbabwe, Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Study, 2011

⁴ Ibid

Children suffered severe deprivations as a result of this crisis. Combined with the effects of the HIV-AIDS epidemic, it had a devastating effect on child welfare, particularly among orphans and vulnerable children. In 2006, two in every five children in the two lower wealth quintiles lacked shelter, one in every three children lacked sanitation and one in every five children lacked potable water.⁵ By 2009, 1 million children had been orphaned by the HIV-AIDS epidemic.⁶ According to UNICEF, 700,000 children were living in households without any kind of an income and 100,000 of these children were heading households. Stunting in children under 5 had reached 35%.

The project's focus was highly relevant during this phase, as it sought to address the devastating effects of the collapse of social service delivery on children by highlighting the importance of increasing allocations for social sector ministries and specific budget line items for children. It became a voice for the voiceless in a time of competing demands on the fiscus, and was unique in its focus on the interface between children and budgeting.

The second phase from 2009 to the present time is generally termed a recovery period. This period ushered in a new Government of National Unity (GNU) which sought to restore economic stabilisation and growth in the Zimbabwean economy. The economic agenda has included addressing economic production, restoring basic services, encouraging private and public investment, promoting international and regional cooperation, and addressing poverty, unemployment and inflation.⁷ The years of negative investments and production capacity have led to low economic growth and low revenue raising potential for the national budget. This has put huge pressure on the national budget as all sectors seek to recover.

Children's rights and needs have remained largely unmet during this phase. In 2010, two-thirds of all children (at least 3.5 million) were living below the food poverty line.⁸ There was only one social worker for 49,587 children, in a context where children had become increasingly vulnerable to violence, exploitation and neglect. Education outcomes for children have remained poor, with only half of all children continuing school beyond primary level, and only 58% of children identified as needing Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) support being selected in 2011.⁹

The project has continued to be a relevant voice for children during this period of recovery. The focus on budget allocations for children is crucial given that resources continue to be the key constraint to the fulfillment of child rights. As civil society has recently observed: "Despite the existence of a legal and policy framework for children's rights that is generally in the line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Child, not enough has been done by the GoZ to provide financial resources for children to realise their rights in practice".¹⁰

⁵ GoZ, Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey, 2006

⁶ GoZ (MoHCW, AIDS & TB Unit), Zimbabwe National HIV and AIDS Estimates, 2009

⁷ GoZ (MoF), 2010 Mid-term Fiscal Review Statement

⁸ NANGO, "The 2012 National Budget Analysis: Child Friendly and Gender Sensitive Budgeting Perspectives", May 2012

⁹ Smith, Chiroro and Musker, Process and Impact Evaluation of the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), Final Evaluation Report (submitted to GoZ), March 2012.

¹⁰ Draft supplementary report of the Child Protection Coalition to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2012.

3.1.2. Participatory budget process

The political landscape for Zimbabwe changed dramatically during the period 2000- 2008, and was characterized by increased political violence and polarization of the Zimbabwean population. High levels of intolerance made civic engagement in government and public policy processes difficult, particularly for marginalised groups including children. To an extent, the signing of the Global Political Agreement and the formation of the GNU created a more conducive environment for civic engagement. However, this arrangement still faces international isolation affecting investment inflows and thus national economic performance.

The participatory budget processes at both the local and national level are still restrictive. In 2000, Zimbabwe adopted a policy of participatory national budgeting in which stakeholders and citizens of the country were to participate in the formulation and monitoring of the budget process. To implement this policy, budget consultation meetings and Parliamentary Portfolio Committees were set up. Sector ministries were to consult stakeholders in the formulation of budget proposals. But major challenges to participation in the budget process remain, including lack of access to information, and limited opportunities for citizens and children to meaningfully engage.

CFNBI has been highly relevant in this context, due to its focus on demystification of the budget process through awareness-raising and sensitisation, and its determination to open up space for more engagement by communities and children, in order to hold decision-makers accountable.

A further issue is whether or not the project has responded to opportunities presented by changes in the context. This is explored in Section 3.3 on Effectiveness.

3.2. Efficiency

3.2.1. Planning

3.2.1.1. Joint planning at funding partner level

The CFNBI has been jointly funded by SCZ and UNICEF from 2003-05 and more recently in 2012. Joint strategic planning sessions do not appear to have been held between the three partners, with a view to maximizing resource utilization, avoiding duplication and optimizing the benefits of the project. Documents show the commonality of activities being funded by the two partners. There is also commonality of activities between CFNBI and the UNICEF-funded project to promote civil society engagement in the NPA for OVC in 2005/6.¹¹ No formal agreement has been reached on co-funding or earmarking arrangements for the project, which reduces efficiency.

3.2.1.2. Planning between SCZ and Implementing Partner

¹¹ NANGO, Project Report on Promoting Support for the NPA for OVC, August 2005 to September 2006 (submitted to UNICEF); NANGO, CNFBI Annual Report, January to December 2006 (submitted to SCZ)

The 2004 Annual Report illustrates good practice in the form of a comprehensive and focused platform for planning and reviewing the project, a “Partner Forum” between SCZ and NANGO. Such meetings are crucial to maintain common vision for the project, review progress, and formally agree on corrective measures or departures from agreed courses of action. This helps to avoid unintended drift from project objectives. However, minutes of a review meeting in 2012 indicate that more recent meetings tend to focus on reviewing activities rather than results or the strategic approach. There does not appear to be a formal mechanism for agreeing action points and follow up.¹²

3.2.1.3. Planning at Implementing Partner level

Variations in the project’s implementation approach across regions were observed (e.g. differences in mobilization and targeting strategies for child training; differences in approaches to partnerships with local organisations). This could be linked to the infrequency of joint planning sessions between NANGO Head Office (HO) and the five regions. Such meetings previously took place using funding from other projects, but this is no longer the case.

This has resulted in limited space for lesson learning, sharing of experiences, and ownership of the project by the Regional Coordinators. As disbursements to the regions are activity-based (see 3.2.5.3 below), Regional Coordinators are also not being encouraged to think beyond the specific activities they are tasked to implement by HO. Regional workplans are not developed – these could help encourage innovation while ensuring consistency of approach.

3.2.2. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of the project in both SCZ and NANGO is a serious weakness. This problem has been perennially identified since 2003, and the need to improve has been recognised. Challenges to be addressed include limited technical skills and the absence of a clear approach to M&E within NANGO, and weak project monitoring systems within SCZ. Project reporting on results has not been linked to monitoring of targets or indicators. The absence of a project log-frame and annual work-plans have contributed to the problem. SCZ does not appear to have played a capacity-building role in this area.

There are some individual examples of good practice in developing clear objectives, targets and indicators, particularly from project documents in 2008-09 (notably, when the operation context was extremely challenging).¹³ Unfortunately, these were not developed into a more comprehensive, consistent approach to M&E.

3.2.3. Human resources

The evaluation noted a high level of commitment level among project staff who often go the extra mile - e.g. working at weekends. Great enthusiasm is displayed in project

¹² Minutes of CFNBI project review meeting between SCZ and NANGO, 2012

¹³ NANGO, CFNBI Annual Report 2008 includes some simple targets for the different project components. CFNBI Project Activity Plan 2009 includes target indicators on budget allocation, child participation and use of score cards.

implementation, particularly when direct engagement with children is involved, and there are significant opportunities for resourcefulness and innovation.

However, staff levels have been constrained by the level of project funding. From 2002, documents show that staff level of effort was funded at 33% of Project Officer's position and 15% of Finance Officer's position.¹⁴ From 2003-05, SCZ seconded a senior consultant to NANGO to provide technical support to the initiative. This was a highly strategic move that significantly boosted capacity, and improved the quality and diversification of the initiative.

