

Child sensitive Budgeting: A critical Review of the Tanzania 2011/12 National Budget

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Introduction

Investment in children is an investment in human capital with large positive developmental impact both in the short and long-term. It makes much economic sense for the country having over fifty percent or over 20 million people below 18 years of age. Various scholars have put forward relevance of investing in children in the name of 'Children's rights'. These rights are defined as entitlements that belong to all children beings regardless of race, ethnicity or social economic class (Nussbaum, 1998: p. 273). The *right-based perspective* includes children's rights into development discourse. According to this perspective, children have inalienable rights to a core minimum level of well being including the right to proper health, quality education, social protection and the right to grow up in a family.

Another perspective is the *socio-economic* one which emphasizes on investment in children's early childhood development as a way of improving the quality and productivity of future labour in a society. This is crucial in facilitating society achieving human development outcomes such as the reduced mortality rates, increased literacy rates through social services such as health and education e.t.c. This argument is based on the *social contract theory* that proclaims rights such as life, liberty and property belong to the individuals and not the society (offenheiser-Holcombe, 2006, p. 276). These rights existed before individuals entered civil society and by entering a civil society, one is agreeing to a social contract which the state has the right to enforce natural rights. The state breaks the

contract if the rights of the people are broken or not secured. Therefore investing in children is important for both social and economic development in any society.

All these arguments inform what is referred as a *child-sensitive budget*. This is the budget that recognizes the international child rights-based obligations (Ngowi, 2011)¹. In Tanzania, this budget would mean basing on analysis that interrogates whether the needs of Tanzanian children are being considered in the national budget. It looks at whether the growth in number of children in the country commensurate with the growth in social services benefiting them.

The child sensitive budget is not a separate budget from the one de-

veloped by the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and approved by the Parliament; rather, it is the budget which is achieved within the government's general budget (Ibid). Its analysis involves looking at whether there is a reasonable allocation for the social sectors targeting children's benefits like education, health (including nutrition, HIV & AIDS), social protection (specifically child protection), and water and sanitation; as well as allocations in other sectoral budgets that *indirectly* impact on child well-being, such as agriculture, transport infrastructure, labour, electricity, agriculture and irrigations; job creation in the private and public sectors, and the like.

The fact that Tanzania is signatory to all the important international

¹ In a paper presented at the Post Budget dialogue on "Re-Investing in Social Sector in Tanzania: A Critical Review of the Budget 2011/12". The Double Tree Hotel, Dar es Salaam 26th July, 2011

commitments to uphold the rights of children, it is expected that even the budget allocation towards children-related sectors will adhere to those commitments. Among the commitments include; the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) of which its Article 4 as well as Article 5 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) require governments to invest “*the maximum extent of available resources to realize the wellbeing of children.*”

Was the National Budget 2011/12 a child –sensitive budget?

The national 2011/12 budget submitted on June, 2011 was prepared following the national budget guidelines which incorporate objectives and targets of the Tanzania Development Vision (TDV) 2025; the Five Year Development Plan (FYDP) 2011/12 -2015/16 as well as priorities outlined in the National Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction (NSGPR/MKUKUTA II). The submitted budget elaborates about five national priorities namely:

- Electricity;
- Water;
- Transport and transportation infrastructure (railways, ports, roads, airports, national optic fibre);
- Agriculture and irrigations, and;
- Job creation in the private and public sectors.

Basing on the above mentioned priorities, it is obvious that the budget is focussing more on the

mentioned areas than on those areas which touch children directly. Moreover the emphasis has been also been directed at ensuring that the achievements attained under education and health sectors are protected. However despite the budget being more specific in terms of social sectors priorities, these priorities are likely to have an indirect impact on children’s wellbeing and rights (Ngowi, 2011). For instance greater access to electricity, especially in rural areas, can enable more schools to be hooked to electricity supply. This may spur installation of laboratory equipments and computers in schools, thus improving the quality of education. In addition, students can have more studying time following the availability of lights in schools. Moreover, water is also a critical component of good health for adults and children as well, particularly through its effects in reducing child deaths associated with water-borne diseases such as diarrhea, cholera, worms and the like.

For the health sector, the Budget guidelines have prioritize the following (i) enhancing the quality of curative, preventive and rehabilitative services at all levels; (ii) constructing and rehabilitating health facilities at all levels; (iii) improving housing and incentives for public health workers; and (iv) training and recruiting new medical doctors, nurses and paramedical graduates. Although these are good priorities for improving health status in Tanzania, they are not backed by adequate resources. The

amount stipulated in the budget statement (1,209.1 billion Tanzanian shillings) which have been allocated to health, is not enough for the realization of these priorities. Although this amount is a bit higher, for about 0.3% compared to the Tshs 1,205.9 billion allocated to the sector in the previous financial year 2010/2011², the trend of resource allocation in health sector shows a declining slope (PER, 2010).

