

SOCIAL PROTECTION THAT BENEFITS CHILDREN: A MORAL IMPERATIVE AND VIABLE STRATEGY FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

AN INTRODUCTORY BRIEF

Sixth International Policy Conference (IPC)

Social protection in Africa: Making it work for children

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**The African Child
Policy Forum**

THE AFRICAN CHILD POLICY FORUM (ACPF)

ACPF is an independent, not-for-profit, pan-African institution of policy research and dialogue on the African child.

ACPF was established with the conviction that putting children first on the public agenda is fundamental to the realisation of their rights and wellbeing, and to bringing about lasting social and economic progress in Africa.

ACPF's work is rights-based, inspired by universal values and informed by global experiences and knowledge. ACPF's work is guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and other relevant regional and international human rights instruments. Specifically, ACPF aims to contribute to improved knowledge on children in Africa; to monitor and report progress; to identify policy options; to provide a platform for dialogue; to collaborate with governments, intergovernmental organisations and civil society in the development and implementation of effective pro-child policies and programmes; and to promote a common voice for children in Africa.



The African Child Policy Forum (ACPF)

P.O. Box 1179, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Tel: +251 116 62 81 92/96/97/99

Fax: +251 116 62 82 00

Email: info@africanchildforum.org

Websites: www.africanchildforum.org
www.africanchild.info

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1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Many African countries have made progress over past decades with regard to social, economic, governance and development outcomes. These developments, particularly consistent economic growth, potentially benefit children. So far they have led to increased access to education, healthcare, nutrition and other essential services, and significant reduction in child mortality.¹

Despite this progress, Africa faces immense challenges. Poverty and inequality are persistent and widespread across the continent. Child malnutrition and child mortality are still relatively high; an estimated 38% of children are stunted and one in every ten dies before his or her fifth birthday.² Basic services are often characterized as of poor quality or having inadequate coverage, particularly for early childhood programmes, healthcare, primary and secondary education and water and sanitation services. Millions of children continue to face different forms of abuse and exploitation, exacerbated by circumstances of poverty, extreme deprivation and loss of their families.

The urgent imperative is to ensure Africa's children are nurtured, protected and adequately supported, to enable them to reach their developmental potential and contribute to economic growth. Africa's child population is expected to reach 861 million by 2050, making it one of the most youthful continents.³ But urbanization, growing inequality, climate change, global economic instability, and, for some countries, protracted civil and ideological conflicts are significant risks that are likely to impact negatively on children's vulnerability.

Within this context, comprehensive social protection programmes are increasingly recognized as effective mechanisms to address poverty and inequality, and protect the most vulnerable families and children. Following the 2008 endorsement of the African Union's Social Policy Framework for Africa, momentum has grown among African governments to invest in and implement social protection programmes. However, the scale and adequacy of these programmes does not match the widespread poverty, deprivation and vulnerability in the region.

Building on this momentum and commitment, the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) is seeking further opportunities to promote concrete measures that will contribute to expansion of comprehensive and effective government-led social protection programmes that benefit children.⁴

The 6th International Policy Conference (IPC) has chosen the theme of ***Social Protection in Africa: Making it work for children***. It builds on the social policy framework (SPF) commitments of the African Union (AU) and the recommendations of the AU Experts' and Ministers' meetings held in April and May 2014, and intends to address gaps and residual concerns impeding the further expansion of social protection programmes.

¹ ACPF 2013

² UNICEF 2013

³ UNDP, 2012

⁴ The AU, in collaboration with UNICEF, hosted expert meetings in South Africa on April 28-30, 2014, and Addis Ababa on May 26-28, followed by a Ministers Meeting on May 29-30.

The IPC brings together multiple stakeholders, including government representatives, international partners, civil society organizations (CSOs), academics and the media. It invites them to reflect on specific analysis and experiences, and to agree a way forward for accelerating collective efforts. Reflecting on earlier AU recommendations and focusing on specific areas considered relative priorities, ACPF aims to contribute new analysis in order to promote dialogue and a set of actions that will move social protection efforts in Africa to a higher level.

In this context, four specific sub-themes were identified and background research papers have been prepared on each of them. These four themes are:

1. Strengthening the economic imperative of social protection
2. Sustainable national institutional arrangements for social protection programmes that benefit children
3. The potential for linking formal with traditional and informal social protection mechanisms
4. The role of CSOs in supporting and strengthening national social protection programmes.

This introductory brief aims to set the context for child-sensitive social protection in Africa, provide conceptual coherence, and articulate the rationale for the selection of the sub-themes for the background papers.