From 2007, the Regional Coordinators added human capacity to implement the project and they currently spend upwards of 60% of their time on it. This has helped to expand the reach of the project. However, their contribution is limited by mobility and IT constraints- specifically, lack of vehicles and laptops. Decentralisation of the project has not been supported by sufficient resources to ensure smooth operations at regional level.

At HO, staffing levels have declined since 2008/09. The current Project Manager is also responsible for other projects and therefore has limited time available for CFNBI.

3.2.4. Technical capacity

The technical capacity of the project has varied over the years, particularly in relation to: (i) economic and budget analysis and (ii) advocacy and communications.

On economic and budget analysis, the project was implemented without an economist as part of the project team for the period 2000-08. Consultancy support was used to strengthen the research and analysis component of the project from 2000-02. However, technical weaknesses in pre-budget submissions in 2004 and budget analysis in 2007 suggest that the lack of an economist did impact on the quality of evidence used to underpin advocacy work (see 3.3.2.1 under Effectiveness).

An economist was recruited into the project team in 2008 and was in place up to April 2012. It was reported that post-budget analysis was done annually from 2009, but unfortunately documentation is not available to assess the quality of this work.

NANGO has recently appointed a new economist to work on budgeting issues from 2013. It is envisaged that s/he will provide technical input to CFNBI alongside other budget work. This is a welcome move which will provide in-house capacity for regular and consistent budget analysis and research. There is also demand from Regional Coordinators for capacity-building in budget analysis. Steps are being taken to address this – e.g. a one-week training course facilitated by the Institute of Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) on budget analysis techniques was attended by Regional Coordinators recently, which is very positive.

¹⁴ NANGO budget proposals for CFNBI, 2002 and 2004

On advocacy and communications, the project had strong technical capacity in its initial phase. This is evidenced by the targeted approach to advocacy, the frequency and range of interface meetings with policy-makers, and their formal recognition of the project. In the recent phase since 2009, advocacy capacity appears to have declined, with the result that policy-makers in some key ministries are no longer aware of the project, and sound budget analysis (such as the 2012 National Budget Analysis report) is not having the intended influence on future allocations (see 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 under Effectiveness for more on this).

3.2.5. Finance

3.2.5.1. Adequacy of financial resources

The level of funding provided by SCZ over the years has been modest, with a notable drop to below \$40,000 in 2010:

Table 1

Date	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Amount USD	53 450	73 450	39 840	57 000	74 000

Source: SCZ and NANGO Finance Records

As a result, the project has been thinly resourced in relation to the wide range of objectives and the overall level of ambition. Budget limitations have resulted in some activities not being carried out. Specific constraints mentioned to the evaluation team include:

- no budget line for internal travel or review meetings
- staff have to rely on public transport or partner vehicles for mobility
- inadequate funding for meetings with parliamentarians in line with allowances demanded by them¹⁵
- insufficient resources to roll out the program to rural areas
- resources not adequate to produce promotional materials

The budget was topped up by \$12,000 in 2011, indicating that the initial allocation was not sufficient for implementation that year.

3.2.5.2 Cost efficiency of activities

Table 1 shows that with the exception of 2010, the budget has remained relatively constant over the years. It is possible that the reduction in scope of activities from mid-2009 (see 3.3.1.2 below) was reinforced by the reduction in budget for 2010. However, the scope of activities has not increased in subsequent years although the budget has returned to original levels. Given UNICEF's contribution of more than \$100,000 for 2012, this suggests that child participation activities could be more cost efficient, freeing up resources for other components.

¹⁵ Minutes of project review meeting between NANGO and SCZ, 2012

3.2.5.3 Disbursement of funds

During the hyperinflationary period, the quarterly disbursements made in local currency were quickly eroded in terms of real value. This reduced the level of available resources for efficient implementation.¹⁶ However, project activities continued through 2008 across the range of components.

Disbursement problems have been experienced from time to time, with evidence of such delays from 2009. Late disbursement has affected the quality of some project activities – e.g. reducing the duration of a training workshop from 2 days to ½ day.¹⁷ The causes for delay in disbursements have been reported as emanating from both sides (funding partner and implementing partner), and it is beyond the ToRs for this evaluation to examine this further.

Within NANGO, disbursements are given to Regional Coordinators for specific activities and funds are not held on deposit at regional level. While this ensures tight financial control of funds by HO, it also limits flexibility, innovation and responsiveness at regional level.

3.2.5.4 Implementation of activities on time and on budget

Project efficiency with respect to timeliness and cost is very difficult to assess, due to the absence of documented annual work plans that define numbers of activities to be done, time-frames, and related budget items. The financial reporting required by SCZ is not linked to activities to track if they are implemented on time and on budget.

3.2.6 Project Governance

From 2000-03, a Task Force of representative organizations provided guidance and direction to the project.¹⁸ In 2003, this became an Advisory Board with decision making and accountability responsibility. This was an effective mechanism to help guide overall strategic approach and strengthen the voice of the project.

Advisory Board stakeholders were directly involved in some of the advocacy activities especially at national level (e.g. to PPCs, sector ministries or Ministry of Finance). This enabled the project to capitalise on the different areas of expertise among Task Force members. The Board was also instrumental in forging synergies between civil society organisations working in this area, such as the partnership of CFNBI with the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre Network (ZWRNC) where child-friendly and gender budgeting issues were brought together in pre-budget consultations and other activities.

¹⁶ NANGO, CFNBI End of Year Report to SCZ, 2008

¹⁷ NANGO, CFNBI 3rd and 4th quarterly reports, 2009

¹⁸ Child Protection Society, Farm Community Trust Of Zimbabwe, Poverty Reduction Forum, Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children, Zimbabwe Parents of Handicapped Children Association, Human Rights Trust of Southern Africa, Zimrights, NANGO and SCZ Norway.

Recent documents (2009 onwards) do not show involvement of the Advisory Board in providing strategic direction or oversight. This development has taken away the valuable involvement and contribution of other child-focused and budget-focused organisations. NANGO intends to revive the linkage between CFNBI and the Civil Society Budget Coalition (CSBC) and to mainstream a focus on children into civil society's wider budgeting work.

3.3. Effectiveness

This section looks at whether the project has achieved expected output-level and outcome-level results through its activities. The main challenge for assessing achievement at this level is the lack of an M&E framework for the project, as highlighted in the previous section.

3.3.1. Overall Effectiveness

The project's strategic approach can be described as having two main phases:

3.3.1.1. Initial Phase (2000-2009)

During this phase, the CFNBI developed a strategic approach characterised by:

- ✚ Primary focus on advocacy and direct interface with GoZ policy-makers
- ✚ Use of multiple entry points for influencing resource allocations for children, including engagement with social sector Ministries (Education, Health, Social Welfare), social sector Parliamentary Portfolio Committees (PPCs), as well as the MoF
- ✚ Active engagement with new opportunities to increase resources for children, such as the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children
- ✚ A collaborative approach to advocacy within civil society, partnering with other NGOs to strengthen the voice of the project
- ✚ Strategic use of consultants to provide pre-budget economic analysis and use of other organisations' thematic research on the needs of children
- ✚ Decentralisation of the project's work to district level from 2003, initially using a District Consultative Workshop model that brought together local-level policy makers, civil society and children to discuss budgeting issues
- ✚ Support for child participation through training and awareness-raising, including introduction of the Ten Point Plan as an advocacy tool from 2007
- ✚ Use of the media and public dialogue meetings to disseminate messages and raise the project's profile
- ✚ Regional networking to share CFNBI's ideas and experiences with others, learn from others, and influence resources for children within SADC countries

Towards the end of this period, the operating environment for CFNBI became extremely challenging due to the political context.¹⁹ Working and moving around outside Harare, especially in rural areas, became very high risk for NGOs. Challenges were faced in 2008 in particular around elections, when NGOs were banned from undertaking any activities. Budget analysis also became very difficult during the peak of hyper-inflation from 2007-08.

