



Learnings from eight budget advocacy pilot projects in French-speaking West and Central Africa

Webinar, Monday 31 July 2023 – Notes

Budget advocacy to mobilise domestic resources is an effective strategy to engage civil society and encourage governments to take ownership of interventions on child marriage and promote girls' education, and engage civil society organisations.

Eight pilot projects strengthen budget advocacy, CSOs or coalitions working at the local, national or regional level.

Focused on working together as a network of civil society organisations. Training in budget analysis, work includes raising awareness among decision-makers.

Six lessons:

1. Position the government as a leader in financing child marriage and girls' education policies
 - Cote d'Ivoire How budget advocacy can increase the mandate of structures in place
2. Increase visibility and profile of marriage and girls' education requires increased expertise and capacity of CSO – focus on producing tools to improve capacity, like budget analysis.
 - Niger – parliamentary/governmental workshop to examining public policy documents including CM, and strengthening budget advocacy to end child marriage capacities.
 - Burkina Faso – AIDS, workshop for analysis to identify gaps
3. Encouraging community participation in budget mobilisation and the appropriations of solutions
 - Support sustainable mobilisation of national resources to end child marriage and promote girls' education
 - Democratise access to civil control of public action and budget
 - Raise public awareness as a counterbalance to demand government accountability in actions and funding to end CM and promote girls' education.
4. Progress decentralised budgets to end child marriage and promote girls' education
 - Lack of specificity on ending child marriage and girls' education in community development plans
5. Promote use of rigorous data from budget analysis to promote advocacy based on evidence
 - Impact of budget advocacy is best when it's based on budget analysis and strengthened capacity of key actors, especially local decision-makers
 - Still gaps in coordination between related sectors, especially education, protection, and SRHR
 - Targeted budget advocacy is important
 - The security crisis can affect connections and the advocacy already done.
6. Need to rethinking budget advocacy to end child marriage and promote girls' education in crisis situations
 - Prolonged humanitarian crisis – with political instability, armed conflict and natural disasters and health crisis – across the region serious disruptions to the work of CSOs

- Prioritisation of security investments, deepening budget cuts for social sectors (education, protection) and less transparency in budgetary information, lack of ability within the government
- How to continue budget advocacy?
- Need to carry out an evaluation of the risks to continue work during and after disruptions

Limitations to projects:

- Burkina Faso – continuous situation of transition, with two coups since 2022
- Mali – terrorist attacks since 2012, continue to limit civil society activism
- DRC – end of pilot project coincided with intensified conflicts and massacres in the Nord-Kivu region

Recommendations:

- Reinforce the visibility of CSOs in their communities, and service providers
- Establish guidelines for a budget advocacy methodology with similar budget configurations, bringing CSOs together for regional-level budget advocacy
- Timely budget advocacy CSOs should be well-informed of the political calendar and budget cycle so they can plan their budget advocacy strategically at the best time of the year
- Promote an intersectional and intergenerational approach to budget advocacy

Burkina Faso education coalition experiences

- Inclusive education, especially in emergency situations
- Challenge in engaging decision-makers to make changes and increase financing for inclusive education and education in emergencies
- Impact – the budget for education in emergencies was significantly increased, but not enough
- Follow-up – Continue advocacy to increase amount and appropriateness of financing in emergency situations

Regional-level experiences, ANCEFA

- Focus on financing education
- During meetings, make sure demands are made, and then follow up on actions – explain why states are not reaching international standards/levels of financing
 - Size of (domestic) budget, work on debt –
 - How to make sure this doesn't limit investment in education
 - Where the money is concentrated – educational policies and systems are inequitable in Africa and don't support the most marginalised (girls, people with disabilities, minorities, poor households). Need to focus on equity, so that those most in need receive the greatest allocation of funds – especially early childhood (petit enfance)
 - Oversight of budget – CSOs to follow how the budget is used – what was its impact
- Challenges – lack of civil access to budgetary information; ongoing investment – identifying different funders
- Opportunities – make the government responsible for ending child marriage, urgently

Cote d'Ivoire GFM3 experience

- Crisis – state has abandoned shelters (foyers d’hébergement) for at-risk girls, which used support girls from isolated places to go to school
 1. Budget analysis of areas where the shelters were located
 2. Increase capacities of target communities
 3. Develop budget advocacy with community
- Results – community didn’t know that with decentralisation there had been a change in the budget; many community leaders who wanted to know how to support girls through influence over budgets. Leaders came together to speak with one voice on girls’ education and child marriage, which was more powerful
- Secondary and tertiary education not obligatory, and fewer girls follow through – new strategies draw attention to this
- Good practice: strengthen community mobilisation; present project to the community before implementation increased their engagement; engaging community leaders in the preparation and implementation of workshops mobilised more participants

Momo (Burkina Faso) – need to engage parliament at the right time, beginning with sectorial actors then technical actors, considering when/who is passing budgetary laws.

Gédéon – PANAMEB (Benin) – funding of budget advocacy projects needs to take into account when budgets are being prepared at the local and state level, so coalitions can advocate appropriately.

Need to share learnings on how to work in crisis contexts, so that others can prepare:

- Braham (Niger) – before the security context worsened, they worked to engage electoral candidates, prepared a document on the situation on education in Niger; need to follow up on commitments from government and other actors; need to work at the community level, as that’s where decisions around child marriage are made. Tendency to invest more in the security context than in education/child marriage – need to focus at community level to ensure girls continue to go to school
- Momo (Burkina Faso) – focus on community-level work and local-level policy
- Tahirou – breaks in power, with new government – how to push advocacy forwards? Need to work in different angles/spaces for influencing; as well as ministries, there are technical services, where you can maintain links and contacts; need to find new points of contact.

Aicha – Need to be flexible in planning and how we do budget advocacy, to respond to changing security situations to not put people at risk; assess risks, and communicate the situation clearly with other CSOs and funders; keep learning spaces open. When governments put tools in place, it isn’t a favour – we, civil society, are also responsible for ensuring they are workable, need to continue training, community advocacy, etc. so that even in times of crisis communities can follow up on commitments.