2. SOCIAL PROTECTION THAT BENEFITS CHILDREN: DEFINITION AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

There is general consensus on the definition of social protection, which broadly refers to a range of mechanisms to reduce either the risk of experiencing an economic or social shock, or to reduce welfare loss after such a shock. At its core, social protection refers to interventions by public, private and voluntary organisations and informal networks that are designed to support communities, households and individuals in efforts to prevent, manage, and overcome risks and vulnerabilities.⁵

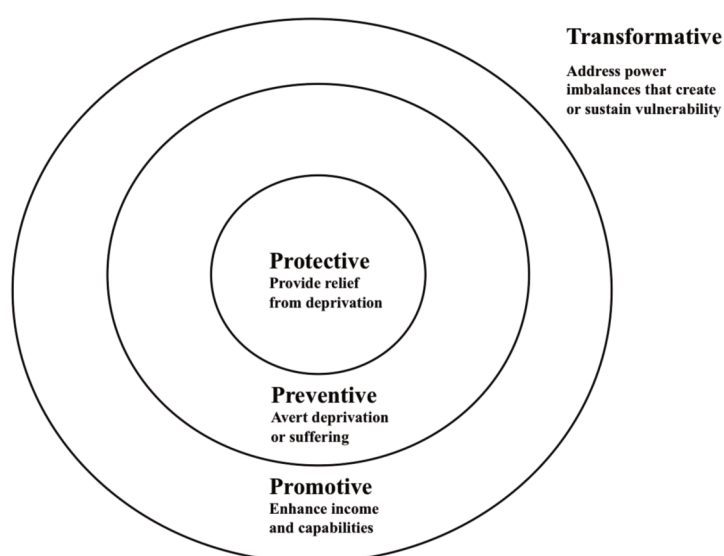
The AU Social Policy Framework⁶ describes the purpose of social protection as follows:

“...to ensure minimum standards of wellbeing among people in dire situations to live a life with dignity, and to enhance human capabilities. Social protection includes responses by the state and other sectors to protect citizens from risks, vulnerabilities and deprivations. It also includes strategies and programmes aimed at ensuring a minimum standard of livelihood for all people in a given country. This entails measures to secure education and health care, social welfare, livelihood, access to stable income, as well as employment. In effect, social protection measures are comprehensive, and are not limited to traditional measures of social security.”

For the purposes of this paper, a conceptual framework that underpins the fundamental assumptions of the background papers, informing their analysis and development, is provided below. This conceptual framework, developed by Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, describes social protection interventions as falling into four categories: protective, preventive, promotive and transformative (see Figure 1).

⁵ Handa et al. (Eds.) 2012.

⁶ AU 2008.

Figure 1: A framework for social protection**A Framework for Social Protection**

Source: Adopted from Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler 2004.

These components move from the specific to the general—from targeted interventions addressing specific vulnerabilities to broad policy, legislative and regulatory reforms that aim to reduce the probability of shocks and address power imbalances that create or sustain vulnerability. The concentric circles represent these four components. The innermost circle consists of protective social protection interventions focused primarily on the most vulnerable and socially excluded, which aim to provide relief from deprivation. Preventive interventions provide alternatives to potentially negative coping strategies that otherwise increase child risk, such as dropping out of school, child labour or inadequate adult care. Promotive social protection initiatives, on the other hand, support active investment in critical aspects of children’s development, including schooling and health.⁷ Transformative interventions (social and economic policy, legal reform, legislative processes and social communication) are the broadest measures, affecting entire societies. They have important impact on fulfilment of the rights of the poorest and most vulnerable, and so should be incorporated explicitly into national social protection systems. Social protection has an integral role to play in promoting child rights and ensuring the wellbeing of children, who are more vulnerable than adults in a number of ways and more sensitive to economic, social and environmental shocks and stresses.

From this conceptual framework, the concept of ‘child-sensitive social protection’ or ‘social protection programmes that benefit children’ is briefly elaborated in this paper. Child-sensitive social protection initiatives imply that deliberate analyses and measures are taken to improve opportunities and development outcomes for children through a multi-dimensional understanding of their wellbeing, including acknowledging that the risks facing children differ from those facing adults.⁸

Social protection programmes that aim to benefit children reflect a number of considerations. First, they are based on the understanding that risk to children is multidimensional. The dimensions of risk include

⁷ ACPF and ODI 2013.

⁸ Ibid.

threats to survival, development, protection and participation in key decision-making processes affecting children's lives. Second, these risks change over the course of childhood: young children who lack adequate adult care, for instance, will be more vulnerable to external shocks than older teenagers. Third, the vulnerabilities and risks children face tend also to be relational in nature. This means that children's reliance on adults can leave them particularly vulnerable through sharing the same risks their caregivers face, particularly when adults are vulnerable as a result of compounding factors such as gender, geographic location, or ethnicity. Fourth, children are often voiceless, without full participation in communities and societies in which traditional legal and cultural institutions do not place a high priority on their right to participation.⁹

Building on this conceptual framework, Table 1 shows how social protection programmes that benefit children should reflect synergetic approaches and interventions arranged around the four components referred to in the framework above.