Nevertheless, the project managed to sustain a level of engagement with key policy-makers at national level including MoF, social sector line ministries and PPCs through to mid-2009. In 2007, NANGO co-facilitated a series of pre-budget consultations at district level which included a specific CFNBI component. Efforts towards local-level participation and advocacy also continued in 2008 with the piloting of children's involvement in citizen score cards in Marondera, Chitungwiza and other locations. The Child Budget Analysis and Advocacy Handbook was produced in 2009 and continues to be a key training resource. Engagement with the SADC Child Budget Network also continued throughout this period. The intention to deliver across the five components of the project remained clear.

3.3.1.2. Recent phase (2010-12)

The most recent phase of the project is characterised by the following key elements:

- ✚ Primary focus on training and awareness-raising of children through workshops in urban and rural districts.
- ✚ Strong links to other child participation activities (e.g. Child-led groups, Junior Councils) to strengthen networks among children and cascade messages as widely as possible
- ✚ Support for children to advocate for resources to fund their child participation work at local level;
- ✚ Ten Point Plan used as the main advocacy tool at national level, through annual presentation by children to the PPC on Public Finance, and the MoF during national consultations
- ✚ Post-budget analysis and production of reports such as the 2012 National Budget Analysis, with the aim of influencing subsequent budget allocations

A primary focus on child participation as the main goal of the project became embedded during this phase. There was also a notable decline in the level of engagement with policy-makers at national level, particularly in the social sectors. The opportunity presented by the formation of the GNU and new political leadership in the social sector ministries does not appear to have been taken up by the project.

Summary of the Strategic Approach of CFNBI

Initial Phase (2000 – 2009): High level of effort on advocacy and interface with policy makers, including at sector level. Combined with proactive media engagement, this led to increased

¹⁹ NANGO, CFNBI Quarterly Reports to SCZ, 2007.

visibility for the project. Project had a multi-faceted approach with efforts being made under all five components, and attention to the links and synergies between them. Child participation integrated to a degree, but not the major focus.

Recent Phase (2010 – 2012): A heavy focus on child participation and awareness-raising at local level was embedded as the main thrust of the project. Post-budget analysis was carried out at national level in 2012, but not linked to an advocacy strategy. Advocacy was limited to presentation of the Ten Point Plan to the PPC for Public Finance. There was no longer any interface with social sector policy-makers. No visible activities under the media reporting and regional links components.

There has been a clear shift away from advocacy and interface with policy-makers, towards child participation as the central thrust of the project. This has not been clearly articulated in SCZ project documents and so does not appear to have happened by design. There is a serious disconnect between project documents which show that results were expected under all five components up to 2011, and project activities on the ground.²⁰ Activities reported since mid-2009 are almost entirely focused on awareness-raising of children and child participation.²¹ Weak project monitoring systems in both SCZ and NANGO do not seem to have identified or addressed this “drift”.

The reasons for the shift in approach are not entirely clear, but suggestions given to the evaluation team have included:

- Political and economic context, especially (i) the peak of hyper-inflation in 2007-08 which made meaningful budget analysis almost impossible, and (ii) the disputed 2008 elections and lack of government from March 2008 - February 2009, which made interface with policy-makers very challenging
- An increase in Save the Children’s focus on child participation in general, as a matter of principle and respect for child rights
- Weak planning and monitoring systems in SCZ and NANGO, and internal staff changes within SCZ which also contributed to a lack of continuity in project monitoring
- Incentives to “chase numbers” (e.g. numbers of children to be trained) at the expense of a more strategic approach

Project funding provided by SCZ in 2010 was also significantly lower than in 2009 and previous years, which may have contributed to a narrowing of the range of project activities.

While context may have played a part, engagement with policy-makers and a clear focus on increasing resource allocations for children actually continued through the worst of the economic and political crisis into 2009. It is not until mid-2009 that the shift becomes apparent

²⁰ SCZ Project Approval of \$12,000 increase to the CFNBI budget, 2011

²¹ NANGO, CFNBI quarterly and annual project reports to SCZ, 2010-11

in project reporting.²² As the change took place mid-year it was not linked to a new partnership agreement.

In our view, the effect of the shift has been to reduce the overall effectiveness of the project. The project's visibility has been seriously diminished by the lack of interface with policy-makers. Key stakeholders in the social sector ministries at national level are no longer aware of CFNBI, and this undermines the project's effectiveness and impact. The non-availability of both the MoF and the PPC on Public Finance for an interview for this evaluation also suggests they may not attach significant weight to the project.

As engagement with social sector policy-makers has declined, opportunities for engagement and influencing of budgets at sector level are being missed. For example, the new Director for Child Health in the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare is unaware of CFNBI, but is planning to push for a new line item on child health in the national budget, and a Task Force to provide strategic direction and priorities for the use of resources. The intention is for civil society to be represented in the Task Force – this is a significant opportunity for CFNBI.

While child training and child participation are a vital component of CFNBI, they cannot achieve the project's goal and objectives alone. For child participation to be effective in influencing resource allocations, it should be complemented by research and analysis, and targeted advocacy and communications. Linkages between project components need strengthening in order to maximise the effectiveness of the project.

There are differences in the vision of the project among the three partners (SCZ, NANGO, UNICEF). For SCZ, CFNBI's primary objective remains to influence resource allocations for children's issues in national and local budgets, principally through the interface with policy-makers. By contrast, UNICEF's 2012 programme document for CFNBI articulates child participation at the goal level. A wider range of outputs are included in the document, but this remains the central element in UNICEF project staff's understanding of CFNBI and what it is trying to achieve. The same thrust was also evident in NANGO Head Office's presentation to the evaluation team (Annex E).

3.3.2. Effectiveness of Project Components

In the absence of clearly defined outputs with corresponding targets and indicators, it is difficult to assess the extent of the project's achievements at this level. The evaluation has looked at the various objectives and expected results in the project documents to extract outcome- and output-level results under each component.

²² Comparison of CFNBI 1st quarter and 3rd quarter reports to SCZ for 2009 indicates the shift in focus of activities and reporting took place around this time. Media and SADC Child Budget Network components are no longer included in the reports from 3rd quarter onwards and reporting is entirely focused on child participation.

3.3.2.1. Research and Analysis

Outcome: Research and analysis widely disseminated and used to inform advocacy and lobbying of policy-makers²³

Output: Analysis of annual national budget with other stakeholders²⁴

Up to 2006, pre-budget submissions to the MoF, social sector ministries and PPCs were focused on the general economic context and its implications for child-friendly budgeting. The submissions generally lacked gap analysis – ie. the relationship between resources and needs. An evidence-based case for more resources was not clearly articulated in 2004 submissions to the PPC on Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, and the PPC on Health and Child Welfare. General statements such as “more resources should be allocated towards service delivery, which have over the years been deteriorating due to various reasons”²⁵ are likely to have had limited influence, as they were not backed by evidence of trends, statistics or analysis. Similar general statements are made in a 2004 submission to the MoF.

Documents indicate that project staff were aware of the need to improve the quality of evidence used to underpin their advocacy work, in order to present a more compelling case to policy-makers. It was reported that independent budget analysis was conducted on a regular basis, but the evaluation was not able to verify this due to gaps in project documentation.

Two examples of budget analysis and research at national level were made available to the evaluation team. The first, from 2007, covers a comprehensive range of issues related to children and the budget.²⁶ Trend analysis is included, which is commendable because it gives the overall progression of resource allocation over a longer period, rather than focusing on one year allocations. However, the report notes the fall of real expenditure due to inflation, but continues to use nominal figures. There is also overstating of proportions of ministerial votes to national budgets due to use of original rather than revised budget estimates.

