

# The South African National Child Rights Coalition (SANCRRC)

Submission to Committee on Appropriations: NA and Select Committee on Appropriations: NCOP) on the 2020 MTBPS and 2020 Second Adjustments Appropriation Bill

20 November 2020

**To: Committee Secretaries**  
**Mr D Arends and Mr L Nodada**  
[daarends@parliament.gov.za](mailto:daarends@parliament.gov.za)  
[Lnodada@parliament.gov.za](mailto:Lnodada@parliament.gov.za)

**The SANCRRC contact details:**

Secretariat e-mail address: [infor.SANCRRC@savethechildren.org.za](mailto:infor.SANCRRC@savethechildren.org.za)

Contact persons:

Emmanuel Modikwane

E-mail: [emmanuel@savethechildren.org.za](mailto:emmanuel@savethechildren.org.za)

Cell no: 0836075236

Patricia Martin

E-mail: [patricia@advocacyaid.com](mailto:patricia@advocacyaid.com)

Cell no: 073 0622241

## Introduction to the SANCRC

The SANCRC is a coalition of 112 civil society organisations united in collective pursuit of their common goal of strengthening the national child rights governance system to ensure the realisation of the rights of every child in South Africa, especially its historically and chronically marginalised populations.

The SANCRC hereby makes the following submission to the Appropriations committee on the Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS) 2020 and 2020 Second Adjustments Appropriation Bill.

## The fiscal context and its impact on government's child rights commitments

The Coalition values this opportunity to share its views with the Appropriations Committee on the Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS) 2020 and 2020 Second Adjustments Appropriation Bill.

Our submission seeks to highlight the overarching legal and development responsibility on the Government of the Republic of South Africa (GRSA) to prioritise children, allocate and ensure the use of adequate resources to realise children's rights protected by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC).

South Africa has ratified the CRC and the ACRWC, has endorsed the Sustainable Development Goals, and was a driver of Africa's Agenda 2063, all of which commit the GRSA to ensure the adequate allocation and use of its financial resources to realise children's protected rights to survive, be protected, develop and participate.

Ratification of these treaties attracts an explicit suite of responsibilities when it comes to public budgeting as set out in detail in the United Nation's General Comment 19 (2016) on Public Budgeting for the Realisation of Children's rights. These include the duty to:

1. Prioritise the realisation of children's rights in all budgeting decisions.
2. Take all children's rights into consideration throughout all stages of their budget processes and administrative systems at the national and subnational levels.
3. Allocate adequate resources to ensure the implementation of all policies and programmes necessary to secure the rights of all children, especially the most marginalised and vulnerable, to survive, be protected, develop to their full potential and participate in decisions that affect them.
4. Allocate more resources to quality services and support that will promote children's growth, development and protection and prevent harm. The returns will be higher and sustainable and will ultimately lead to fewer children requiring intensive care at a high cost – a cost that will yield much lower returns in terms of sustainable development. In sum, there is an overarching duty to invest in national programmes and services that will support families, caregivers and communities provide the nurturing care and protection children need, not just to survive, but develop to their full potential.

General Comment 19 reiterates that the duty to prioritise children in the budget is not only a legal duty, but an absolute development imperative. It is only if children's rights are realised, notably for children in historically and chronically marginalised households, that there is any meaningful prospect of building the human capital required to achieve the country's goals of eradicating poverty and inequality to secure inclusive sustainable development.

The Committee is aware of the intergenerational nature of poverty and inequality in South Africa. There is now an abundance of evidence that the perpetuation of the inequitably high and persistent levels of poverty among the majority of South Africa's historically marginalised communities is driven by the inability of children to escape the poverty traps they are born into because of their lack of access to critical services (health, nutrition, protection and education) to realise their rights to develop to their full potential.

A recent study by the Statistics South Africa (2020) confirmed that more than 60% of children in South Africa are multi-dimensionally poor.<sup>1</sup> This means that they are not only income poor, but are deprived of access to developmentally critical services such as health, nutrition and education, as well as basic services such as water and sanitation. The proportion is much higher for children in rural areas, children in provinces that fall into the former homelands, children in women-headed households, and children in households with low levels of unemployment and high levels of income poverty. The major causes of the persistently high levels of MD poverty are lack of household income and lack of access to infrastructure and accessible quality services. The WHO and UNICEF estimate that close to 40% of young children under the age of 5 years are at serious risk, given their MD poverty, of poor development.<sup>2</sup>

The message is clear: the GRSA must invest far more of its public resources, and must ensure increased allocations, improved efficiencies, and accountability for the use of resources for services to equalise the opportunities of historically marginalised children. The public budget must prioritise securing access to quality developmentally supportive services for children and the families caring for them, particularly for the most marginalised.

