

**RE: Day of General Discussion – “Children’s Rights and Alternative Care”
Comment: Public Expenditure for Children’s Care**

Dear Members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child,

Maestral International strongly welcomes the convening of a Day of General Discussion on Children’s Rights and Alternative Care in September 2021. We are particularly **pleased to see the Committee’s interest in securing meaningful engagement of children and young people** who have experienced alternative care.

Article 4 of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provides that States shall undertake measures to secure the rights of children “to the maximum extent of their available resources...”. However, **public expenditures for children’s care and protection have been *de minimus* in many countries since the Convention’s ratification**, leaving child protection systems bereft of the resources they need to prevent and respond to the drivers that lead children to be separated from their families.

Care reform is an essential component of overall social policy and should be seriously considered during the identification of a country’s policy priorities and the allocation of budget. **Children in safe and nurturing families are more likely to attend school, to perform better in school, to have better lifelong health status, and to experience fewer social problems.** In addition to securing a child’s right to live in a family environment, care reform builds human capital. This, in turn, is important for inter-generational poverty reduction.

The COVID-19 crisis should be elevating care reform amongst the list of global and national priorities. A child is losing a parent or custodial grandparent to COVID-19 every 12 seconds, and that pace is increasing exponentially as the pandemic progresses. The [World Bank projects](#) that from 143 to 163 million people will be thrown into severe poverty (less than \$1.90/day) in 2020 and 2021, putting intensive stressors on families that will surely lead to separation. Reports of violence and abuse of children in lockdown have skyrocketed since the pandemic began.

[Changing the Way We Care](#) has supported preparation of a [Guidance on Public Expenditure and Care](#), and the Better Care Network hosted a [webinar](#) on the topic. We attach a one-page summary of the Guidance and **encourage governments and their partners to deepen their commitments to invest in care.** We hope this Guidance is helpful to those interested in this Day of General Discussion.

Formal child protection systems are often too heavily dependent on external donor resources that are neither sufficient nor sustainable. **We call on States to both scale and sustain budgetary resources for care reform**, and to execute those budgets effectively and efficiently in the interests of their children and families. The returns on those investments will be substantial.

Sincerely,



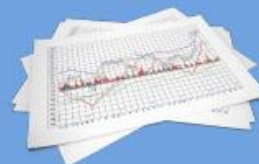
Philip Goldman
President
May 7, 2021

CHILDREN'S CARE AND THE NATIONAL BUDGET

Your government has a strategy to promote the better care of children within, where possible, a family environment. How do you go about including that strategy in the public budget?

IDENTIFY WHAT INVESTMENTS ARE NEEDED

Activities in any strategy require resources. If a strategy seeks to increase the number of trained professional social workers, it then becomes necessary to identify how many workers, of what type, and at what cost per worker. How will those workers be trained, and at what cost? It is also important to ensure those workers will have the resources they need to do their work – offices, furniture, equipment, and the costs to keep those operating.



LEARN ABOUT THE BUDGET CYCLE

Every government has its own process for preparing and executing the budget, and that is typically outlined in a Treasury Circular (or equivalent) with key steps and dates. It is important to begin to prepare your case as early as possible in the budget cycle, as it can be difficult to change decisions later in the cycle. A typical annual budget cycle has four stages: (i) budget formulation; (ii) budget approval and enactment; (iii) budget execution; and (iv) budget oversight. Key deadlines in the Circular must be identified and met on time.



PLAN FOR MULTIPLE YEARS TO GO TO SCALE

Most countries prepare a three to five year budget, sometimes called a Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). The first-year budget is important, but the MTEF allows you to forecast for taking a program to scale. For example, you can use the MTEF to plan for an increase in the number of trained social work staff year by year.



IDENTIFY THE AGENCIES INVOLVED AND COST

Care reform requires the engagement of different sectors, such as social welfare, education, health, justice, interior, and finance. You need to identify which ministries and departments are key to implementing the care strategy. You then need to have a dialogue with key staff, including their budget departments, on what they need to cost. Sometimes a costing tool is needed to help, and certain assumptions need to be agreed – what is the payroll for those social workers, and how much funding will their offices require? Will youth or civil society have voice during the costing, and if so, how?



MAKE THE CASE FOR THE BUDGET REQUEST

You've come up with a great budget, but you know that the government has competing priorities. Each investment should be linked to an outcome. Influential government champions should be mobilized to support the budget request. Attempts should be made to link care reform to national social policy – poverty reduction strategies, health, education, justice, etc.



WANT TO LEARN MORE?

*Changing The Way We Care*SM (CTWWC) is an initiative designed to promote safe, nurturing family care for children implemented by Catholic Relief Services, Maestral International, and key partners like Better Care Network and others. User-friendly Global Guidance on Public Expenditure and Children's Care that can be accessed at [Public Expenditure and Children's Care: Guidance Note](#)