The second is the 2012 National Budget Analysis which provides a comprehensive, technically sound analysis covering the period 2009 – 2012. It was produced by a consultant, and incorporates trend analysis over a number of years, compares allocations to needs on the ground, and distinguishes between nominal and real allocations. It includes some crucial findings with respect to budget allocations for children, such as the allocation for the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare which dropped to less than 1% of the national budget in 2012, with serious implications for social protection and safety nets for vulnerable children.

However, the report is not “user-friendly” – its key findings are not set out in a clear or accessible way for policy-makers. It has not been linked to an advocacy plan and its dissemination has been weak. For example, MoLSW staff are unaware of the report and of

²³ The evaluation team was unable to identify a specific outcome in relation to research and analysis in a project document, but the intention to use it to information advocacy and lobbying is clear in a number of reports.

²⁴ SCZ-NANGO partnership agreement, 2011

²⁵ NANGO, Budget Submission to Portfolio Committee on Health and Child Welfare 2004; Budget submission to Portfolio Committee on Public Service and Social Welfare 2004.

²⁶ NANGO, Trends on the Level and Impact of Budgetary Allocations to Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children, CFNBI, March 2007

the decline in their Ministry's budget allocation, so an opportunity for influencing is being missed. Children are also unaware of the report. The issue of the MoLSW's budget decline is therefore not reflected in the Ten Point Plan despite its importance for addressing four of their priorities (BEAM, street children, disabled children, and children living in institutions).

Independent budget analysis at local level does not appear to have been carried out under CFNBI as yet. It is positive that this is being planned for 2013, and that capacity-building of Regional Coordinators has started through the recent IDASA training course.

3.3.2.2. Advocacy and lobbying

Outcome: Policy makers appreciate the need for child responsive budgeting²⁷

Output: Advocacy and lobbying of social sector ministries and parliamentarians to increase budgetary allocations to health, education and social protection for the benefit of children²⁸

Overall, an advocacy plan for CFNBI with clear objectives, strategies and targets has not been developed, which has reduced the effectiveness of this component.

National level

Initially, advocacy was focused on delivering clear and simple messages to policy-makers around the need to increase resources in critical areas for children. Despite the weaknesses in the budget analysis that underpinned advocacy at this stage (as noted above), CFNBI nevertheless appears to have succeeded in raising the awareness of social sector policy-makers, parliamentarians and the MoF on the importance of considering children when budgeting. Pre-budget and post-budget workshops were used to enhance policy-makers' awareness of child-friendly budgeting. This is evidenced by the frequency of interface with policy-makers and their formal recognition of CFNBI.

In 2004, CFNBI was granted Consultative Status by the MoF. This meant that the project was formally recognised and invited to provide submissions as part of the national budget consultation process. The project was also recognised by sector ministries and PPCs, and pre-budget submissions were invited by these bodies on a regular basis. In a context characterised by a highly restrictive budget process, this can be considered a major achievement. This can be partly attributed to the energy and drive exhibited by the project, and its strength in advocacy and relationship-building during this phase.

Advocacy was also carried out jointly by NANGO with other NGOs at this time, and SCZ attended the majority of advocacy meetings with policy-makers. This was highly effective in strengthening CFNBI's voice and raising the profile and credibility of the project. After some years, the links with other NGOs declined, so strategic partners such as ZWRCN were no longer engaged in CFNBI's advocacy work. This has gradually diminished the project's voice.

²⁷ NANGO, CNFBI quarterly reports to SCZ, 2007

²⁸ NANGO, CNFBI 1st quarter report to SCZ, 2008

The decline in interface with social sector policy-makers is undermining the project's effectiveness, as sector ministries are the ones who produce bids that determine the initial level and focus of allocations. Influencing them early in the budget cycle (ie. 2nd quarter) is therefore critical. In interviews, both MoLSW and MoHCW indicated they would welcome analysis and inputs from a project such as CFNBI to help shape their budget formulations.

Advocacy in the recent phase is limited to children's presentation of the Ten Point Plan to the PPC for Public Finance and the MoF during its national consultations. There is no direct interface or advocacy by project staff with policy-makers, due to the heavy focus on child participation. There does not seem to be consideration of when and where child participation in advocacy is appropriate, and when it is not. Entry points and strategies are thus more influenced by the availability of children than by the identification of strategic entry points.

Local level

At local level, the project's initial decentralisation phase from 2003 contributed to a "demystification" of the budget process in some communities. This was achieved through activities such as preparatory workshops for pre-budget consultations, and District Consultative Workshops. These were effective in empowering ordinary citizens, community representatives, civil society and children to engage in discussion of budget issues and interface directly with line ministries at local level. However, resources were not sustained at a sufficient level to continue this model beyond 2005.

The project has also helped to raise community awareness on the importance of considering child welfare and children when planning and budgeting. There is evidence to suggest that it has contributed to shifting the nature of the community-level debate towards children in some locations (e.g. Marondera).

In 2007, CFNBI engaged in a series of pre-budget consultation meetings at district level, co-facilitated by NANGO with ZWRCN and Poverty Reduction Forum (PRF). This illustrates again the effective use of strategic partnerships with other NGOs, and links between child-friendly budgeting and other perspectives, including gender budgeting and participatory budgeting in general.

More recently, informal collaborations between CFNBI and local organisations have emerged, particularly with Residents Associations (e.g. Gweru United Residents Association) and other local NGOs involved in budget work (e.g. Habakkuk Trust in Bulawayo). This has the potential to be a cost-effective way of strengthening advocacy for child-friendly budgeting with limited resources. For example, GURA has increased its focus on children in its advocacy work as a direct result of the project.

There is not yet a systematic approach to documenting children's needs to inform advocacy work. Regional Ten Point Plans have been developed as an input to the national Ten Point Plan through extensive consultations with children, but these have not yet been used as advocacy tools at local level.

Advocacy plans at local level have also not been developed to identify entry points and targets. For example, in rural areas, district level sector officials are the critical link between the district and national level, and they sit on the Rural District Development Committees which develop plans and budgets. In urban areas, senior councils have the authority and financial capacity for development within the council area (although council budgets are subject to approval by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development). These stakeholders would ideally be primary targets for advocacy by the project at local level.

3.3.2.3. Child participation

Outcome: Enhanced stakeholders', especially child and youth, participation in the budgeting process²⁹

Output: Children and stakeholders empowered and able to articulate budgetary matters³⁰

Support for child participation in budgeting gathered momentum gradually during the initial phase, culminating in the formation of the Zimbabwe Child and Youth Budget Network (Z-CYBN) in April 2006. Z-CYBN's goal was to enhance participation of children and youth by giving them space, voice and capacity in budgeting processes.³¹ Its achievements have included sensitisation workshops conducted in different parts of the country where children and local leaders interacted together.³² A notable achievement was the National Children's conference attended by high level policy makers that included the Speaker of Parliament.

The project thus generated a high level of commitment and enthusiasm among children to learn more about budgeting processes and add their voice to those advocating for more resources for children. The Z-CYBN is no longer functioning today which may be partly linked to the mobility of young people, lack of incentives to participate and the absence of mechanisms to ensure continuity or succession of members.

Over the years, strong links have been developed with other child participation initiatives, including child-led groups (such as the Marondera Fight Club), Junior Councils and Junior Parliament. CNFBI has raised awareness on budgetary issues within these groups and among school children more generally in all five regions.

