

Unahin ang Bata sa Budget ng Bansa

How child rights advocates engaged lawmakers into passing a 2021 budget that prioritizes programs for children





Overview

This budget advocacy campaign was launched in September 2020 by the Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD), the Child Rights Network (CRN) and the United Nations Children's Fund Philippines (UNICEF) to call on legislators and local executives to prioritize programs for children in the 2021 budget, both at the national and local levels.

A total of five (5) budget briefers were produced (Social Protection, Nutrition, WASH, Adolescent Reproductive Health, Health), which were all shared to lawmakers and target local government units. The budget briefers contain urgent calls for support on specific programs and needs of children like the Universal Health Care Act, Kalusugan at Nutrisyon ng Magnanay Act, modules, tablet, laptop, immunization, adolescent and reproductive health services and comprehensive sexuality education, among others.

Twenty one (21) legislators and their legislative staff were engaged through person-to-person advocacy. Five (5) legislators, namely Senators Risa Hontiveros, Bong Go, Sonny Angara, and Reps. Sarah Elago and Helen Tan, committed to support the advocacy by raising some points in the provided briefers during congressional hearings.

The campaign was able to reach out to select cities and local government units (LGUs), namely Angeles, Valenzuela, Cagayan de Oro, Zamboanga, as well as Northern Samar and Zamboanga del Norte, but only Cagayan de Oro City responded. The non-responsiveness of the LGUs could be attributed to the timing of the engagement, which was begun late into the local budget process.

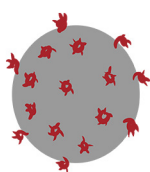
Our information and education materials posted in various social media platforms had 3,000 shares, 110,000 engagements and 730,000 reach. The listicle reached almost 6,000 people in Metro Manila. The livestreamed Usapang Human Development talk show on the budget reached audiences from Luzon (CAR 182; Calabarzon, 1211; Metro Manila, 1117; Ilocos Region, 311; Bicol Region, 407; Mimaropa, 251; Cagayan Valley, 247), Visayas (Western Visayas, 399; Eastern Visayas, 325) to as far as ARMM (72), Caraga (172), Zamboanga Peninsula (178); Davao Region (233); Soccsksargen (295); and Northern Mindanao (245).

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic provided an urgent impetus for the prioritization of spending for programs for children like health, academic module development, immunization, nutrition, adolescent reproductive health, and WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene). Although said programs receive yearly funding from the national government, evidence gathered during the pandemic highlighted the need to urgently engage lawmakers to prioritize said budget items considering the government's competing priorities.

Children's rights advocates sought to solicit the support of the national and local legislative branches of the government to allocate sufficient funds for programs for children in the 2021 budget.

Several barriers were observed prior to the start of the campaign, including:



1. The COVID-19 pandemic was a major barrier in the successful and seamless conduct of person-to-person (P2P) advocacy. There was a need to shift to online P2P to reach out to legislators and their staff.



2. Programs for children are among the various items needing support in the 2021 budget so it was a huge challenge to communicate with legislators the need to give equal priority to children's programs.



3. Political environment – In the Philippines, the dominant party normally dictates the funding priorities. For 2021, a large chunk of the budget was appropriated for the continuation of the 'Build, Build, Build' program of the Duterte administration, which hugely affected programs that will support the overall well-being of children. While we recognize the fact that infrastructure programs should also be supported like school building programs and construction of new health facilities to address the issue of shortages, it was deemed necessary for the government to distribute the budget more judiciously.



4. There is little discussion or public discourse on the need to pass a child focused budget, and the campaign launched can be considered as entering uncharted territory.

Campaigning for children-focused budgeting

Several strategies were employed to provide a holistic approach towards information dissemination, alliance building, and clinching concrete victories for children. These include:

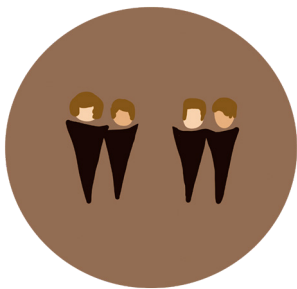
TACTIC 1: Alliance Building



Two episodes of Usapang Human Development and one episode of SKL, the UHD Podcast were dedicated for budget advocacy. Panelists and guests included the House Committee on Basic Education, Department of Budget and Management, Department of Social Welfare and Development, and the Health and Nutrition, WASH and Social Policy sections of UNICEF Philippines.

