PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE FOR CONSIDERATION INTO THE 2020 MID-YEAR BUDGET STATEMENT AND ECONOMIC POLICY

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown most of the targets in the 2020 budget statement and economic policy into disarray and has adversely impacted the welfare of all Ghanaians, with the poor and vulnerable people bearing the harshest brunt. The mid-year budget review presents a good opportunity to address the gaps and reset the targets, which will be crucial in bringing the economy back on track and enhancing the welfare of the poor and vulnerable. Given this, SEND Ghana in partnership with UNICEF are reiterating the need for government to continue to give attention to the social sector issues concerning children, women, small-holder food crop farmers as well as the poor and vulnerable people. In lieu of this, we remind the Ministry of Finance to ensure that the underlisted issues submitted to them are considered in the 2020 mid-year budget review.

- Release all 2020 allocations for the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection to enable them to implement their flagship programs. It is important to maintain funding for key social protection programmes to ensure existing beneficiaries continue to benefit during the COVID-19 situation. In particular, the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) remains one of the key interventions that directly impact the livelihoods of the extremely poor and vulnerable households. Therefore, all efforts must be made to ensure a continuous payment of grants to LEAP beneficiaries during this COVID-19 pandemic. The government must also work harder to expand the coverage beyond the 330,000 poor households currently benefitting across the country. For effective targeting, completion of the Ghana National Household Registry (GNHR) in all regions must be prioritized.

- Release at least 90% allocated funds for policy and system development, including Child Protection and Social Welfare Information Management, and operationalize the Ghana Child Labour Monitoring System (GCLMS).

- To attain SDG 4 which seeks to ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,’ the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service must ensure that continuous learning opportunities that are currently ongoing reach all vulnerable children in deprived communities who are currently cut off from the government’s television, radio and other virtual learning platforms. The education sector budget especially for goods and services should not be reduced so that the development, printing, and supply of curriculum, textbooks, e-learning programmes and training for teachers can be sustained.

- To ensure substantial growth in the general health budget during and post COVID-19 period, government, through the Ministry of Finance should...
increase the health sector budget to at least meet the 15% of annual budget allocation to health in line with the Abuja Declaration; ensure adequate, equitable and continuous supply of COVID-19 PPE, testing services and care provision to deprived areas, and sustained access to immunization, maternal and neonatal services. Government must endeavour to honor its co-financing commitments to GAVI and also commit to raising domestic resources for provision of essential health & nutrition commodities, including vaccines, IFA tablets, Vit A capsules, etc.

- Improve access to water, especially in poor-urban areas and hard to serve rural areas. According to the MICS 2018 report, still 20% Ghanaians lack access to basic drinking water. In addition, continuous focus is required in improving sanitation (MICS 2018 report: 21% practicing open defecation and only 48% with access to hygiene facilities with soap and water available). Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in schools are also areas that need special attention, as the children face risk of infection from COVID-19 and other communicable diseases, where less than 40% of basic schools have improved WASH services in Ghana.

- To achieve the SDGs agenda of leaving no one behind, government needs to institute deliberate mechanisms to link the poor and other disadvantaged groups especially smallholder women farmers, disabled farmers, and LEAP beneficiaries to Planting for Food and Jobs (PFJ) and provide them with increased subsidies and timely access to inputs on the program.

- To promote accountability in the management of COVID-19 funds, we call on government to provide frequent updates on inflows and outflows of the funds. The Ministry of Finance should also collaborate with CSOs to conduct public expenditure tracking surveys for some sectors such as health, WASH, and education to find out how beneficiaries received the services and goods.

Signed  

George Osei-Akoto-Bimpeh  
Country Director, SEND GHANA

For more information, please contact:

Emmanuel Ayifah, PhD  
Deputy Country Director, SEND GHANA  
(0208819409)

Kwesi Asante  
Social Policy Specialist (PFM), UNICEF  
(0244654193)

Vision: A Ghana where people's rights and well being are guaranteed.
The Mission of SEND is to promote good governance and the equality of women and men in Ghana.