The project has facilitated interface meetings between children and policy-makers to discuss their needs in the context of local budget planning (e.g. Marondera, Mvuruwi, Bulawayo, Gweru, Chitungwiza). Where this interface has happened - usually between Junior and Senior Councils - discussion has generally been around children's needs and priorities, but links to actual budget processes and allocations have been weak. So far, such meetings have taken place on an ad hoc basis rather than becoming a feature of the budget consultation process. This interface has led to the creation of specific budget lines to support activities of Junior Councils in some locations, but has not influenced allocations for children's services. The distinction between a budget allocation for *child participation*, and allocations for *children's*

²⁹ NANGO, CNFBI Quarterly Reports to SCZ, 2007

³⁰ NANGO, CNFBI Quarterly Reports to SCZ, 2007

³¹ Muchabaiwa, Bob, Gender-Sensitive And Child-Friendly Budgeting In Zimbabwe, 2009

³² Z-YBCN, Annual Report to SCZ, 2006-7

services and child welfare has not been clearly articulated in project reporting, but is an important distinction to make.

There is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that CFNBI has empowered children to raise awareness among local-level policy-makers of the needs of vulnerable children, leading to improvements in services for children. For example, in Marondera in 2007-8, children who had gone through CFNBI training identified the needs of child-headed households who were having their utilities (water and electricity) cut off due to their inability to pay. They were supported by the Child Protection Co-ordinator to approach municipal officers who responded positively.

Since mid-2009, training workshops for children have become the main activity of CFNBI. The workshops are helping children to become more articulate in budgetary matters, and to understand the budget process. Children themselves feel the benefit of the training for their own personal development and levels of confidence. The training has also helped improve the quality of planning and budgeting by Junior Councils and child-led groups for their activities.

Training has generally been well received and there is a high level of commitment and enthusiasm among participants. The evaluation observed some limitations in the project's technical capacity to use child friendly approaches during training, and some children expressed the need for more child-friendly materials to be used.³³ Children also favour sensitising adults (e.g. headmasters, community leaders etc) to the importance of child participation in budgeting in order to increase community support.

In general, however, children do not feel that there are sufficient platforms for them to engage in advocacy following the training, or that they are having an influence on actual budget processes. Only a limited number of children are able to participate in presentation of the Ten Point Plan at national level, and there is demand among children for more feedback on whether its key points have been addressed in the national budget.

At local level, training is not usually followed up with support for children to participate in budget processes due to the limited resources at regional level, and the challenges presented by restrictive local budget processes. Attempts by individual children to participate in consultations (e.g. Ward level meetings) have met with resistance from adults and can be intimidating for them. Therefore, any assumption that training will automatically lead to increased participation of children in budgeting processes should be treated with caution.

3.2.3.3. Media

Outcome: Child friendly media reporting, advocacy and lobbying³⁴

Output: Capacity development of at least 20 journalists to effectively report on child responsive budgeting in Zimbabwe and in SADC³⁵

³³ CFNBI Scouts and Pathfinders training, Mutare, November 2012

³⁴ NANGO-SCZ, CFNBI project approval document, 2011

³⁵ NANGO, CNFBI End of Year Report to SCZ, 2008

Media engagement was a central component in the initial phase. This was focused on effective use of the national media to reinforce key messages around the rights of citizens, communities and children to participate in budget processes. It was also successful in helping to raise the visibility of the project. CFNBI regularly placed articles and adverts in the national press and used a variety of radio spots to increase its profile.

Through the IN-TV Citizen Child program, CFNBI provided a radio and television platform for children to articulate their needs on radio and television. The programs were aired for three years from 2003 – 05. One of the off-shoots from this was Club Citizen Child, a platform where children learnt about their rights, raise awareness about children's issues as articulated by the children and solutions suggested by the children.³⁶ Membership of the club had grown to 6000 by the end of 2005 and Club Citizen Child had become a voice for children at key national and international events.³⁷

However, there is no evidence available of training workshops for journalists which were intended at various stages of the project, or of other activities to strengthen reporting on child-friendly budgeting by the media. In terms of achievement of expected results at output-level, this appears to be the least effective component of the project.

Opportunities exist which could be taken up by the project in future – for example, UNICEF's annual field trip for the media to raise their awareness on children's issues could be used to convey key child-friendly budgeting messages.

3.3.3.4. Regional networking

Outcome: Prioritization of children's issues in national budgets of SADC community

Output: Enhanced collaboration and knowledge sharing among civil society organisations in SADC³⁸

The approach was successful in raising the profile of child-friendly budgeting issues in the African region. This is evidenced by CFNBI's role from 2003 as co-chair of the SADC Child Budget Network (Imali Ye Mwana), together with IDASA.³⁹ Between 2002 and 2005, CFNBI participated in World Bank sponsored workshops in Ethiopia, Uganda, Ghana and Zambia, which provided an opportunity to raise the profile of the project and extend its influence. In 2005 the project was recognized as a promising social accountability initiative in Africa.

Meeting reports of the Network suggest that it contributed significantly to cross-fertilization of ideas, lessons and challenges between the member countries. Themes such as budget analysis, budget tracking, lobbying and child participation were discussed among members, and this enriched their thinking and approaches.

³⁶ IN-TV, Citizen Child Report to SCZ, 2005

³⁷ World Summit on Children in Cape Town and Launch of the NPA for OVC in Zimbabwe, both in 2005

³⁸ NANGO, CFNBI Workplan, 2009

³⁹ The Imali Ye Mwana network is funded separately at a regional level

However, this did not translate into effective advocacy at the regional level, as originally intended. This was due to the lack of common advocacy issues to focus on, limited resources, and the fact that the network had no legal status or institutional framework. No regional-level research outputs or media publications were produced.⁴⁰

The link between CNFBI and Imali Ye Mwana has not been visible in project reporting since 2009. The reasons for this are not clear, but may be linked to the above.

3.4. Impact

Previous sections have considered the output-level, outcome-level and process achievements of the project. This section examines the extent to which the project has achieved its intended impact at Goal level.

There are challenges in assessing impact due to the evolution of the project's goal over the years, and the absence of a documented log frame or results chain with targets and indicators. The weak M&E system has resulted in inadequate data for impact assessment. Attribution of budget allocation changes to the project is difficult due to the absence of clearly documented advocacy strategies and targets, the non-availability of key policy-makers for interview (e.g. MoF and PPC for Public Finance), and the existence of other players advocating for improvements in the lives of children and in the social sectors.

Goal: Local and national budgets are responsive to children's issues

The project aimed to contribute to increased resource allocation for children's issues in national and local budgets. This section's analysis is limited to national level only, as local budget information in the regions was not available.

Impact reporting issues

Analysis based on nominal figures is problematic, especially in a hyper-inflationary environment such as that experienced from 2000-2008. Price and revenue increases are inevitable, affecting the budget income and expenditure. In a hyper-inflationary environment, budget revisions and supplementary budgets are common and this is true for Zimbabwe. An analysis of the budgetary allocations in the Blue Book from 2000-2008 shows that, in most cases, revised allocations were higher than original allocations in nominal terms.

Reporting of CNFBI's impact has been largely based on nominal figures, and in some instances original budget allocations. Supplementary budget analysis does not appear to have been carried out by the project, and the use of original budgets and nominal figures has resulted in over-stating of some of the increases in allocations. For example, the budget for Ministry of Labour and Social Services is claimed to have increased from 1.23% of the national budget in 2002 to 11.23%⁴¹ in 2005, when the revised proportion for 2005 was only 7.12%.⁴²

⁴⁰ Imalie Ye Mwana meeting notes, 21-23 May 2007, IDASA office, Pretoria

⁴¹ NANGO, Reflections of the Strategy Period 2002-2005, 2005.

⁴² GoZ (MoF), Budget estimates for the Year Ending 2006

Similarly, the Ministry of Education and Culture budget is reported to have increased from 21.2% in 2002 to 25.23% in 2004, 24.64% in 2005 and 19.24% in 2006⁴³ when the revised proportions were 17.42% in 2004, 17.17% in 2005 and 10.94 in 2006.⁴⁴

There is also a reporting of success related to the 200% increase in the BEAM allocation from 2002 to 2003, while the rate of inflation was 198% in 2002 and 589% in 2003.⁴⁵ These budget allocations reflect inflation changes in the economy, and the fact that the increase in allocation is less than the net effect of inflation means a lower allocation in real terms to BEAM.