Table 1: Social protection approaches and examples of interventions

Components	Examples of types of interventions
Protective Child-sensitive social protection aims to safeguard household income and consumption levels so that children's basic wellbeing can be maintained	Social assistance schemes through cash or in-kind transfers, social service fee waivers and school feeding programmes
Preventative Child-sensitive social protection seeks to provide households with alternatives to potentially negative coping strategies which may otherwise increase child risk, such as dropping out of school, child labour or inadequate adult care	Social services offering promotional family- and community-based services to support childcare and prevent violence against children, and provide alternative education for child labourers
Promotive Child-sensitive social protection supports investment in critical components of children's development, including schooling, health, and protection from violence, abuse and neglect	Social insurance schemes aimed at reducing risks of external shocks to health, income and livelihoods
Transformative Child-sensitive social protection addresses societal power imbalances that might otherwise contribute to creating or sustaining child vulnerabilities. It also encourages greater equity through changes aimed at redressing aspects of gender, religion, ethnic, race, class, or disability discrimination	Social equity measures in the form of transformative anti-discrimination legislation seeking to limit discriminatory treatment, affirmative action towards marginalised or traditionally discriminated-against groups (such as minority or indigenous children), and legislation

⁹ ACPF and ODI 2013; Jones and Sumner 2007.

Child-sensitive social protection is not child-exclusive, and interventions do not have to focus only on children. The concept refers to an approach that recognises the manner in which risks facing children differ from those particular to adults, particularly in light of the three child-specific areas of vulnerability: physical and biological vulnerabilities; dependence-related vulnerabilities; and institutionalised disadvantage. In this approach, while child-targeted programmes are certainly important, child-sensitive social protection recognises that addressing the wellbeing of care-givers can also significantly reduce the risks that children face. It also recognises the importance of the roles, relationships and unique needs of caregivers as an important component of programming.¹⁰ Social protection programmes that are not directly targeted to children can still have positive impacts on children's welfare: for example, old age pensions have a positive effect on the poorest children, particularly given that the proportion of children living in poverty is much higher among households headed by elderly people.¹¹

All the IPC background papers will therefore refer both to general social protection programmes and to those that aim specifically to benefit children.

3. WHY CHILD-SENSITIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION?

Why is it important for African countries to commit to and invest in social protection programmes that benefit children?

There are multiple compelling justifications for pursuing child-sensitive social protection in Africa.

First, there is the child rights imperative. Child-sensitive social protection is inherently a rights-based approach, premised on the fundamental principles of international and regional child rights instruments encompassing the rights to: freedom from discrimination; survival, development and protection; the best interests of the child; and participation. Access to appropriate social protection as a human right is guaranteed by language in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art 25)¹²; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights¹³; and the Constitution of the ILO.¹⁴ The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child¹⁵ identifies (in Articles 20, 26, and 27) the right of all children to social security and insurance alongside an adequate standard of living. In the African context, Article 20(2) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child specifically obliges State Parties to take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child in providing material assistance and support, particularly in the areas of nutrition, health, education, clothing and housing.¹⁶ The rights-based perspective also places an obligation on governments to provide the institutional capacity necessary to realise those rights, and to strengthen accountability for social protection that is beneficial to children.

Second, there is the social imperative. The child population in Africa is expected to reach 861 million by 2050, making the continent one of the most youthful.¹⁷ This growing young population represents a potential productive workforce to drive and accelerate Africa's economic growth. For this to happen,

¹⁰ Winder and Yablonski, UNICEF Social Protection Strategic Framework: 19.

¹¹ Kakwani et al, Poverty, Old Age and Social Pensions in Kenya: 18.

¹² <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

¹³ <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm>

¹⁴ <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/constq.htm>

¹⁵ <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

¹⁶ http://www.africa-union.org/official_documents/Treaties_%20Conventions_%20Protocols/a.%20C.%20O.N.%20THE%20RIGHT%20AND%20WELF%20OF%20CHILD.pdf

¹⁷ UNDP 2012.

children need to be adequately nourished, protected and educated so they can reach their full potential. Africa's growth will also be sustained if this expanding young population has access to meaningful employment opportunities.

Furthermore, rates of urbanization in Africa are the highest in the world: the urban population on the continent is expected to increase from 12% to 20% of the world's urban population by 2050.¹⁸ While urbanization is generally associated with increased economic opportunities, it has also brought about problems such as increasing unemployment, poverty and crime, poor access to social services, poor sanitation, and pollution (UNDP 2012). Many of Africa's populations are being forced to migrate, for socio-economic or conflict-related reasons; this leads to increased family separation and implies a greater need for measures that protect children.