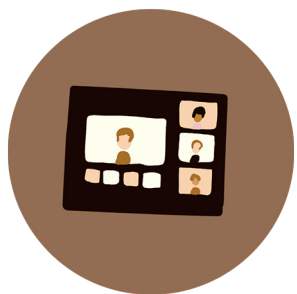
The discussions focused on the need to pass a 2021 budget that will give particular importance to programs that will promote the well-being of children.

TACTIC 2: Person-to-Person Engagement



Engagement of legislators and their staff through person-to-person advocacy as well as champion development were done through the provision of a total of 11 technical briefing materials. Senators Risa Hontiveros, Bong Go, Sonny Angara, and Reps. Sarah Elago and Helen Tan actively supported the initiative by sharing campaign materials online and by manifesting their support for the campaign. They were all given copies of the budget briefers. The legislators' commitments range from liking and sharing our social media cards to explicitly stating their support for the calls outlined in the budget briefers.

TACTIC 3: Participation in the budget hearings



Active online monitoring of budget deliberations, particularly of agencies that have appropriations for programs for children like the Departments of Health, Education, and Social Welfare and Development were done. Several discussions also facilitated the identification of potential champions. Due to quarantine restrictions, budget hearings were only monitored online.

TACTIC 4: Communications and public mobilization



Pieces of evidence that were gathered during the pandemic were used to develop high impact information, education and communications (IEC) materials and their online dissemination helped significantly in highlighting the message that more funds are needed to address the essential needs of Filipino children. Said IEC materials were posted in PLCPD and CRN's social media accounts and legislators were tagged in said posts. The IEC materials consist of the following: 1) listicle, which details why programs for children should not be cut; 2) editorial cartoons, which illustrate the need to fund the country's adolescent sexuality and reproductive health education and services, 4Ps, Universal Health Care, support for blended learning for students, among others; and 3) memes and social media cards. The public was also encouraged to tag and message key legislators to strengthen the advocacy.

Results

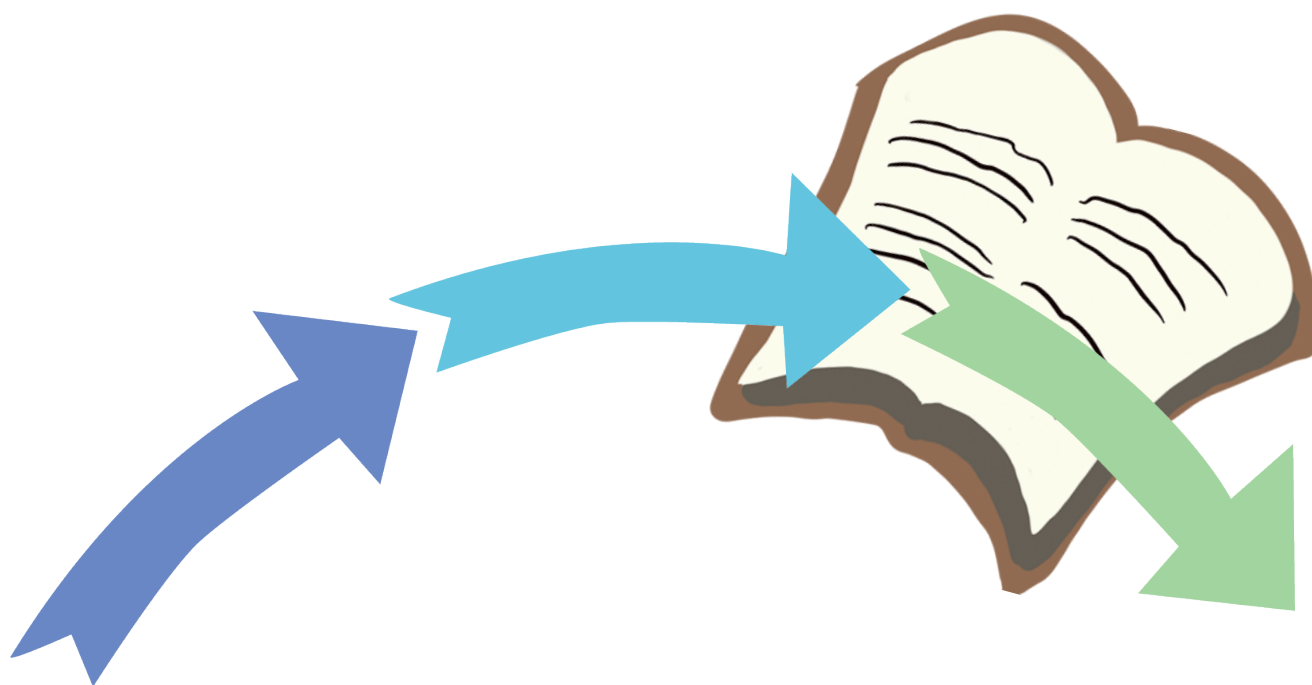
A number of legislators were tapped in this advocacy, but the remote interactions proved to be a major setback. Because person-to-person advocacy had to be done online, some legislators were not responsive. Also, only a handful of legislative staff responded to messages sent via Viber and Whatsapp.

