



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

144th IPU Assembly

Nusa Dua, Indonesia
20-24 March 2022



Panel discussion *Leveraging parliamentary budgeting powers for children*

*Organized jointly by the IPU and UNICEF
Monday, 21 March 2022, 12:30 – 14:00
Medan, first floor, BICC*

Concept note

Background

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has been universally¹ ratified. It provides, through its Article 4², the overarching international legal framework for the protection of children's rights³. Parliaments have a key role to play to help implement the Convention, including by ensuring that funding and resources are invested effectively from a children's rights perspective. In doing so, it is crucial that parliaments address the needs of all children, with emphasis on the most vulnerable, and hold their governments accountable on how resources are spent, including by verifying if expenditure is in line with the national and international commitments they have made.

Since 1989, the Convention has brought about notable changes in the promotion of children's rights, guiding national children's policies that take into account "the best interests of the child". The voice of children is increasingly being heard and parliaments are becoming places where children's concerns are being addressed. The systematic and large-scale collection and analysis of data on the situation of children has led to better policy-making. Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has offered additional impetus to securing children's rights.

However, despite undeniable progress, the reality is that much remains to be done and the challenges are increasing. Many children are still suffering from poverty, famine, hunger, illiteracy, disease, discrimination, exploitation, and child trafficking, labour and marriage, as well as violence of all kinds. For these children, the implementation of the Convention is still wishful thinking.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased and complicated these challenges. It has negatively impacted the economy, with recessions expected in some countries. In this regard, the need for recovery seems to leave the promotion of children's rights on the back burner.

¹ Except for the United States of America

² Article 4: States parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the 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 cooperation.

³ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/838730>

As children hold the key to a better tomorrow, and early investment is the best investment in the future, it is urgent to combine our strengths in order to move forward with children's rights, taking into consideration the four general principles that the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) – which oversees the implementation of the Convention – has identified from the Convention. These principles form the basis for all State decisions and actions that directly or indirectly relate to the rights of the child, including public budgets. They are the right to non-discrimination (article 2); the best interests of the child (article 3); the right to life, survival and development (article 6); and the right to be heard (article 12).

The current global mobilization in favour of resilience should also ensure that post-COVID budgetary reallocations do not sideline children.

Organization of the panel discussion

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), with the collaboration of UNICEF, and the support of the CRC, will organize a panel discussion on *Leveraging parliamentary budgeting powers for children* on the occasion of the IPU's 144th Assembly, which will take place in Nusa Dua, Indonesia from 20 to 24 March 2022.

This panel aims to:

- Raise parliamentary awareness around the need and possibilities for action by parliaments to budget for the promotion and protection of children's rights;
- Identify and share good parliamentary practices in all phases of the budget cycle that could serve as inspiration for better budgeting in support of children's rights.

This interactive panel will be addressed by parliamentarians, representatives from UNICEF and a member of the CRC.

The questions for the panel will be:

- Has public expenditure for children being adequate in your country? Has it responded to the needs of children? Has it increased in recent years?
- How have parliaments been able to ensure that a children's rights perspective drives the manner in which resources are allocated?
- What are the tensions that parliaments must resolve to take into account the needs of children and reflect them in the budget? In other words, when lawmakers debate the hierarchy of priorities, do they use all the arguments children's rights offer to them?
- What good practices of parliamentary involvement in the four stages of the budget cycle exist in support of children's rights?
- What steps have parliaments taken to prevent discrimination in budget-related legislation and to address inequalities affecting children by increasing or reprioritizing certain parts of the budget, or improving the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of their budgets?
- Has the children's rights perspective been adequately combined with a gender perspective?
- What steps have parliaments taken to ensure that children's opinions have an impact on the design of budgets?
- To what extent has the existence of dedicated parliamentary committees on children's rights in some parliaments enhanced the budget process in support of children's rights? How have these committees worked together with parliamentary finance/budget committees?