Thirdly, there is the development imperative. Investing in social protection programmes leads to improved social development outcomes. There is robust evidence for this, both in Africa and globally. A comprehensive social protection agenda offers synergies with, and enhances the effectiveness of, national and global commitments and initiatives such as the MDGs. Child- or youth-targeted social transfers, for instance, can aid in the reduction of current and intergenerational poverty (MDG-1); social insurance benefits can aid in school enrolment and reduce the incentives for child labour (MDG-2); and conditional benefit tied to school attendance can create positive incentives for child enrolments, particularly among girls (MDG-3). Child-sensitive social services, transfers, and social insurance reduce the impacts of malnutrition and disease in orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), protect against HIV/AIDS, and help increase healthcare access (MDGs 4,5 and 6).¹⁹ Furthermore, public works programmes that invest in community infrastructure aimed at environmental sustainability (MDG-7) may also have child-specific benefits, especially for girls, by reducing the time burden and associated risks involved in collecting water from remote locations.²⁰ The social protection framework also assists in strengthening the link between emergency or relief programmes and longer-term transition and development programming.

Fourthly, there is the economic imperative. Addressing poverty and inequality through effective social protection measures leads to faster and more inclusive economic growth. The positive economic impacts of cash transfers, public works and health insurance can assist at micro level by insulating against shocks to assets and consumption. Broader economic benefits at the macro level include, for instance, demand stimulation through infusion of cash into local economies, and smoothing of consumption during slow economic periods.²¹

Beneficial interventions that improve children's nutrition, health, security and general education during defining periods of their physical and cognitive development can also help ensure more economically productive adulthood.²² Indeed, international consensus has begun to grow around linking social protection with the concept of growth with resilience²³ as an integral component of international development agendas. This was articulated most recently in the 2010 G20 Seoul Consensus and the 2011 Busan Aid Forum.²⁴

¹⁸ UNICEF 2012.

¹⁹ Ortiz et al., 2010; Holmes and Jones, 2010a; Holmes and Jones, 2010b.

²⁰ Holmes and Jones 2010.

²¹ Ortiz et al. 2011; Fisbein et al. 2011.

²² Grantham-McGregor, et al. 2007; Victoria et al. 2008.

²³ A notion which refers to a balanced socio-economic growth where appropriate resilience is built to withstand unpredicted risks and shocks and one which exploits the synergies between growth and resilience (The Montpellier Panel (2012).

²⁴ <http://www.g20.org/index.php/en> ;<http://www.aideffectiveness.org/busanhlf4/>

Finally, social protection is a viable strategy for sustained socio-economic development. Reflecting on the recent rapid economic and social development that has occurred in the East Asia region, it can be seen that significant investment in economic infrastructure, combined with investments in primary and secondary education, have played instrumental roles in driving growth.²⁵ These investments, together with appropriate re-distributive mechanisms, have led to decreased inequality and improved living standards. All in all, the contribution of human and social capital to the total wealth of East Asia is estimated to be as high as 75%, compared to 31% in Sub-Saharan Africa.²⁶ Needless to say, investment in social protection that is responsive to the needs of children and disadvantaged families where they are disproportionately represented has long-term benefits in driving inclusive growth and development. This compelling evidence justifies the need to prioritise such interventions in national development planning and budgeting.

4. SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES THAT BENEFIT CHILDREN IN AFRICA: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Africa is at an important juncture with respect to social protection. Now more than ever before there is great commitment to social protection; a growing body of evidence of good practice and documented positive impacts; and increasing acceptance of the need to put in place a comprehensive set of measures that are well coordinated and complementary, and which engage multiple stakeholders. Yet there is great inconsistency across different countries in Africa in the extent to which social protection has been institutionalized through national government-led frameworks. Commitments to social protection vary widely across Africa. Without doubt, they do not yet constitute a response proportionate to the widespread poverty, deprivation and vulnerability that necessitate them.

Social protection is a relatively recent phenomenon in Africa. However, since the 2009 endorsement of the AU's Social Protection Framework, many Member States have taken deliberate steps towards substantive commitments, investments and efforts to put in place the institutional arrangements necessary to support national social protection.

The extent to which social protection is legally legitimized differs widely. While many Constitutions in Africa refer to aspects of social protection for children²⁷, few countries have made an explicit commitment to entrenching children's socio-economic rights within national legislation. South Africa is an example to the contrary, having enshrined child and adolescent protection commitments in the South African Constitution (Act No. 108, 1996, Art. 27)²⁸ — thereby joining progressive international examples such as Brazil and India. However, few other African countries have emulated this step.²⁹

Under the AU Social Policy Framework, many countries in Africa have now put in place national policies and strategies, and to a lesser extent institutional arrangements and platforms, for the co-ordination of

²⁵ Tilak, Building Human Capital in East Asia: 11.

²⁶ Haq and Haq: 25.

²⁷ See, for instance, Constitutions of Burkina Faso (section 23[3], 1997); Burundi (section 30[(2), 2005]; Chad (section 38[1], 1996); Senegal (section 20, 2001); and DRC (40[4], 2006). Particularly common is language on children's right to education. See ActionAid, 2007.

