Monthly Review
published by the International Reference Center for the Rights of Children Deprived of their Family-ISS

N° 207
DECEMBER 2016

EDITORIAL

From austerity to prosperity for children – budgeting for 2017?

Questions concerning State spending have always involved a fine and sometimes divisive balance of competing interests, especially with widespread austerity measures in place. How can we ensure prosperity in the field of alternative care and adoption through effective budgetary planning?

As the New Year approaches and fresh resolutions abound, what should guide our budgets in the realm of alternative care and adoption? With less and less resources how can we encourage better spending in 2017 - individually and together – holistically? How can States give due regard to their obligation in article 4 CRC for public spending?

Budgeting for family support and prevention work

There has been growing international advocacy on the importance of investing in children (e.g. [CRC General comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights (art. 4)](), 2015 theme for Human Rights Council's Day of the Child and dedicated side event focusing on alternative care). Yet the challenge remains convincing Governments to allocate adequate budget for State support of families and development of robust national welfare programmes.[2] Such basic services are essential for providing a country wide safety net keeping families together. The ISS/IRC encourages Governments to work closely with the Childonomics initiative, which looks "at long-term societal costs linked to insufficient investment and misdirected funding of outdated care systems, which disenfranchise and further marginalise vulnerable children and families. (…) It will provide a means of engaging in dialogue with Ministries of Finance and those responsible for managing public spending across different sectors." (see p. 3)

Budgeting for suitable alternative care options

Irrespective of efforts, some children may nevertheless enter the care system. Regrettably for many the only option are large scale residential care institutions (RCIs) as opposed to family based care – either through re-integration, kinship care, foster care etc. How can we influence increased funding of the latter and discourage RCI funding? Indeed the work in Spain of better investing in families has been promising (see p. 6). The ISS/IRC likewise welcomes the work led by Elevate Children Funders Group, Hope and Homes for Children, and Lumos in collaboration with other key stakeholders on Funding streams - tracking and documenting national and international funding practices. By understanding how/why money flows, we have a better opportunity for redirecting the often well intentioned spending habits of many - donors; national stakeholders; faith-based organisations; governments; civil society; tourism industry; private sector; media; communities, etc.

Budgeting for adoption

If the previous initiatives are successful, logically less will be invested into RCIs. The question then arises as to whether this will be to the detriment of children remaining in RCIs for whom family based care is not suitable. Should RCI funding via adoption, in particular intercountry adoption (ICA) be the solution? Specifically should contributions/donations to RCIs be allowed, albeit after the adoption has occurred? If external funds are used to support RCIs, States of origin may feel obliged to ensure that children are supplied for ICA. Contributions can also create competition, whereby whoever provides the greatest amount receives the greater number of children.

Furthermore, in UNICEF's view[1], these types of funds should not be the way in which support is provided from other countries. When contributions are mandatory in order for ICA to be carried out, the contributor may have little or no influence over the kind of projects financed and whether they comply with international standards. Consequently, contributions of this nature cannot automatically be considered as a desirable form of 'development aid'. But what would be a desirable form of 'development aid'? How can the adoption community invest in States of origin in a way that does not create an unhealthy dependency? How can we promote and finance quality standards of care for the children that remain in RCIs? ISS/IRC believes that there is an acute need to have more awareness raising among donors of what ethical practices, including wide dissemination of the HCCH's Note on Financial Aspects of Intercountry Adoption. Another avenue would be for States to take note of the good practices highlighted with respect to use of contributions in HCCH's Summary list of good practices on the financial aspects of intercountry adoption.

With so many questions, it is clear that we have much work ahead of us for 2017. Yet our work cannot be limited to alternative care and adoption in terms of State budgeting principles of effectiveness, efficiency, equity, transparency and sustainability outlined in CRC General Comment 19. We must also address donor conception (see p.8) and international surrogacy arrangements to better protect children (see p. 11). The ISS/IRC looks forward to working with various stakeholders to build the momentum on the preceding initiatives to identify some possible solutions to these challenging questions and more. Together we can budget for a lifetime of prosperity for children now and generations to come.

The ISS/IRC team
December 2016

INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE
SERVICE SOCIAL INTERNATIONAL
SERVICIO SOCIAL INTERNACIONAL

irc-cir@iss-ssi.org
www.iss-ssi.org

ISS
32 Quai du Seujet
1201 Geneva / Switzerland