South Africa has committed to increasing investments in services necessary to overcome the challenges and drivers of MD poverty, and in so doing secure the equitable development of its human capital potential residing in its children. It has committed, in terms of global agreements such as the Nurturing Care Framework for ECD, the INSPIRE Framework, and the Survive, Thrive and Transform Agenda, as well as its own National Development Plan, Medium Term Strategic Framework 2019 – 2024, and its National Child Care and Protection Policy and National Integrated ECD Policy committed to prioritise the resourcing of services required to create enabling caregiving environments for the provision of nurturing care and protection, including:

1. Social security for caregivers and families to meet children's basic needs
2. Employment creation
3. Health care, not just for survival, but the healthy growth and development of its children
4. Nutritional support to ensure health growth and prevent stunting because it is a critical determinant of poor development and has increased in children under the age of five over the past five years
5. Responsive and positive caregiving for optimal protection and development of children
6. Quality learning from birth across the life cycle of the child

---

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF South Africa. 2020. Child Poverty in South Africa: A multiple overlapping deprivation analysis. <https://www.unicef.org/southafrica/media/4241/file/ZAF-multidimensional-child-poverty-analysis-policy-brief-07July-2020.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://nurturing-care.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/South\\_Africa.pdf](https://nurturing-care.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/South_Africa.pdf)

7. Security and safety, including basic services and protection from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

The provision of these services is a non-negotiable if South Africa is to achieve the SDGs and its own National Development Priorities.

We recognise the significant policy progress that has been made towards creating an enabling environment for nurturing care for development. However, the GRSA itself recognises, in for example the MTSF 2019 – 2024, that implementation has lagged, especially for marginalised families and communities in historically poor and rural provinces and municipalities.

Before COVID 19, budgets were already under enormous pressure because of recession, corruption, inequitable allocations, and inefficiencies, resulting in inadequate resourcing for services to create equitable, enabling care environments.

With the onset of COVID 19, the situation worsened exponentially with the GRSA having to find and redirect significant resources away from existing services to limit the harmful impacts of this unprecedented humanitarian crisis. In addition, hard-won gains have been lost, leading to a growing gap in children's well-being and development, especially the most vulnerable, thus deepening inequalities.

This has created a double burden of less resources and a higher service delivery burden to catch up on, for example, the estimated loss of 40% of the academic year for children, the drastic loss of early learning opportunities with the closure and erratic operation of early learning services, and the reported loss of essential health services such as immunisations and sexual and reproductive health services. When this is grafted onto historical budgetary inadequacies and inefficiencies, there is a need for a high level of vigilance and deliberate prioritisation of resources to secure children's developmentally critical rights in marginalised areas.

We recognise the enormous challenges the GRSA faces in ensuring equitable and adequate budgetary allocations in the current context of fiscal pressures and competing priorities. However, we urge the Committee to ensure that these pressures do not result in government failing to honour its global,, regional and national commitments to ensure the prioritisation and consideration of children's rights in all budget-related processes and decisions.

### Immediate and emerging opportunities and concerns with the budget

1. We recognise and appreciate the resources that were allocated through the COVID 19 response and in the Medium-Term Budget policy statement that benefited children. These include the following investments that will benefit children:
  - a. Improvements in the supply of electricity
  - b. Infrastructure development at local levels
  - c. Increased investments in the Social Housing Programme through subsidies in the amount of R 2.2 billion for poor families
  - d. Children in low income families will benefit from the tax deductions their working caregivers can make against provident fund contributions
  - e. The extension of the Social Relief of Distress Grant to end January 2021
  - f. An additional R 1 billion to be allocated to food aid to address the hunger crises in South Africa.