²⁸ <http://www.info.gov.za/documents/constitution/1996/a108-96.pdf>

²⁹ Constituição Federativa do Brasil de (1988), http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/Constituicao/Constituicao.htm; Constitution of India (2011). <http://www.indiacode.nic.in/coiweb/welcome.html>.

multi-sector social protection programmes. Very few countries, perhaps even none, are starting absolutely from scratch; rather, they are building on existing programmes already in place, with governments merely adjusting them to achieve greater coherence and complementarity. In many countries, protracted humanitarian interventions are increasingly incorporated into national social protection frameworks. These national policies are sometimes, but not always, integrated into national development plans.

While many countries are implementing small-scale pilot programmes, few are able to report social protection programmes implemented on a national scale. South Africa is again an exception, although countries like Kenya and Ethiopia are making tremendous progress in terms of achieving national coverage. The trend is positive, particularly with respect to the cash transfer programmes that form an important element of social protection. For example, ten years ago, only South Africa had a significant and robust cash transfer programme; now over 30 countries have long-term programmes to deliver some form of cash transfer.³⁰ Some countries in North and West Africa have invested in national-level subsidy programmes; however, these do not necessarily reach the most vulnerable.

There is a growing body of evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of different aspects of social protection. For example, preliminary assessments of Kenya's cash transfer programme suggest that it is making important contributions in shifting consumption preferences within participating households, with significant increases in food expenditure and dietary diversity, a 15% increase in the frequency of consumption of five food groups (meat, fish, milk, sugar and fats), and greater energy intake among children.³¹ Other examples include Malawi's successful Mchinji cash transfer scheme and South Africa's Child Support Grant, both of which have contributed to significant declines in a range of child health and nutrition deficits, including stunting, among their beneficiary populations.³²

Evidence from Public Works Programmes (PWPs), which provide cash or in-kind wages to daily labourers unable to find alternative employment due to short-term or chronic distress, suggests that these can also have some positive impact on children's nutritional wellbeing. For example, Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme provides grain or cash equivalents to able-bodied adult workers, alongside direct transfers for family members physically unable to work (such as children, older people, and pregnant or lactating mothers).³³ Evaluations suggest this initiative has reduced child food insecurity within households, increasing the quantity, quality, and regularity of food consumption while reducing malnutrition, particularly during the rise of food prices in Ethiopia during 2010.³⁴

Africa's recent progress is therefore impressive; but many challenges and missed opportunities remain, impeding the further acceleration of social protection programmes in many countries and reducing their sensitivity to children's special needs.

³⁰ UNICEF (2014). Improving Child Outcomes Through Social Protection: Evidence From The Transfer Project. Paper presented at the Africa Union Expert Consultation on Children and Social Protection Systems in Africa. Prepared by UNICEF Innocenti, April 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/transfer/events/>

³¹ Jackson et al. 2011; Davis et al. 2012; Republic of Kenya, 2012.

³² Agüero et al. 2006; Miller 2008.

³³ Young Lives 2010; Save the Children 2012.

³⁴ Ibid.

5. TOWARDS FURTHER INSTITUTIONALIZATION, BUILDING NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND EXPANDING SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES IN AFRICA

ACPF has reflected on the progress that has been achieved and identified a number of areas where there remain not only knowledge gaps but also — in some cases — visible scepticism on the part of certain stakeholders. Recent policy dialogues have shown there are many questions that remain unanswered; by beginning to address these, further potential can be unlocked for expanding social protection deliberately across Africa.

There are four areas of social protection that ACPF has identified which deserve greater attention and follow-up.

First, while there is widespread knowledge and understanding of the positive impacts of social protection on development outcomes, there is less conviction and shared understanding regarding the explicit benefits of social protection for economic growth.

Second, while some countries are implementing incrementally comprehensive social protection programmes, the challenge remains daunting and unfeasible for many others. Reflecting on the factors that have triggered the evolution of a more coherent and comprehensive approach to social protection in some countries, there are opportunities for many countries in Africa to take concrete action to ensure that social protection is nationally owned and firmly institutionalized in national planning processes, including financing through domestic revenues.

Third, Africa has a long history of traditional and informal social protection systems that are deeply rooted in culture, religion and kinship practices. Many countries have built on, or intend to build on, these important structures and mechanisms. There is, however, limited knowledge and understanding of the potential for linking government-led formal structures with more traditional social protection.

Fourth, in many countries CSOs play an important role in contributing towards the implementation of national social protection programmes. Yet, reflecting on current practice in the external and policy environment, there is scope for further clarifying how their role could be strengthened and expanded, so that their engagement and contributions are better aligned to national-led social policy frameworks.

Background papers (see below) were commissioned to address each of these areas. Each of these papers presents an analysis across many African countries of existing practices, trends, challenges and opportunities. The papers propose a set of recommendations for multiple stakeholders, including pan-African treaty bodies, national governments, CSOs and international partners.

i. The economic imperative: why investing in social protection is good for economic growth in Africa

There is limited understanding of the economic basis for investing in social protection. This argument moves beyond the moral imperative and evidence for improvement in social development outcomes; it must provide evidence and justification for governments allocating scarce national resources. The paper entitled *Strengthening the economic imperative of social protection*³⁵ responds to the following questions:

³⁵ Prepared by Dr. Michael Samson, Ms. Meredith Yang and Ms. Alice Murphy from the Economic Policy Research Institute (EPRI)

- What are the economic benefits of investing in children through social protection?
- What is the cost in economic terms of *not investing* in child-sensitive social protection?
- What contribution can social protection make to local economies as well as the macro-economy?

