



Regional Brief

Regional Interagency Task Team on Children and AIDS – Eastern and Southern Africa

Challenges for orphaned and vulnerable children and youth in the SADC region

In 2006 there were approximately 17 million children who were orphans in SADC (UNAIDS, UNICEF 2006) and it is unlikely that this number has significantly decreased.

Not all children made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS are orphans, with many being vulnerable as a result of household illness and stigma combined with poverty, conflict and other economic, social and political challenges.

Specific vulnerabilities for orphaned and vulnerable children and youth (OVC&Y) can include lack of access to education and other basic services, stigmatisation, depression, abuse, neglect, early marriage, child labour and other rights transgressions.

Children and youth orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS in the Southern African Development Community (SADC)

Key SADC policy frameworks and guidelines for Orphans, Vulnerable Children and Youth (OVC&Y)

The response to orphans and vulnerable children and youth in the region

In the past decade most SADC Member States have recognised the need to address OVC&Y issues and have developed National Plans of Action (NPA) and other responses targeting children. This has resulted in policies and programmes to improve the development outcomes of a wide range of vulnerable children (UNICEF 2011, SADC 2010). However, despite this progress, recent studies carried out by the SADC Secretariat (SADC 2010) reveal that most SADC Member States still need to deliver services for OVC&Y in a more comprehensive manner. Service delivery is often planned and delivered in a 'silo' fashion with limited coordination across the sectors. This results in less efficient and effective care and support for OVC&Y with many of the most marginalised and vulnerable children and youth lacking access to basic services and rights.

SADC Framework and Plan of Action for Comprehensive Care and Support for OVC&Y (2008-2012)

In response to the need to support Member States to further address OVC&Y issues in a harmonised and comprehensive manner, the SADC Framework and Plan of Action for Comprehensive Care and Support for OVC&Y (2008-2012) (Framework) was developed in 2008 and an accompanying business plan in 2009. Using a multisectoral approach, the Framework outlines priorities for a common, comprehensive response to address the challenges faced by OVC&Y, their families and caregivers. The Framework has stimulated the development of a number of more specific SADC guidelines and conceptual frameworks for OVC&Y.

Minimum Package of Services for OVC&Y

The Minimum Package of Services for OVC&Y (Minimum Package) is a set of standards and guidelines which promote the harmonisation of comprehensive service delivery for OVC&Y across the region. Member States are being urged to integrate these standards and guidelines as part of national level responses to OVC&Y. The Minimum Package prioritises a number of services for OVC&Y and outlines how sectors can respond in a coordinated and comprehensive manner. The Minimum Package identifies six priority areas of service provision for OVC&Y: education and vocational skills; health care and sanitation; food security and nutrition; child and youth protection and safety; social protection; and psychosocial wellbeing. It also recommends approaches which can facilitate improved cross sectoral planning and implementation, as well as the monitoring of progress.

Who are orphans, vulnerable children and youth affected by HIV and AIDS?

An orphan is a person aged 0-17 where either one or both parents have died. Children affected or made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS are children living with HIV, or children living in a household with a chronically ill adult, as well as those whose wellbeing is compromised by HIV and AIDS in their families or communities. National Plans of Action for OVC can also include children in poor families, street children and children with disabilities, among others (UNICEF 2011). Vulnerability in children and youth as a result of HIV and AIDS is contextual and must be interpreted using evidence drawn at country and sub-country levels.

Working together to address OVC&Y challenges in the region

SADC Member States have committed to integrating the Framework into national responses for OVC&Y. However, it is recognised that this requires the combined support of regional stakeholders, including the SADC secretariat, UN agencies, donors, civil society, the private sector and other actors. SADC is working with a wide range of these stakeholders at regional and national level to facilitate the uptake of aspects of the Framework. Support and collaboration from stakeholders includes the provision of technical and other assistance, and the promotion and dissemination of SADC priorities at regional and national level.

Regional Conceptual Framework for Psychosocial Support for Orphans, Vulnerable Children and Youth

The Regional Conceptual Framework for Psychosocial Support for OVC&Y (PSS Framework) is a tool that accompanies the Minimum Package of Services for OVC&Y to provide clarity and guidance to SADC Member States on psychosocial support. Working from the basis that psychosocial care is a critical requirement of all children, especially vulnerable children, it outlines how psychosocial support should be a cross-cutting service and be integrated into all service delivery for OVC&Y. The psychosocial needs of OVC&Y are grouped into three main categories: skills and knowledge; emotional and spiritual wellbeing; and social wellbeing. The PSS Framework recommends that planning and programming for psychosocial wellbeing, development, care and support be age and gender appropriate and take into consideration cultural and economic contexts. It is recommended that responses be multi-layered, addressing not only the needs of individual children, but also those of the family, peer groups, communities and society.

How were the Minimum Package of Services and the PSS Framework for OVC&Y developed?

The Minimum Package and PSS Framework are the result of an extensive consultative process involving a broad range of stakeholders in the region. It was approved by SADC Ministers responsible for OVC&Y in Windhoek in June 2011, and endorsed by SADC Ministers responsible for Health and HIV and AIDS (November 2011) and for Employment and Labour (April 2012). SADC Ministers responsible for Education and Skills Development and for Gender have also endorsed the need to deliver services for OVC&Y in a comprehensive manner. The SADC Council of Ministers and Heads of States and Government commended this initiative during the Summit in Maputo in August 2012.

Implementation Guidelines for the Minimum Package of Services and Psychosocial Support for Orphans, Vulnerable Children and Youth

The Implementation Guidelines for the Minimum Package of Services and Psychosocial Support for Orphans, Vulnerable Children and Youth (Implementation Guidelines) have been developed to accelerate Member States' efforts to integrate the Minimum Package and PSS Framework into national planning and programming. The Implementation Guidelines identify the key conditions and steps required to ensure the multisectoral, comprehensive delivery of services for OVC&Y through the integration of the recommendations in the Minimum Package and PSS Framework. This includes the integration of basic services through cooperation, collaboration and coordination; addressing cross-cutting issues including HIV, gender, participation and marginalised groups; reviewing or developing necessary policies and legislation to improve service delivery for OVC&Y; empowering vulnerable children, youth and their families to access services; and providing a continuum of care and support to facilitate transition from childhood to adulthood.

What is psychosocial support?

PSS is a continuum of care and support which influences both the individual and the social environment in which people live. This continuum ranges from care and support offered by caregivers, family members, friends, neighbours, teachers, health workers and community members on a daily basis – ongoing nurturing relationships that communicate understanding, unconditional love, tolerance and acceptance – and extends to care and support offered by specialised psychological and social services.



References

SADC 2010. *The Situation of Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children and Youth in the SADC Region*.

UNAIDS, UNICEF 2006. *Africa's Orphaned and Vulnerable Generations: Children Affected by AIDS*.

UNICEF 2011. *Taking evidence to impact: Making a difference for vulnerable children living in a world with HIV and AIDS*.

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