A Focus on Child Protection within Social Protection Systems

Transforming Children's lives
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OUR VISION is a world in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation.

OUR MISSION is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.
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Transforming Children’s lives
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Executive Summary

‘No violence against children is justifiable; all violence against children is preventable.’

Introduction

Social protection is generally understood as a set of public actions that address poverty, vulnerability and exclusion and provide means to cope with life’s major risks throughout the life cycle. This study examines the relationship between social protection programmes and systems for child protection. It proposes that social protection programmes should become much more sensitive to child protection issues by including elements which strengthen and support families and identify and respond to children at risk. Such services should not be viewed as an ‘add-on’ to social protection but rather as an integral component which helps to ensure that social protection interventions reach their maximum impact.

It argues that many of the documented benefits of social protection programmes address the very vulnerabilities that make children more at risk of experiencing violence, exploitation and abuse. Yet child-sensitive programmes often limit their focus to gains in children’s health and education while the positive role that they can play for increased protection of children against violence, abuse and exploitation is seldom measured or acknowledged. As a consequence the potential and opportunity for social protection interventions to do more in helping to prevent, identify and respond to violence and abuse of children has been overlooked.

The goal of Save the Children’s work on child protection is to promote, protect and fulfil children’s rights to protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other human rights, humanitarian and refugee treaties and conventions, as well as national laws. Child protection deals with issues that are sensitive, sometimes stigmatising and often hidden (such as domestic violence and sexual abuse), and with violations that are often socially accepted (such as corporal punishment) or even authorised by the state.

Successful child protection work begins with prevention and seeks to address the root causes of children’s vulnerability such as poverty, gender and other forms of discrimination, power imbalances between adults and children, violence in society and social acceptance of certain forms of violence, such as corporal punishment. It is a combination of factors, acting at different levels, which influence the

1. Report of the independent expert for the UN Study on Violence against Children (A/61/299) para 1
likelihood of a child experiencing violence, exploitation, abuse or neglect. It is worth emphasizing that some child protection issues, such as exploitation, sexual exploitation, child trafficking and child labour have an immediate link with poverty whilst with other child protection issues, such as sexual abuse and corporal punishment, the link is not so immediate.

Recognising the ways in which deprivation and poverty are transmitted across generations and across time requires that social protection programmes take the “long view”, tackling multiple deprivations through protective as well as transformative agendas. There will be many children who are not reached by social protection programmes who have child protection needs; for example, children without appropriate care from parents or others, children living in the streets or children on the move. In short, social protection programmes do not provide a basis for addressing all child protection issues. However, they can be an important means of reducing the risk of violence, neglect, exploitation and abuse children face through reducing poverty but also through addressing discrimination and social exclusion.

They can, for example, ensure that more children go to school for longer periods of time and education can be a very protective factor in children’s lives. They may increase the uptake of birth registration and help to reduce child labour and early marriage. They can also help to support families in caring for their children through integration with a wide range of support services focussing on strengthening and supporting families and identifying and responding to children at risk. This could happen, for example, by providing much needed points of contact and referral between families and social welfare services or community-based child protection mechanisms.

This study is far from comprehensive but aims to provide preliminary analysis and to highlight areas of further research and advocacy. It is based on a desk review of relevant literature and interviews with informants in international agencies and countries with relevant experience. It should be emphasised that issues of child protection are very rarely incorporated into the design, implementation and evaluation of social protection mechanisms. Where they are included they are rarely made explicit or clearly evaluated as a separate outcome. Despite this lack of evidence, the value of this study lies in demonstrating the clear linkages between social protection measures and child protection concerns. It also explores ways in which they could be integrated further to realise the potential of social protection as an important component of over-arching child protection systems.

**Recommendations for strengthening child protection within social protection programming**

Social protection must be regarded as one element in a broad strategy aimed at ensuring the protection of children. As such it should be developed in coordination with other policies addressing the various factors causing or perpetuating harm to children. The main challenge is to shift the terms of the debate so that child

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protection is not seen as a complementary ‘add-on’ to social protection but rather as an integral component which can help social protection have optimum impact.