Africa stands at a critical juncture, with 40 percent of its total population under 15 years of age. Maximising the productive capacity of this growing population would require investment in its children now.³⁶ The paper emphasises that foregone investments in nutrition, health and education outcomes during this critical window of a child's development represent an irreversible loss in human capital development. Without equitable investment in children and the reversal of widening disparities, the negative implications for human rights, employment, sustained growth and political stability will translate into a staggering economic cost to society.³⁷ Income inequality and inequality of opportunity are highly correlated, with a child's earning potential strongly determined by their parents' socio-economic status.³⁸ The persistence of inequality is largely owed to the fact that children growing up in poor households are likely to receive poorer health care, to have lower educational outcomes, and to reach lower levels of attainment in the labour market.³⁹ Child-sensitive social protection programmes therefore address the economic and social barriers that prevent access to services early in childhood.

The paper considers the link between positive development outcomes brought about by effective social protection, and positive economic growth. Children who suffer from stunting are more likely to have lowered cognitive ability and be poor as adults⁴⁰; for instance, malnutrition in pre-school children leads to an estimated loss of lifetime earnings of approximately 12 per cent.⁴¹ A recent study led by the AU Commission and supported by the Economic Commission for Africa and the UN World Food Programme highlights the cost of child malnutrition in monetary terms for four African countries. Overall, the costs of child malnutrition quantified across Egypt, Ethiopia, Uganda and Swaziland range between 1.9% and 16.5% of respective GDP.

Furthermore, education is a strong determinant of a person's life earnings. A study across 51 countries finds that each year of schooling increases wages (on average) by 9.7%.⁴² Furthermore, according to simulation analysis by Heckman and Cunha, interventions aimed at preschool aged children reduce the risk that the children will be poor later in life. Interventions aimed at adolescents achieved similar results, but cost 35% more than pre-school interventions.⁴³ As Graph 1 depicts, the marginal productivity of investment is highest in the first few years of a child's life.

³⁶ UN-DESA, World Urbanisation Prospects: 1. World Urbanization Prospects: The 2011 Revision, report, accessed October 2, 2013, http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/pdf/WUP2011_Highlights.pdf.

³⁷ You et al, Generation 2030: Africa: 10.

³⁸ Smeeding et al, Persistence, Privilege and Parenting (2011).

³⁹ Haveman and Wolfe, 1995; Esping-Andersen and Sarasa, 2002

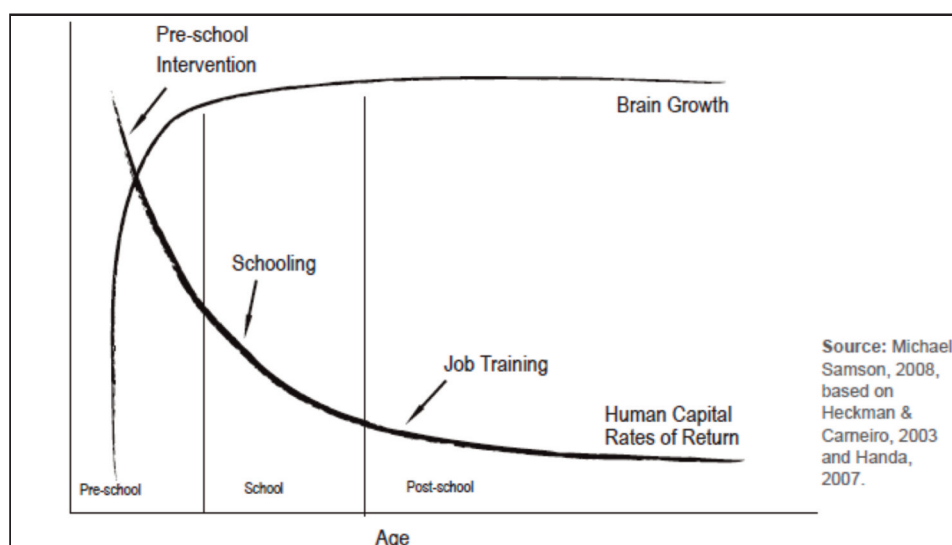
⁴⁰ McGregor et al, Child Development in Developing Countries 1.

⁴¹ World Bank, Children and Youth. Early Childhood Development (ECD).

⁴² Psacharopoulos G, Patrinos H. Returns to investment in education: a further update. Educ Econ 2004; 12: 111–34.

⁴³ Cunha and Heckman, The Technology of Skill Formation: 35.

Graph 1: Childhood development and rates of return



Source: Cunha and Heckman 2007.