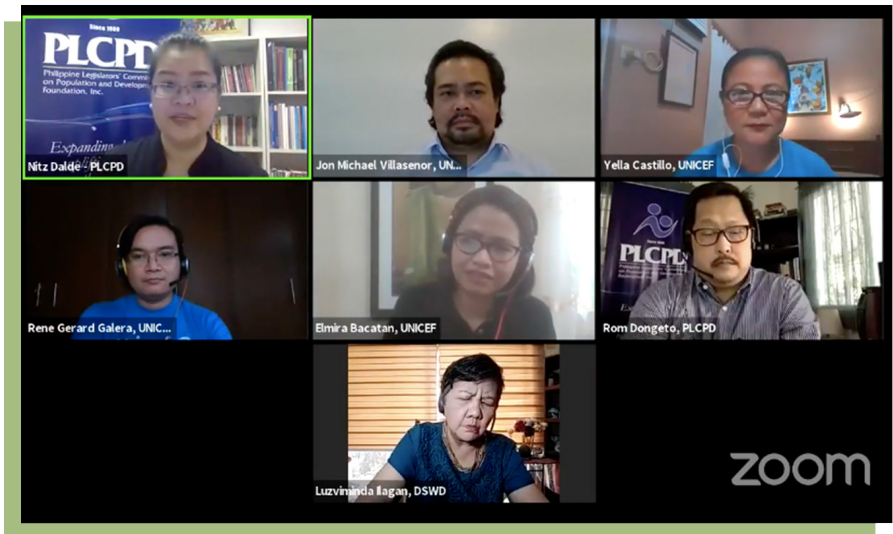
Of the 21 legislators that were identified, only 5 responded - a conservative number considering the urgency of the matter.

In terms of engagement with LGUs, only one responded from the seven (7) that were tapped. This could be attributed to the lateness of the engagement. The conversation with CDO revolved around the importance of gathering data from identified cities and municipalities as such data can be used in the same advocacy in the next budget cycle.

BUDGET BRIEFERS CAN BE ACCESSED HERE:

<https://bit.ly/3ap1H5w>





*Usapang Human Development
September 24, 2020*



*Podcast Recording
October 27, 2020*



*Usapang Human Development
November 24, 2020*

Key Lessons

Despite launching the campaign in the third quarter of 2020, a significant number of key legislators and the public still showed their support. The advocacy materials generated a lot of engagement with various stakeholders as evidenced by the reach of the posts. This outcome can serve as a template for more calibrated and more properly timed children's budget advocacy campaigns in the future.

All things considered, the national and local level budget advocacy campaign can be considered a success if we base it on the number of engagement and reach. As such, the efforts should be continued to ensure consistent legislators' support for programs for children in the succeeding budget cycles.

While the legislators tapped in the campaign noted the key points discussed by the briefers provided to them, concrete gains have yet to be ascertained, as a detailed copy of the approved General Appropriations Act has yet to be secured. Strategies such as conduct of high impact online advocacy campaign should be sustained. Social media products should be continuously improved and strategically released.

In the SKL, the UHD podcast episode, two children from Tondo, Manila came up with a fliptop (spoken words with rhythm) which highlights the most urgent needs of children. The act gave deeper meaning to the campaign because it highlighted children's participation. Activities that directly involve children in the campaign should be explored further in future campaigns, as such actions can be considered high impact and leave indelible marks on legislators.

Despite being launched at a period when the nation and the world is battling a pandemic, key messages on public funding for children's welfare were able to gain footing at the national level. As such, the strategies used in the successful conduct of this budget advocacy should be retained and improved in future engagements with lawmakers. Despite the many challenges of doing online advocacy, the campaign was still able to engage lawmakers and the public, providing fertile soil for future deeper engagements as regards public finance.