- g. Significant investments in increasing job opportunities for young teaching assistants in public fee-paying schools and government-subsidised private schools
  - h. The R 600 million rand allocated for the employment of early childhood development and social workers.
2. We are however concerned about the following deficits and challenges in the medium-term budget and the resulting implications:
- a. The reduction of provincial equitable shares by 4% over the next 3 years, alongside the historical provincial inequities and inefficiencies are of grave concern. This is likely to impact negatively on the provision of critical services for the realisation of children's rights, notably in the poorer provinces where the need is so much higher.
  - b. The reductions in the provincial equitable shares are especially worrying when viewed against the decline, in real terms, in the budgets annually for the next 3 years for education (3,5%), health (1,5%), and social development (2,2%). The combination is likely to see a contraction in availability and quality of these key services.
  - c. Historically there has been inadequate allocations to promotive and preventative services for children. For example, the health sector is duty bound to provide a package of comprehensive support for development in the 1<sup>st</sup> 100 days of a child's life. Historically it has focused on services preventing avoidable deaths and development services have been neglected. We have not seen shifts in budget allocations in health to fulfil its critical devilmment role as per the National ECD Policy. The further budget reductions create a risk of even less focus on these core services.
  - d. Material support for caregivers is a proven developmental intervention. In this regard, the temporary increases in the child support and other grants during COVID 19 were most welcome developments. However, we are concerned that these will no longer continue in a context of extremely high levels of unemployment.
  - e. The trend of increasing allocations in high-intensity statutory services to provide therapeutic, responsive services once children are already in trouble continues. The Social Development budget is increased to increase the number of social workers – a workforce that provides statutory services that are already under strain. There is no comparable increase in budgets for promotive, prevention and early intervention services sch as the increased child support grant, parenting support programmes, and programmes for improving nutrition and reducing stunting – by way of example. Thus, whilst the budget allocates more money for early education practitioners – this is not likely to yield returns without improving the earlier development years, by for example, improving responsive caregiving practices and reducing stunting – both of which impact on the cognitive development of children which will limit the benefit of early education through formal centres later on.
  - f. In addition, the increased investments in huma resources without improving other elements of the protection system will yield limited returns. It is well-known that social development services cannot be provided to children in need because, not just too few social workers, but inadequate infrastructure to enable them to do their work, and systems to enable planning, identification and provision of services to vulnerable children. There is an urgent need to invest in strengthening the whole system, not just parts of it.

- g. Securing system's strengthening investments, the prioritisation of children, and improved equity across provincial and local planning and budgeting requires strong national leadership and coordination of the child rights agenda. In this regard we welcome the National Plan of Action for Children and the establishment of the Office on the Rights of the Child (ORC). However, what is of concern is the small budget allocated to the ORC to fulfil its central rights-based development mandate. The ORC budget is much smaller than the budget allocated for institutions supporting other vulnerable groups, such as women and people with disabilities.

### Concluding observations and recommendations

**In closing, we urge the Committee to consider these crucial gaps that are fatal to South Africa's recovery and long term development, and urge that measures be put in place to secure the prioritisation of developmental budgeting for the realisation of the rights of children. In this regard, we welcome the introduction of Zero-Based Budgeting in 2021 – 2023. It raises several significant risks – but also opportunities if the risks are managed.**

It offers a significant opportunity for correcting past imbalances and inequities and for putting in place a strategic programme of action for securing environments for the provision of nurturing care and protection for vulnerable children in South Africa. The evidence is overwhelming – investments in children's survival, development, protection, and participation is essential for the recovery and sustainable growth of the country. Zero Based Budgeting offers the rationale and the opportunity for the prioritisation of and securing these investments in the current context of fiscal constraints and competing priorities.

**However**, realising this opportunity will require significant leadership and skill in translating the evidence into well-structured, evidence-based, motivated and costed promotive programmes. If we do not have this leadership and skill, Zero Based Budgeting could see significant reductions in strategic, promotive child rights programme funding.

It is of the utmost urgency that children's rights programmes proven to expedite children's well-being and the long-term health and wealth of the country be adequately funded. These include programmes for:

1. Child nutrition -especially the prevention of stunting
2. Health care – not just for survival, but development of children in their earliest years.
3. Programmes to support responsive, quality nurturing parenting.
4. Quality early learning from birth and continuing across the life cycle of the child.
5. Protection services that prevent risks through strong, protective families and communities.

Critically, we must see increased investments in system's strengthening initiatives. We cannot see piecemeal improvements in only parts of the system – as this will erode the evidence base for increased child budgeting. This in turn requires increased investments in strengthened child rights leadership and technical capacity ahead of the introduction of Zero Budgeting to maximise the opportunity it represents to increase investments in children's rights.