In view of these aggregate costs to national development, inaction only enhances existing inequalities. Social protection can reverse these inequalities, and interventions — particularly at formative stages of growth — generate important economic benefits for adult productivity and the productivity of society on the whole. Immediate economic benefits of social protection often reach beyond the targeted beneficiaries of programmes by contributing to short-term growth outcomes. When poor households increase and stabilise their spending power, their purchases stimulate local economic activity, creating jobs, raising wages and improving profits of local enterprises. Increased utilisation of services in health, education, livelihoods and productive activities in turn raises labour productivity, increasing disposable income and creating a “virtuous circle.”⁴⁴ This “multiplier”, documented for South Africa in the government’s impact assessment of social grants in 2004, expands the potential of social protection to contribute to local economies as well as to the broader macro-economy.

ii. Sustainable arrangements that facilitate incremental growth and ownership (financing, integration of humanitarian, national & institutional arrangements, etc.)

In an Expert Consultation meeting held in April 2014, the African Union called for Member states to implement

“...a minimum social protection package... within a comprehensive social protection system... through the progressive expansion and coverage of programmes.”

The AU recommendations also call for Member States to:

“...adopt financing strategies that guarantee social protection and make allocations of national budget” — as well as to put in place the appropriate institutional arrangements.

⁴⁴ Gassman 2012

The second paper, entitled *Sustainable institutional arrangements for social protection programmes that benefit children*⁴⁵, examines progress and opportunities for implementation of these recommendations. It provides a brief historical perspective on the evolution of comprehensive social protection in Africa and reviews building blocks and progress made by African countries in terms of institutionalising social protection.

The analysis reinforces the significant variation between African countries in the pace at which social protection programmes have been scaled up, and the commitments made to institutionalise them. The analysis illustrates a number of evident trends that have influenced the emergence of more comprehensive approaches to social protection across many countries. The significant role of humanitarian interventions and their increasing convergence with social protection frameworks, catalysed by greater emphasis on building resilience, together constitute one of the most significant trends evident across African countries.

Financing social protection is a critical element of institutionalization, and the paper highlights that current expenditure by African countries on social protection is inadequate. The regional average was noted to be 2.8 per cent of GDP allocated to social protection, compared to 3.7 for Asia and the Pacific, 7.6 for Latin America, 7.1 for the Middle East, 11 for North Africa and 18 for Western Europe. This reinforces the fact that sustained institutional support for social protection implies securing funding from domestic sources such as tax revenues. A key challenge for governments, therefore, is a low level of tax revenue relative to national income, especially when coupled with high levels of dependency on grants and foreign aid. Most African countries have small economies, and their ability to finance social protection packages is therefore severely limited. But the fact that most African economies are growing means that in future governments will be able to deliver quality social protection services funded mainly from domestic sources. Additionally, research on social protection financing suggests that there is more latitude in national budgets than is often acknowledged: ILO modelling demonstrates that even low-income countries should typically be able to afford a minimal social protection package consisting of targeted child support grants to the poorest 10% of a population.⁴⁶

The paper examines other factors necessary to facilitate the further institutionalization of social protection. Human resources are an important component in strengthening institutional capacity to deliver social protection services; yet Africa is far from having adequate skilled capacity, specifically in terms of social workers, who provide critical input in delivering the services and ensuring equity.

Limited interaction and coherence across sectors in the delivery of services is identified as a challenge to implementing comprehensive social protection strategies; deliberate effort needs to be made to bring together related sectors and professions under a single conceptual framework. Africa continues to face capacity constraints: many countries lack the mechanisms and structures to design and implement social protection programmes responsive to children. Strengthening child-sensitive social protection requires ensuring capacity at all levels and putting in place the necessary institutional arrangements, leadership and accountability systems.

The paper suggests that in order for meaningful and sustainable national-led measures to be put in place a political choice must be made at the highest levels of government to prioritize social protection policy and programmes that benefit children, underpinned by adequate budget allocations. Second, an appropriate national institutional arrangement needs to be made to facilitate the practical implementation of a coherent, comprehensive social protection package.

⁴⁵ Prepared by Roger Pearson.

⁴⁶ Pal et al. 2005 and DFID 2006 cited in Samson et al 2006.

iii. Potential for linking formal and informal social protection systems

Although there is much discussion of potential complementarities and possible conflicts between formal and informal social protection systems, there is not much evidence on what has worked and what has not worked in practice.⁴⁷ The paper entitled ***The potential for linking formal and traditional social protection mechanisms in Africa***⁴⁸ examines in more depth the existing traditional practices and how they are evolving (and in some situations being undermined or overwhelmed). It sets out to answer the following questions:

- *What are the informal systems of social protection in Africa?*
- *How can emerging formal social protection mechanisms be linked to these practices and build on them, so that they mutually reinforce one another in addressing vulnerability, particularly of children?*

Kinship-based traditional support systems have been and remain the main safety net mechanisms in Africa during periods of difficulty and risk. They provide valuable safety nets to poor families who cannot access or are excluded from formal protection structures. These traditional systems are underpinned by the principles of solidarity and reciprocity where risks are collectively shared.⁴⁹ The paper describes the existing range of traditional forms of social protection, as well as the challenges potentially undermining them. The paper also describes the increasing number of emerging informal mechanisms, such as remittances and the work of faith- and community-based organizations, which exist without the engagement and contributions of external agents. The paper shows that these informal mechanisms are not necessarily always deliberately integrated into formal social protection systems.