In the more recent phase, some inaccuracies and gaps in impact reporting were observed. The 2011 annual report states: “on education, the national budget managed to allocate 20% to the Ministry of Education hence managing to adhere to the Dakar declaration”. However, the 2012 National Budget Analysis document states that the Ministry was allocated 17.7% of the budget, commenting that this “falls far short of the Dakar Declaration”.

The 2012 allocation for BEAM of USD 16 million for 160,000 secondary school children is also reported as a project achievement based on the Ten Point Plan, despite there being no allocation at all for primary school BEAM and the Ten Point Plan’s demand being resources for 2 million children. Resolving these types of gaps and inconsistencies in impact analysis is crucial for maintaining the quality and credibility of reporting, and basing the project’s advocacy strategy on a realistic assessment of its impact to date.

National budget trends: 2000-08

A more useful indicator than increases in nominal allocations is the proportion of social sector ministry allocations to the total budget, looking at a trend analysis over several years (rather than changes from one year to another). This allows us to measure the relative importance of the sector or ministry against other competing demands. Trend analysis helps show whether responsiveness of government allocations has been sustained.

Budget allocation trends show distinct patterns between the two main periods of 2000-08 and 2009-12. In the economic decline period, it is very clear that in nominal terms the budgets for all sectors increased reflecting the inflationary trends. However, the budgets of line ministries as a proportion of the total national budget show a mixed trend (Figure 1). The Education Culture and Sport budget shows a declining linear trend in terms of its proportion to the total national budget. The Health and Child Welfare budget and Labour and Social Welfare budget show an increasing linear trend. However, these increases were well below the inflation rate, hence in real terms the budget allocations declined – a fact which the project noted in 2007: “Allocations sound reasonable as percentages, they are however eroded by inflation rates and subsequent school fees increases.”⁴⁶

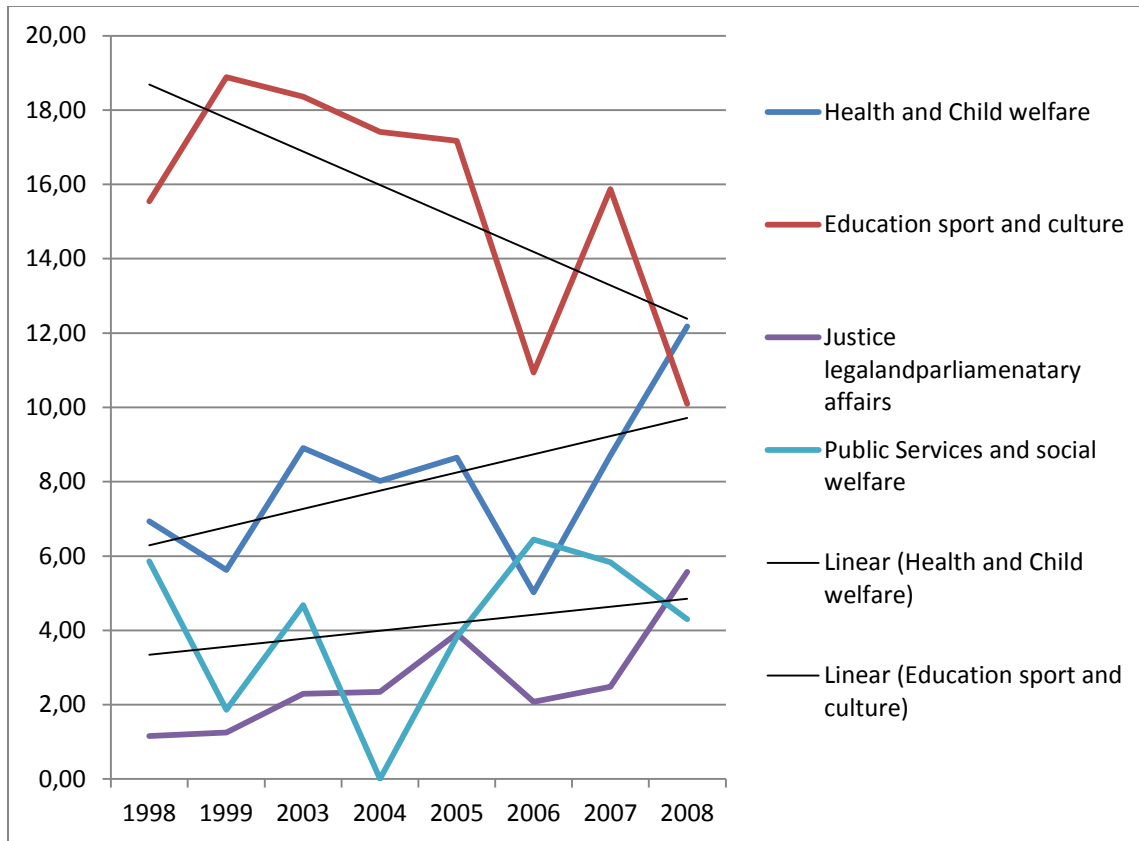
⁴³ NANGO, Trends on Level and Impact of Budgetary Allocations to Orphans and Vulnerable Children, 2007

⁴⁴ GoZ (MoF), Budget Estimates for the Year Ending 2005, 2006, 2007

⁴⁵ Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe. Inflation Rates on www.rbz.co.zw [accessed 10 November 2012]

⁴⁶ NANGO, CFNBI End of Year Report: January-December 2007

Figure 1



Source: Zimbabwe Government Ministry of Finance Blue Book 2000-2008

Looking at social sector ministry allocations as a proportion of the total national budget only gives one indication of increased attention to children’s issues. Examining specific child-friendly budget lines is also important, and this was a focus of advocacy during this phase.

Early impact claims around new budget items have been difficult to verify. For example, the project claims to have influenced the introduction of the budget line item on children in difficult circumstances in 2003.⁴⁷ Discussions with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare did not confirm this claim, however - they reported that the budget line was introduced as a result of the Ministry’s research and interaction with children at various levels including district level. Verification of the project’s claim to have influenced the review of the tax bracket in 2005 could not be made with MoF to due non-availability for interview.

The post-budget meeting in 2008 confirmed inadequate allocations within child-specific line items to meet children’s needs in the national budget. In the report it is suggested that the budget situation has increased child poverty with 1,500,000 child orphans, 115,000 children living with HIV, 12,000 living with disability and 5,000 living in institutions.⁴⁸ The analysis of the

⁴⁷ NANGO, CFNBI Annual Report to SCZ, 2003

⁴⁸ NANGO, CFNBI End of Year Report to SCZ, 2007

budget increases based on nominal figures, during a period of hyper inflation, revealed that each child would receive \$Z 6.6 million for BEAM and \$Z 933,000 for children in difficult circumstances. In real terms, with inflation of 231 million % (July 2008) and 3.2 quintillion % (December 2008)⁴⁹, this represented less than 1 USD per child.