The following are some recommendations for how INGOs, NGOs and other relevant agencies can move the research, policy and advocacy agenda forward in relation to further integration between child protection and social protection.

Research and policy
Care must be taken not to assume that social protection can strengthen child protection in all settings or to extrapolate this from the literature. In short, we do not yet have the evidence available to clearly identify the features of successful pathways to integrating social protection and child protection. The following are some areas of research of suggested interest.6

- **Strengthen the evidence base**

There is a real need to strengthen the evidence base on the relationship between child protection and social protection in order to support future advocacy and inform programme planning. This should focus on impact as well as any benefits for institutional coordination and should consider whether there is robust evidence that an integrated approach to social protection from the perspective of child protection is optimal in all settings. It should consider which combination of interventions can address child protection most effectively in which contexts eg cash transfer with condition of access to education, birth registration, immunisation, regular meetings with social workers etc. It should consider how social protection programmes can maximise their impact on child protection even when it is not an explicit entry point? Also the implications of social programming and child protection in emergency and post-emergency contexts need to be considered.

- **Share experience within different contexts**

Explore how lessons on integrated poverty reduction programmes from developed and middle-income countries can inform progress in low income countries taking into account difficulties in implementation such as lack of resources, lack of capacity, lack of confidentiality mechanisms etc7. It is really important not to infer that programmes such as Chile Solidario are possible in other regions. One possibility is to look at implementation in lower income countries in Latin America such as Nicaragua or Honduras which may be more comparable with conditions in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa. Another possibility is to be selective about which components are able to be transferred and the role that community-based groups can realistically play.

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6. Many of these ideas are sourced from: Greenberg, Aaron and Sherr, Lorraine (2009) ‘Social welfare and cash transfer meeting, Carmona, Spain’, Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies, 4: 1, 6–9.

7. It is worth remembering that in some countries up to 20% of GDP is expended on social welfare (Sweden, UK and Germany), while the poorest nations (Ethiopia, Kenya, and Mauritania) direct less than 1% of GDP to social welfare: Strengthening national responses to children affected by HIV/AIDS: What is the role of the state and social welfare in Africa? p 5 http://www.childresearchpolicy.org/images/wilton_park_report_wps05-30.pdf
- **Build consensus and political will around social protection and child protection**

  Social protection programming can be highly politicised. It could be very useful to research how to build consensus within communities and the public at large regarding the importance of social protection and child protection systems; for example, find media friendly stories demonstrating the positive impact of linking the two.

- **Research into different modes of delivering social protection**

  Further exploration of the question of universal social protection versus targeting is needed and examination of which method is optimal for strengthening children’s right to protection.

- **Examine how to reach children who are not in conventional households**

  Of particular importance is to consider ways and means by which social protection can ‘reach’ children who are not living in conventional households (for example, children on the move, child-headed households, children without appropriate care who are living in institutions).

- **Examine the role of community-based child protection mechanisms**

  The role, positive and negative, of community-based involvement in child protection and means by which this can be integrated into social protection; for example, is there any evidence that social protection interventions could ‘crowd out’ community based protection to the detriment of children’s best interests?

- **Develop indicators**

  It is important to develop a set of core child protection indicators which could be included and integrated into existing social protection monitoring and evaluations. These might include birth registration coverage for boys and girls, access to auxiliary social workers (with minimum quality standards at community level) and an indicator that could track the confidential identification and referral of child protection violations picked up during contact points.

**Advocacy and programming**

- **Mapping at country level**

  At a country level there is a need for detailed mapping of the intricacies of existing social protection interventions prior to consideration of how child protection could be strengthened as part of them. This requires a mapping of all social protection schemes of relevance to children and consideration of the extent to which they are part of a comprehensive country strategy on social protection and the gaps where child protection is not being sufficiently addressed.