It concludes by identifying a broad consensus that formal and informal social protection systems both have value and can work together to provide comprehensive, flexible systems of support to poor and vulnerable individuals and households.⁵⁰ Efforts should therefore be made to incorporate traditional and informal social protection mechanisms into mainstream strategies, policies and programmes, ensuring that new social protection initiatives take into account their cultural context; strengthen existing solidarity mechanisms; and expand outreach – especially to those groups that are off the administrative radar.⁵¹

iv. The role of CSOs in promoting child-sensitive social protection

Engagement of civil society organizations is necessary in order to yield responsive, child-sensitive policies and programmes. It requires that governments adopt an inclusive approach to policy development – a principle embedded in, and required by, the African Union’s Social Policy Framework (SPF) for Africa. The framework expressly requires that governments put in place mechanisms to involve civil society in policy-making on social protection. The paper entitled ***The role of civil society in supporting and strengthening national child sensitive social protection programmes***⁵² examines the existing role of CSOs in social protection, the challenges that they face, and the opportunities that exist for them to have more defined, deliberate roles.

⁴⁷ Browne 2013.

⁴⁸ Prepared by Dr. Mary Amuyunzu-Nyamongo, African Institute for Health and Development

⁴⁹ Kaseke 2013.

⁵⁰ Browne 2013.

⁵¹ ACPF and ODI 2013; Ntale et al. 2008.

⁵² Prepared by Patricia Martin, Advocacy Aid (Pty).

The paper shows that over and above the legal and ideological rationale for civil society involvement, there are cogent practical reasons why civil society participation should be encouraged and cultivated. It asserts that active participation of civil society is likely to result in sustainable and effective social protection programmes responsive to local contexts and needs.

CSOs face numerous challenges to effective participation in social protection policy dialogue and design of programmes. In general, there are two underlying clusters of factors. The first relates to external challenges in terms of restrictive political and legal environments that limit the involvement of CSOs in policy dialogue. The second relates to a wide range of factors revolving around weak and *ad hoc* participatory processes that do not facilitate inclusive policy development: CSOs' various capacity constraints; lack of knowledge of the workings of government and the apparatus of state; lack of conceptual clarity and common frameworks for child-sensitive social protection; and weak coordination. Outside South Africa, most CSOs have not made their presence felt in emerging platforms and dialogue spaces.

The paper proposes that CSOs, particularly national CSOs, align their social protection interventions more strategically with government-led national social protection programmes in the specific areas of implementation and service delivery; research and impact analysis; advocacy; supporting governments to develop policies and programmes; strengthening accountability systems; and providing a collective framework and structure for civil engagement.

While CSOs face multiple challenges in this regard there are also a number of opportunities for enhanced participation in the development of strong CSSP policies and programmes. These include growth in social solidarity across civil society; enhanced commitment to children's issues and improvement in child-friendliness of national legal frameworks; increasing democratisation across Africa; and improvements in governance.

6. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Social protection programmes that benefit children provide African governments with one of the most effective tools in existence for tackling poverty and inequality, enhancing economic growth and progressively realizing children's rights. These background papers reaffirm that many African countries have begun a process of investing in, and scaling up, national-led social protection programmes. Yet several important legal, structural and administrative challenges exist for African governments to implement child-sensitive social protection effectively. These challenges affect the reach, effectiveness and sustainability of existing social protection efforts. Governments remain sceptical on the economic benefits, and to a large extent social protection programmes continue to be financed by international sources.

Based on analysis of experiences and current practices across Africa and globally, the papers identify ways in which social protection programmes can and must be embedded into economic and development planning processes, and be nationally owned and driven.

The findings of the papers explore a number of ways in which social protection programmes can become institutionalized through putting in place government-led arrangements including creating leadership and accountability mechanisms for multi-sector engagement; incremental building of a comprehensive package of complementary interventions aligned to a coherent conceptual framework; and, finally and most

importantly, committing financial resources, preferably from domestic revenues, to social protection. The findings also reaffirm that social protection programmes can be made more relevant and effective, and achieve greater coverage within African countries, if there is an effective engagement of CSOs (particularly national ones), and if formal social protection systems build on and integrate with traditional and informal social protection measures.

These analyses and research findings, along with the linked recommendations, inform the IPC outcome document and the agreed way forward. The outcome document reflects a consensus on how social protection programmes in Africa can be forged at a higher level through deliberate, collective action by governments, international partners, research institutes and CSOs.

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