The project's Ten Point Plans have generally focused on influencing specific line items for children. A review of national budget allocations in relation to the Ten Point Plan for 2008-09 shows that its impact was very limited:

Table 2

Ten Point Plan 2008-09	National Budget Response in 2008
BEAM should cater for full school and exam fees for 1 000 000 orphans	Budget allocated equivalent of less than 1 USD per child
Adequate resources allocated for at least one victim friendly court per province	Equivalent of USD 40 000 was allocated, translating to approximately USD 4000 per province which is inadequate
Sanitary wear for girls to be subsidized for girls	No provision was made; no tax/duty policy concessions made
Adequate resources should be allocated for the education, protection and development of children with disabilities especially for construction of schools and provision of assistive devices in every province	Provision made for assessment of children with disabilities but not for supportive services
Adequate resources should be provided to procure and distribute drugs to at least 50% of all children living with HIV	Only USD 600,000 was provided for anti retroviral drug procurement for both adults and children. The number of children in need of ART in 2008 was 34,337 ⁵⁰ suggesting inadequate allocation.
Vote of registrar general should be significantly reviewed upwards to enhance the departments capacity to reach out and issue birth certificates to all children in districts	No allocation was made for mobile registration. An equivalent of USD 600,000 was allocated for all national registration requirements
Resources be allocated for supplementary feeding of at least 80% of all needy children	Nutrition program received an allocation equivalent to USD 1,000,000 [data on the level of need not available]
Per capita grant allocations for children living in institutions to be maintained and projections and regular reviews made in line with inflation.	No allocation was made for children in institutions.
Children living on the streets allocation to be increased by 1000% for rehabilitation and reintegration	Allocation equivalent to USD 40,000 was made. There was no allocation made in the previous year (2007).

⁴⁹ Zimbabwe National Statistical Agency and Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe 2010

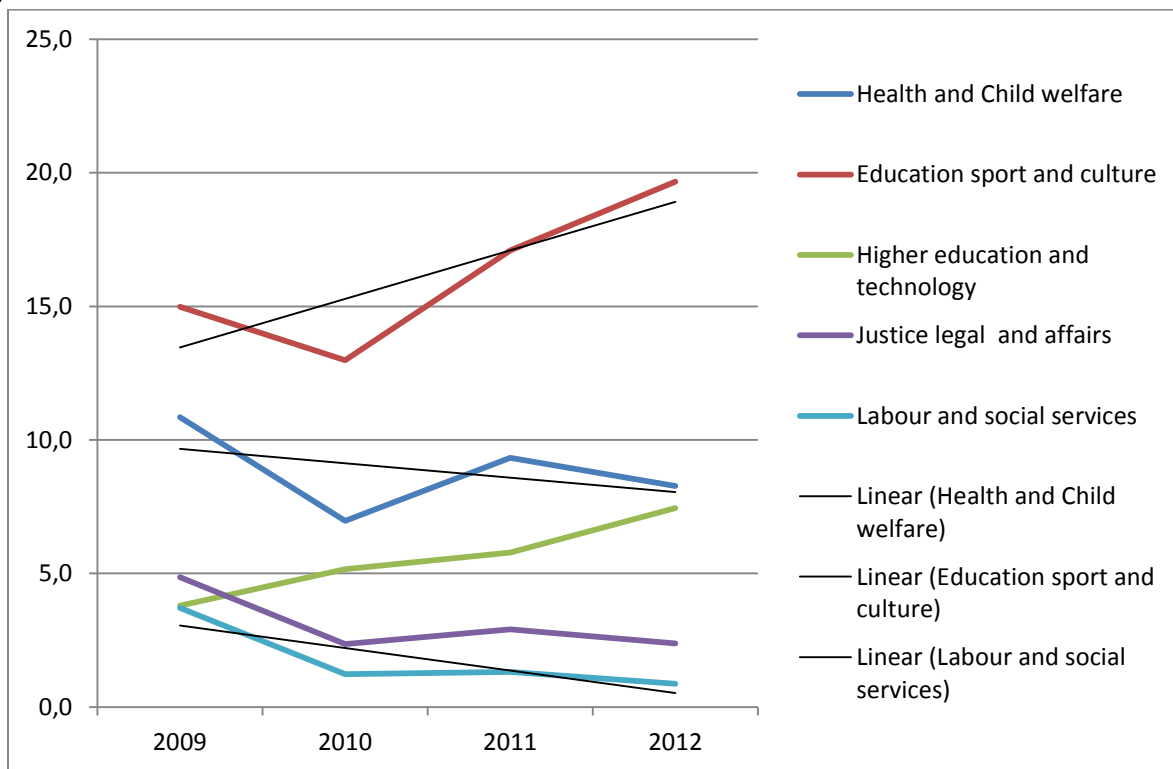
⁵⁰ GoZ (MoHCW), National Child Survival Strategy for Zimbabwe 2010-05, 2010

National budget trends: 2009-12

An analysis of social sector ministries' budgets as a proportion of total budget from 2009-12 shows a decreasing trend, except for the Education Culture and Sport budget (Figure 3). In 2012, the allocation for the Education Culture and Sport budget was 19.7%, almost meeting the Abuja declaration expectation of at least 20% of the total national budget. For the past two years the proportion of this Ministry's budget to the total budget has increased.

The data shows a serious decline in the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare budget to less than 1% of the national budget. Allocations to the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare also declined overall, and consistently failed to meet the Abuja target of 15%. In 2010, Zimbabwe was reported to have spent 9 USD per capita on health, falling far short of the USD 34 per capita recommended by the Ougadougou declaration of 2008.⁵¹

Figure 3



Source: Zimbabwe Government Ministry of Finance Blue Book 2009-2012

Of additional interest is how much was actually made available to the line ministries after the allocations. Because of the cash budgeting system, line ministries can only spend what is available and this has resulted in ministries actually receiving far less than what would have been allocated in the budget. In 2009 Ministry of Health and Child Welfare is reported to have

⁵¹ UNICEF, GoZ, Situation Analysis of the Status of Women and Children's Rights in Zimbabwe 2005-2010: A Call for Reducing Disparities and Improving Equity, 2010

received only 40% of what had been originally allocated: USD 75 million out of USD 158 million, with 92% of expenditure being salaries.⁵² In 2012, the situation has not improved with the Ministry budget being reduced from an initial allocation of USD 300 million down to USD 200 million.⁵³

In 2011 the project reported on its input into the development of the 2012 budget: “On the national budget children were able to influence the budget and this saw the allocations to the child related ministries - Ministry of Education, Health and Child Welfare, and Labour and Social Services, increasing by 74%; 35% and 25% respectively.”⁵⁴ These figures are based on original allocations, and not on revised allocations for 2011. The percentage increases from 2011-12 based on revised allocations for 2011 are 51%, 35% and 25% respectively. This shows positive change both in nominal and real terms, particularly for education.

The project has also reported on two impact achievements based on a comparison of the 2012 national budget with the 2011 Ten Point Plan. This comparison suggests that two items - maternal health, and water and sanitation – were largely addressed in the budget, and the evaluation was able to verify this in terms of the budget allocation figures.

However, attributing these positive changes to the project is more difficult. Attribution is questionable as the timing of the Ten Point Plan’s presentation by children is very late in the budget cycle to have an impact on allocation decisions – in 2012 it took place after the 2013 budget had already been announced, and in previous years it was reported to have been too late to have the intended impact. The evaluation was not able to validate the influence of the Ten Point Plan due to non-availability of the PPC for Public Finance and MoF for interview.

3.5. Sustainability

From the outset, the project has positioned itself as an advocacy initiative towards the GoZ. In the early years, the frequency of engagement with policy-makers suggests there was the potential for movement towards more of a partnership approach, but this was never formalised. The political context and sensitivities around budgeting matters present significant challenges for development of a partnership approach, but some former project staff nevertheless feel that this could and should have been explored.

Within the advocacy approach, the project does not appear to have lobbied with GoZ for changes to national (or local) budgeting processes to internalise a child-focused approach. For example, integration of an annual “child-friendly review” of the national budget, as a formal stage within the budget cycle led by the MoF or the PPC for Public Finance, would have the potential to create sustainability. The project could support this review by offering independent analysis to underpin discussions, and facilitating the participation of children to input their priorities.

