



Protecting Africa's Future: Livelihood-Based Social Protection for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children in East and Southern Africa

REOSA Policy Brief

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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Regional Emergency Office for Southern Africa (REOSA)

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This policy brief presents a series of Regional Inter-Agency Task Team for Children (RIATT) and FAO recommendations.

Among them are:

- Drafting stand-alone social protection policies to fill gaps in protection of orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC); and
- Strengthening existing policy frameworks.

It also advocates for:

- Livelihood-based social protection initiatives aimed at reducing vulnerability and providing social transfers to the poor; and
- Protecting the vulnerable against livelihood risks and enhancing the social status of the marginalized.

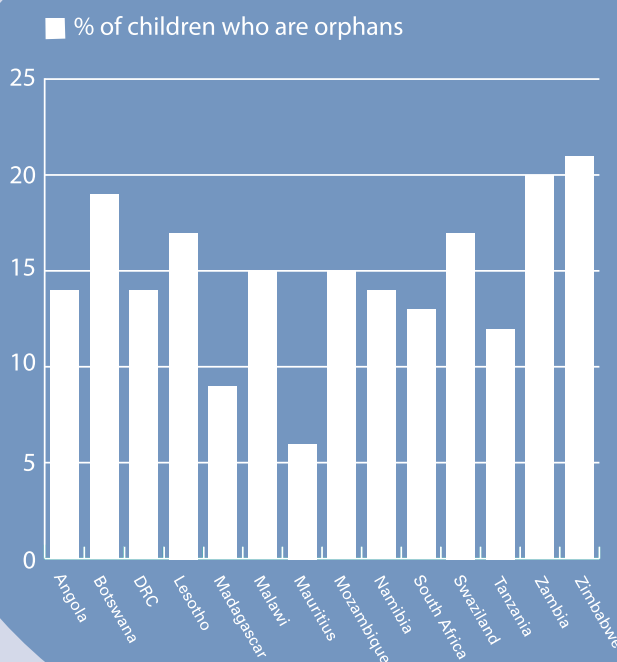


The Context of the Problem

Despite greater access to antiretroviral (ARV) drugs in southern Africa, the current HIV epidemic continues to result in increasing numbers of orphaned and vulnerable children. In many countries in the region, as many as 50 per cent of all orphans under the age of 17 years had parents who died of AIDS-related illnesses. According to bodies like UNAIDS, this level of AIDS-related orphanhood is expected to remain high until 2030 (UNAIDS, UNICEF, USAID, 2008; see Figure 1).

Although noteworthy policy and investment in programmes aimed at responding to these children's needs exist, too many programmes remain ill-equipped to cater for their needs in a sustainable and cost-effective way. This is partly as a result of gaps in OVC social protection policy and legislation.

Figure 1: Estimated number of orphans in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) by country (2008)



Adapted from the SADC Orphans and other Vulnerable Children and Youth (OVCY) Framework (2008)

FOUR TYPES OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

1. Protective social assistance for the poor such as disability benefits and old age pensions.
2. Preventive measures to avert poverty such as food-for-work schemes and school feeding programmes, as well as measures to safeguard health, including antiretroviral treatment (ART) and prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) programmes.
3. Promotional income enhancement through activities including life skills and vocational and agricultural training for youth, as well as increasing access to credit through microcredit opportunities.
4. Transformative approach to addressing social inequity and exclusion through awareness campaigns, stigma reduction campaigns, psychosocial support and therapy, and policies and laws to protect OVC, e.g. protection of inheritance rights.

(Greenblott, 2008)



Existing Tools and Frameworks

1 **The 2001 United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on HIV** placed special emphasis on orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) and challenged countries to implement national policies and strategies in response. Some of the 2001 UNGASS OVC-related targets include:

- By 2003 develop (and by 2005 implement) strategies to support orphans and children infected and affected by HIV with counselling and psychosocial support; enrolment in school; access to shelter, good nutrition, health and social services; and protection from abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, trafficking and loss of inheritance.
- Ensure non-discrimination and protection of the human rights of children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV, through the promotion of an active and visible policy of de-stigmatization.

2 **The 2004 Cape Town Declaration on Enhanced Parliamentary Response to the Crisis of Orphans and Other Children Made Vulnerable by HIV in Africa.** This declaration by SADC ministers emphasized the need for coordination and leadership on OVC issues as well as the involvement of a wide range of actors including families, community leaders and political parties among others. Some of the commitments made under this declaration include:

- Review and amend as necessary all legislation relevant to national AIDS policies in order to ensure that the rights of children infected and affected by HIV are protected.
- Establish a specific portfolio committee to deal with OVC issues in every parliament.

3 **The 2006 Livingstone Call for Action** commits African governments to:

- Increase cooperation and information exchange on social protection activities.
- Develop reliable long-term funding for social protection, both from national budgets and development partners.

4 **The 2006 African Youth Charter** commits states to upholding several rights for young people, including:

- The right to own and inherit property; the right to social, economic, and cultural development; the right to education; the right to employment; and the right to physical, mental and spiritual health.

5 **The 2008 SADC Framework and Programme of Action for Orphans, Vulnerable Children and Youth (OVCY)** was SADC's first effort to develop and implement a regional response to the needs of orphaned and vulnerable children. The framework emphasizes goal-orientated, holistic and integrated approaches to OVC issues.