Coming to education which is a basic right to every child, the budget did not do justice to the sector. Although it has been stipulated as one of the MKUKUTA II goals with the aim of ensuring equitable access to quality primary and secondary education for both boys and girls, universal literacy among men and women, and expansion of higher technical and vocational education, the meager resources allocated for this purpose, places some doubts over its realization.

According to the budget guidelines, priorities for the education sector include:

- (i) improving the quality of education at all levels especially availability of textbooks, laboratories and school desks, with emphasis on people with disabilities;
- (ii) improving the education and training policy and its strategies including skills development;
- (iii) strengthening the financing of higher education and
- (iv) improving teachers’ services including housing and incentives.

² Budget Submission 2010/11; 2011/12

³ Ngowi, 2011

However, with Tanzania spending of 5.6% of its GDP on the education sector³; this is insufficient for all these plans will bear expected fruits. This is too low compared to the commitments made under Dakar agreement of at least 7-9% of GDP in education. The continuous freezing of the education funding as reflected in the small spending in primary education and secondary education makes things harder following the increasing demand.

There are number of issues that need to be addressed, first the fact that allocations for basic education (pre-primary, primary and secondary education) are declining in favor of higher education should be of concern. A decline of about 78% of the total education spending in 2005/06 to 70.5% in 2011/12 has been recorded. This means the gains achieved in basic education may not be sustained, let alone making room for improving the quality of education. Furthermore recent scale shows that enrolment in both primary and secondary education have continued to rise hence pressing higher demands for more resources needed for improving the quality of the services within these levels. Therefore it is vital for the Government to review its priorities in education sub-sector spending.

Furthermore, although one of the challenges in education has been identified as inadequate skills training for the students completing primary and secondary education, vocational training seems to be neglected in the submitted 2011/12

education budget. It is reported that there are about 639,700 students who need vocational trainings but the absorption capacity stands 84,000 students only. As it has been noted that the 2011/12 Budget removed over 65% of the resources which used to be allocated for vocational training and re-allocated it to higher education where a number of Tanzanians are capable of paying. Thus re-allocation of the funds from vocation to higher education is equivalent to subsidizing the already rich Tanzanians.

The Implication

Basing on the fact that the fiscal year 2011/12 plan did not prioritize health sector, there is some implication that might hinder Tanzania from realizing international and national commitments on children's rights. As it has been explained, for the long time the country has been trying to improve health of its people, and children in particular through

- (i) reducing mother to child HIV transmission,
- (ii) reducing the high maternal mortality
- (iii) reducing infant and under-five mortality rates
- (iv) providing immunization services to all eligible children, and
- (v) reducing malaria infection in the country. However it is unlikely that these objectives will be reached unless adequate resources have been allocated to this sector.

Second, as the data shows, there have been progressive real declines

in resource allocations to the sectors directly benefit children like health and education sectors. This means that it will be difficult for Tanzania to adequately achieve its commitments. This is because Tanzania is not sufficiently prioritizing children in terms of ensuring maximum allocation of budget resources to enhance children wellbeing and protection of their rights. Despite the fact that both the TDV2025 and 2011/12 Budget Guidelines direct towards greater spending on children, the 2011/12 budget submission and Five-Year Development Plan do not seem to accord priority on the same. This mismatch in policy prescriptions and actual budget allocations is serious and may preclude attainment of the social goals and targets committed internationally and domestically such as those enshrined in MKUKUTA II and MDGs.

Recommendations:

- The government (all MDAs and LGAs) are urged to make their budgets more 'child-friendly' by reviewing their budgets to ensure that priority is given in budgetary allocation and implementation to the realization of children's right and wellbeing.
- The government is urged to prioritize early childhood development including investing at least 6% of the available education and health budgets in early childhood development.
- Prioritize investment in secondary education as an integral part of the educational policy

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and national education budget, and tackle issues around girls education as in most countries in Africa girls have a lower completion rate than boys.

- More allocation to educational services like pre-school education services and facilities, primary education capitation grant, efforts related to educate every child (girl or boy) at primary and secondary education, eradicating disparities in terms of gender, urban-rural, rich versus poor and vulnerable/disadvantaged ones.
- Allocate more to teacher training, including equity in allocation of teachers between rural and urban settings.
- Increase Health Budget in the FY2012/13 budget to progressively reach 15% of total budget in compliance with commitments made under the Abuja Heads of State agreement. Allocate more resources to children-related health services drugs, malaria prevention and control, improving nutrition for children (elimination of child malnutrition), allocation to immunization services like on EPI and eradication of infectious diseases e.t.c.
- There should be portion of the

budget to be allocated within the budget for children.

- Public awareness campaign on children sensitivity budget.

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