Editorial Cartoons

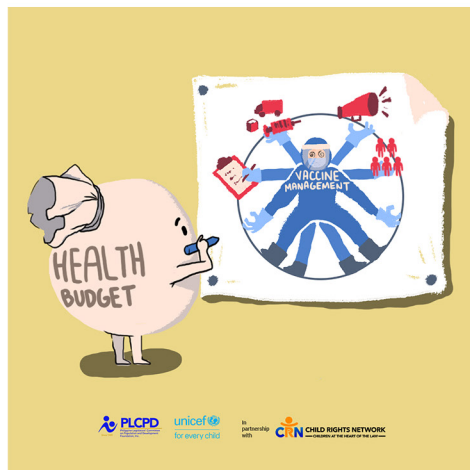
On social protection:



On the education budget:



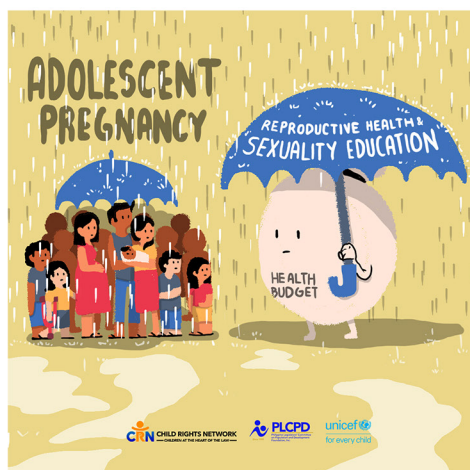
On human resources for health:



On the nutrition budget:



On the budget for reproductive health and sexuality education:



On the budget for water, sanitation and hygiene:



Ang Kwento ng Pagkwenta

Paano nagbabadyet ang gobyerno at paano tayo makikisangkot dito

Sa unang tingin, ang pagbabadyet para sa mga programa, proyekto, at aktibidad ng gobyerno ay mukhang kumplikado. Pero sa mas simpleng pagtingin, ang prosesong ito ay parang pagtanim at pag-aalaga ng halaman. Binubuo ng apat (4) na pangunahing hakbang kung saan lahat ng Pilipino, matanda man o bata, may kapansanan o wala, ay dapat makisangkot. Tara't araling ang mga ito at tingnan kung paano maririnig ang ating boses sa bawat hakbang ng pagbabadyet ng gobyerno!

1



PAGHAHANDA SA BADYET

(Sa ilalim ng executive department)

2



PAGSABATAS NG PAMBANSANG BADYET

(Sa ilalim ng Kongreso)

3



IMPLEMENTASYON

(Sa ilalim ng iba't ibang ahensya)

4



PANANAGUTAN

(Sa ilalim ng Commission on Audit)





Step 1: Pagpupunla

PAGHAHANDA NG BADYET SA ILALIM NG EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Lahat ng pagtatanim ay nagsisimula sa pagpupunla.

Ang binhi ng pambansang badyet ay ang tinatawag na “National Expenditure Program” na naglalaman ng mga tinipon na datos na sumasagot sa mga tanong na magkano ang perang available para gastusin, at ano-ano ang mga pagkakagastusan?

Bago pa matapos ang taon, ginagawa na ito sa ilalim ng pangunguna ng Department of Budget and Management. Tinitipon kung ano ang mga pangangailangan ng bawat ahensya at tinitingnan kung magkano ang dapat ilaan.

Ano ang pwede mo gawin?

Para marinig at malaman ng ating mga lider sa gobyerno kung ano at magkano ang kailangan ng ating sektor, sa bahagi pa lang na ito ay kailangan na natin mag-submit ng mga dokumento, pagpapaliwanag at liham, kung ano-ano bang mga programa at proyekto ang dapat unahing lagyan ng pondo. Ito ang panahon para ipaunawa sa ating mga lider kung bakit dapat bigyang halaga ang mga programa at proyekto na para sa kapakanan ng mga bata.*





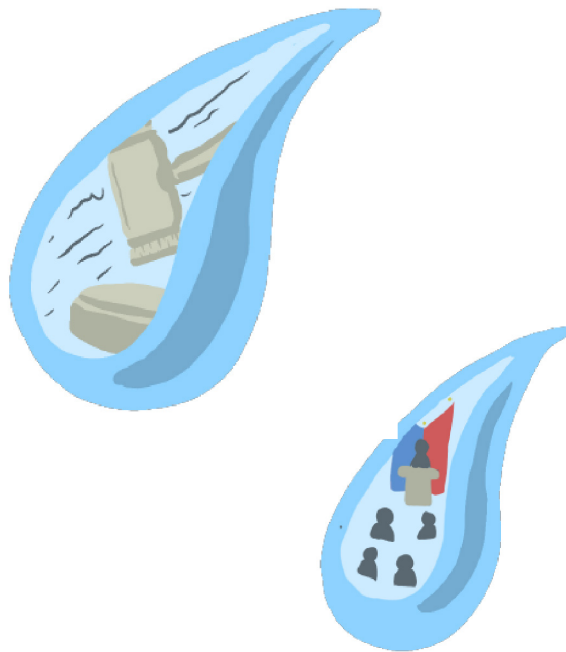
Step 2: Pagkalinga

PAGSASABATAS NG BADYET SA ILALIM NG KONGRESO

Pagkatapos itanim, dapat diligan at kalingain ang binhi ng pagbabadyet para lumago.