Children play at the UNICEF-supported Consol Homes Orphan Care Centre in Malawi. The community-based centre supports orphaned and other vulnerable children, many of whom are affected by HIV/AIDS.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Regulatory frameworks should be developed to ensure accountability and the implementation of quality OVC care and support. Such frameworks should work to expedite birth registration and documentation of children to enable them to access basic services. They should facilitate access to social protection interventions for children and specifically work to:

1. Develop and enforce minimum standards for OVC support that incorporate social protection elements.
2. Enact social protection laws regarding children's rights to health, education and inheritance. Of particular importance are laws that ensure treatment for HIV-positive children that is appropriate for their physical, psychological and social needs.
3. Review, develop and enforce gender equity and youth empowerment policies, and link these with the welfare of OVC.
4. Promote family and community stability while reaffirming and supporting the dignity of all citizens, including children.
5. Respond broadly to the needs of all children living in conditions that negatively impact their health, well-being and development. Interventions should neither be restricted to the most vulnerable nor to those orphaned by AIDS.
6. Consider the particular needs of OVC who are living with disabilities.

Livelihood-Based Social Protection Responses

All SADC member states have specific policies targeting OVC. However, programmes remain focused on children's immediate material needs and lack more sustainable livelihood and rights-based approaches. The latter kind of approaches take into account not only the immediate needs of OVC but also their long-term physical, emotional, legal and economic needs, and treat these as basic rights. With the shift from provision of social transfers such as food and monetary aid to more comprehensive social protection characterized by the provision, protection and promotion of livelihoods, it is necessary for southern African states to make a corresponding shift in policy.

Figure 2: Elements of livelihood-based social protection



POLICY GAPS

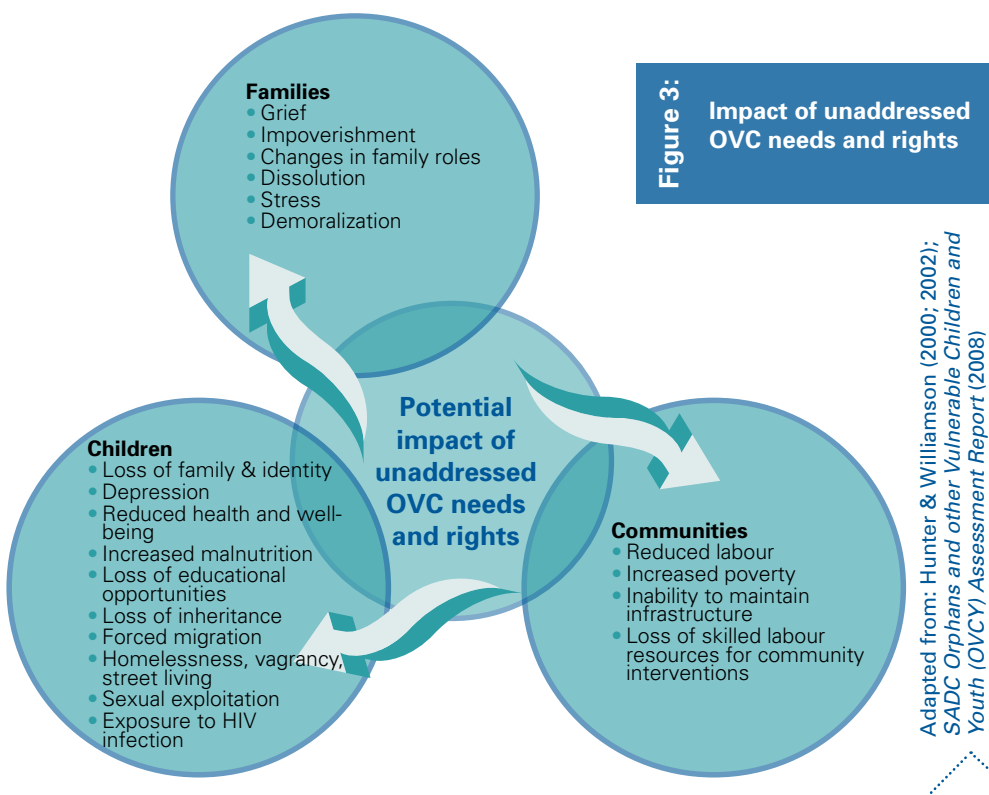
An analysis of the policy environment of east and southern Africa reveals the existence of certain policy gaps. These include:

- Inadequate policies and legislation regarding livelihood-based social protection;
- Lack of effective and meaningful collaboration among government departments and civil society organizations providing care and support to children; and
- Inadequate resources for livelihood-based social protection.



Policy Implementation

1. **Domesticate and operationalize** global conventions and agreements addressing children's rights, such as the African Youth Charter.
2. **Review, develop, harmonize and implement** policy and legislation to provide comprehensive care and support that includes physical, medical, psycho-social and legal support to OVC, their families and caregivers. **Support must extend beyond the provision of basic services**, i.e. it is not enough to provide clothes, food and school fees.
3. Policies and programmes need to **be responsive to the evolving needs of OVC throughout their lives**. As children mature, their needs change and they will require skills transfer and employment support. Social protection interventions must address such age-related developmental changes. Economically empowering older children could also break the cycle of poverty for the families of OVC.
4. **National budgets should earmark funding for the protection of children**, including funds directed to key ministries responsible for rolling out appropriate interventions to meet demand.
5. **Promote the scaling up of voluntary testing and counselling, including provider-initiated testing and counselling, and ARVs**. Effective and timely treatment can counter some of the factors that increase children's vulnerability when parents and guardians are ill or have died.
6. There is a need for **long-term integrated approaches** that emphasize livelihood-based social protection with aligned fiscal backing.
7. **Report progress** as agreed in global, continental and regional conventions and agreements to ensure that commitments are kept and key targets achieved.



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