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Interview with Director of Child Health, MoHCW

⁵⁴ NANGO, CFNBI Annual Report to SCZ for Dec-Jan 2011

At local level, an important achievement in terms of sustainability has been to help secure new budget lines for child participation (especially Junior Councils) in the locations mentioned above. Because the resources are coming from local authority budgets, this should secure a longer-term, sustainable impact on child participation. However, in all five regions it was reported that platforms for children to participate in actual local budget processes still do not exist. The project has not yet achieved sustainability in terms of children's participation in budgeting at local level.

Several stakeholders articulated the long-term vision of the project as creating "a generation of children who are articulate in budgetary matters" and thus able to influence allocations for child welfare in the future. Fulfillment of this aspiration would require a significant scaling up of the project, and particularly investment in creating sustainable platforms for children's engagement in budget processes.

Ideas around adopting a "training of trainers" approach are worth exploring, but there are real risks in expecting children to take on a training role with the limited knowledge they have gained from the project to date. Training of trainers should ideally be targeted towards other stakeholders that have the necessary experience and capacity to cascade budget training. Various stakeholders also proposed advocacy with the Ministry of Education for inclusion of child-friendly budgeting within future revisions to the national curriculum.

At local level, the informal partnerships between CFNBI and some Resident Associations noted above also have the potential to increase sustainability of community participation in budgeting from a children's perspective. Examples such as the Gweru United Residents Association show that the project can directly influence others to integrate a focus on children in their advocacy work. This approach has the potential to create longer-term, more sustainable impact on local-level budgetary processes and allocations. Again, more resources would be required for CFNBI to scale up and/or formalise such partnerships.

4. Challenges and Lessons Learned

- The political and macro-economic context and the sensitivities around budgeting issues have been major challenges for CFNBI, in common with other governance and advocacy projects. Nevertheless, interaction with policy-makers is possible even during high levels of political tension (as shown by the project's activities in 2007-09) and is a critical strategy for influencing allocations.
- Resources for the project from SCZ have not increased significantly over the 12 years. The project was not able to capitalise on its early achievements and grow into a larger, more influential initiative. Any future vision for the project must have a realistic level of ambition, and be sufficiently resourced.
- Technical capacity in economics and budget analysis *and* advocacy and communications are essential. The 2012 National Budget Analysis is an example of

sound economic and budget analysis that was not “user-friendly” in its presentation, and was not followed up by advocacy products and events to maximise its influence (e.g. one-page summary of key messages; forum for policy-makers to discuss key findings).

- The lack of an M&E framework for the project has diminished its efficiency and effectiveness. Project monitoring has been weak and this has allowed the project’s focus to drift. It is also very difficult to show impact and this is de-motivating for staff who are implementing the project.
- Training of children is only the first step towards child participation in budget processes. It provides children with knowledge and awareness of budgetary issues. This must be followed by support for child participation in national or local budget processes, if the training is to have its intended impact. This has resource implications for the project, given the financial costs of participation.
- Opportunities for a more meaningful and sustainable participation of children in budget processes do exist, and merit exploration. For example, the Public Relations Officer for the Bulawayo City Council suggested that that the Council could potentially fund specific consultation sessions for children as part of the local budget formulation process.
- Access to budget information is a major barrier, particularly at the local level. There has also been resistance and suspicion to CFNBI from local authorities in some locations. It is impressive that project staff have maintained clear commitment in the face of these challenges.⁵⁵ This suggests that deepening the work in locations where the project has good relations is likely to be more effective than extending into new areas. There is value in moving towards more of a partnership approach with local authorities where this is feasible.
- Increased budget allocations in favour of children are only one part of the picture, and may not necessarily lead to increases in expenditure. The link with work on expenditure tracking is highly strategic and could be expanded in the next phase.

5. Recommendations

Project Strategy

- Develop a joint vision for 2013 onwards shared by SCZ, UNICEF and NANGO
- Agree on how the vision will be resourced; explore opportunities for pooled funding or other arrangements to make project’s funding more efficient

⁵⁵ For example, in Kwekwe clearance for a CFNBI training activity was refused after three weeks of communication – the problem was eventually resolved through intervention of the local MP.

- Ensure capacity levels are increased to a sufficient level to deliver, with at least one full-time staff member in NANGO Head Office who is equipped to deliver the advocacy component, and the addition of technical input on economic and budget analysis

Project Systems

- Harmonize SCZ and UNICEF program frameworks into one clear log-frame, to ensure the project is coherent and to simplify reporting for NANGO
- Develop a robust M&E framework to monitor and assess progress towards results, including SMART indicators and targets
- Develop annual work plans (also using a log-frame format), to tighten the links between activities and expected results, and facilitate regular monitoring including an annual project review
- Improve the quality of project reporting to ensure a focus on results rather than activities, and encourage learning; SCZ and UNICEF should set clear incentives for accuracy and realism in impact reporting - where targets are not being met, use this to inform advocacy plans
- Develop contingency plans to help the project deliver in different scenarios, so that momentum is maintained through the next elections phase and beyond
- Identify and invite key (two or three) NGOs to play a formal role in CFNBI's governance and oversight (as per the previous Advisory Board)

Regional/Local Level

- Develop and test a “model” to successfully influence local budgets in selected locations where good relations already exist. Focus on *deepening* the work in selected locations rather than *broadening* the reach of the project into new areas
- Identify entry points for advocacy and engagement in these locations, based on in-depth analysis of local budgeting processes (including rural/ruban differences)
- Agree on the most appropriate modalities for empowering Regional Coordinators to innovate at the local level (e.g. funds on deposit at regional level; regular planning meetings to share ideas; regional work plans)
- Address mobility and IT issues for Regional Coordinators

Child Participation

- Recognise the distinction between influencing budget allocations *for children's services* (e.g. *health, education, social welfare*), and budget allocations *for child participation* – and ensure that both are given adequate attention
- Review training capacity within NANGO and review training materials to ensure they are child-friendly and accessible to all (and agree on a minimum age for training attendance)
- Develop ways to actively support children to participate in budgeting processes at local level – e.g. push for specific children's platforms within consultations

- Gather feedback on training and follow-up activities regularly and digest this
- Consider training adults (e.g. Headmasters, community leaders, Residents Associations) to sensitize them to child participation and budgeting

Research, Analysis and Advocacy

- Develop a clear advocacy strategy based on analysis of (a) who should be targeted (b) achievable targets based on evidence of children’s needs, allocation trends, and socio-economic context; (c) timing in relation to budget cycles
- Identify potential champions for child-friendly budgeting within GoZ
- Continue to build technical capacity within NANGO on research, budget analysis and advocacy to reinvigorate these components. Use a range of advocacy approaches, and bring children into advocacy work only where appropriate
- Strengthen relations with policy-makers in social sector ministries and social sector portfolio committees. Engage senior management in SCZ, UNICEF and NANGO to boost advocacy efforts and identify strategic opportunities.
- Develop a wider range of written advocacy products, such as one-page briefings that can be easily digested by policy-makers. For example, build on the findings of the 2012 National Budget Analysis to produce a briefing on the decline in budget allocation to the MoLSW and its impact on children
- Revive the project’s media component to improve visibility and disseminate more widely the key messages from research and advocacy products
- Re-build strategic partnerships with other NGOs in the budget sector through the Civil Society Budget Coalition or another forum, to strengthen the project’s voice

Sustainability

- Explore the viability of developing a partnership approach with GoZ, particularly with social sector ministries where opportunities exist (e.g. MoHCW, MoLSW). This could be combined with meetings to raise the visibility of the project.
- Propose to the Ministry of Finance the incorporation of an annual “child-friendly review” of the national budget, as a formal stage within the budget cycle
- Formalise and/or scale up partnerships that have the potential to help deliver CFNBI’s objectives over the longer-term – e.g. with Residents Associations that are engaged in advocacy around budgets
- Advocate with the Ministry of Education and key stakeholders for inclusion of child-friendly budgeting within revisions to the school curriculum