Kapagtapos na kolektahin ng Executive Department ang mga datos at kwenta sa pagbabadyet, isa-submit ito ng Pangulo sa Kongreso matapos ang kanyang State of the Nation Address tuwing July sa porma ng “National Expenditure Program.” Ang makakapal na mga librong ito ay pag-uusapan sa mga pulong ng Kamara de Representante (House of Representatives) at dadaan sa tatlong pagbasa o reading bago pagbotohan at saka ipasa sa Senado (Senate). Sa puntong ito, ang mga patak ng impormasyon, suggestions, at saloobin ng mamamayan ay nakakatulong sa pagdilig ng mga binhing ipinunla.

Pagkatapos, magpupulong din ang Senado para pag-aralan at pag-debatehan ang badyet bago ipasa. Sa huli, magpupulong ang mga kinatawan ng Kamara at Senado para pagkaisahin ang final na version ng pambansang badyet bago ratipikahan bilang batas. Ang naratipikang dokumento ay babalik sa Office of the President, na siyang may kapangyarihang lagdaan ito bilang batas. May kapangyarihan din ang Pangulo na mag-veto o hindian ang ilang bahagi ng badyet na sa tingin niya ay hindi akma para sa mga prayoridad ng gobyerno.*



Ano ang pwede mo gawin?

Ilang buwan ang inaabot ng prosesong ito at dapat aktibo tayo sa bahaging ito sa pagdalo, pagsali, at pagkausap sa ating mga mambabatas. Dapat nating ipaliwanag sa kanila ang mga puntong gusto nating mapalalim, at mga programa at proyekto na gusto nating maisama at huwag matanggal sa badyet. Kailangan natin magkaroon ng “children’s budget champions” sa hanay ng mga mambabatas na maniniguradong may sapat na pondo para sa kapakanan ng mga batang Pinoy!*





Step 3: Paglago at Pag-ani

IMPLEMENTASYON - PAGGUGOL NG BADYET
PARA SA MGA PROGRAMA AT PROYEKTO

Ang binhing itinanim, yayabong sa takdang panahon, maaari nang anihin!

Ang binhing itinanim, Hindi nagtatapos ang yayabong at sa takdang kampanya hangga't lagdaan panahon, maaari nang ang pambansang badyet. anihin! Kaalaman ang Mahalagang alam natin fertilizer na nagpapayabong kung saan napupunta ang sa proseso ng paggawa ng pera, anong ahensya ang ng badyet. Kapag alam gagasta dito, at kung natin kung aling programa nagagawa ba ang mga at proyekto ang may pondo, programa at proyekto na siguruhin nating napapatupad ipinaglaban magkaroon ng ito. Halimbawa, kung may pondo para sa isang pondo.
Halimbawa, kung may pondo para sa isang classroom o pagbili ng bakuna, dapat alerto tayo kung nabili nga o nagawa ang mga ito.





Step 4: Pagtimbang at Pagtala

PANANAGUTAN - TIMBANGIN AT ALAMIN ANG KULANG

Matapos ang anihan, tinitimbang at binibilang ng isang magsasaka kung husto ba ang kanyang ani

Matapos ang anihan, tinitimbang at binibilang ng isang magsasaka kung husto ba ang kanyang ani. Sa pambansang badyet, bilyong-bilyong pera ang pinag-uusapan, at galing ito sa buwis ng mamamayan. Kaya hindi pwedeng isawalang-bahala na lang natin ang paggamit sa pondo ng bayan. Gaya ng pagtimbang at pagtala, matapos ang isang taon, gumagawa ng ulat ang Commission on Audit (COA) tungkol sa kung paano ginamit ng mga ahensya

ang kanilang badyet at kung may anomalya ba o kaduda-duda sa kanilang pagpapatupad ng mga pampublikong programa at proyekto.

Gamit ang ulat ng COA, pwede tayo magkampanya para sa pananagutan kung may nalustay bang hindi tama sa pondo ng bayan. Susi sa bahaging ito ang pagiging alerto!*