- **Assessment of political context**

  Political will is required to ensure the adoption of child-protection focussed social protection and the political context for social protection as well as for child protection needs to be investigated at country level. This will help to develop a clear picture of how dynamic political and institutional circumstances can affect the prospects for social protection initiatives with child protection components being adopted and succeeding in specific contexts. How are decisions made and
policy processes played out? How are alternatives weighed up? What role do factors other than perceived affordability play? How can social protection schemes survive change in political (and economic) circumstances? How can financing be sustainable? At a local level, how will informal politics affect implementation?

As entry-points agencies should consider influencing the development and implementation of social protection strategies and at country level consider if National Plans of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children and/or Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers could be useful vehicles for promoting child protection in social protection programmes. Evidence is crucial here (see section on Research above) to support an argument that social protection can have a positive impact on children’s lives. For example in Bangladesh the Ultra Poor Programme was adopted following from an assessment of the limited success of existing interventions in reaching the very poorest. Local partners also need to be supported to engage in policy development and planning of social protection at a national level so that child protection can be pushed up the agenda.

- **Building bridges between two disciplines**
  Efforts should be made to act as a bridge between the networks of international organizations and research institutes who are engaged in social protection and those engaged in child protection.

- **Strengthening duty bearers’ understanding**
  There is a need to demystify the concept of child protection so that civil society, donors and government have a better understanding of the benefits of building and strengthening a rights-based national child protection system which leads to holistic, inclusive, sustainable and well-coordinated ways of protecting all children in all settings. This needs to be done in parallel with influencing stakeholders to develop a model of social protection that fully integrates child protection concerns into policies and programmes by including access to transfers, services and transformative components.

- **Strengthening children’s engagement with social protection interventions**
  There is no evidence of children’s participation in the design of social protection schemes. There are very few examples where children have been asked about the impact of any cash transfer or other social protection scheme. There is a need to ensure that social protection measures aiming at strengthening child protection are informed by children’s perspectives and experiences (and those of their parents/care givers as well).

- **Linking community-based groups with social protection provision**
  Community-based groups may play a very important role as the first line of protection for children at risk of or victims of violence and abuse in developing local preventive and remedial activities. Community-based child protection committees with volunteers who work to identify and refer cases of violence and

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8. Introducing basic social protection in low-income countries (2007) Barrientos
9. See ‘Building rights-based national child protection systems – A concept paper to support Save the Children’s work’ produced by the Save the Children’s Child Protection Initiative.
abuse against children in their neighbourhood could be supported alongside appropriate systems that link existing child protection community-based groups to social protection programming so that such groups can refer those they are working with to any social protection scheme and can also be a watchdog for specific child protection violations that may require deliberate intervention.

• Resource allocation
The process of how states allocate resources is critical, not least as a means of determining the political priority afforded to strengthening child protection. Without knowledge of how much is being invested, both in financial and human terms, it is difficult to track progress or ensure accountability for reducing violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Budget tracking work should be undertaken so that there is more clarity about whether states are allocating maximum available resources to both social protection and child protection. This budget work should emphasise the efficiencies of savings possible in combining social and child protection.

• Coordination of government structures
The various governmental agencies engaged in social protection and child protection should be assisted to define the terms of their cooperation with each other and supported in the initial stages of this cooperation.

• Emphasis on evaluation
Social protection programmes which include child protection components must generate evidence to show exactly what works. The risk otherwise is of a number of pilot programmes being developed that have little hope of going to scale owing to inadequate evidence.

10. See note above
1. Overlapping agendas: Child protection and social protection

1.1 What is child protection?

The UN Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against Children builds on the work of the UN Study on Children in Armed Conflict. It was produced in 2006 and gives us the first comprehensive, global study on all forms of violence against children. It found that they face many different forms of violence in many different settings (at home, in the community, in school, in institutions, in workplaces). This includes sexual exploitation and abuse, trafficking, physical and humiliating punishment, child labour and harmful traditional practices (including early marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting). At least 150 million girls and 73 million boys worldwide are raped or subjected to sexual violence each year; 115 million children are involved in hazardous work and 3 million girls and women are subjected to female genital mutilation each year.

The UN Study on Violence argues that a comprehensive approach is needed to ensure children’s right to protection. This idea has been built upon by many agencies including Save the Children which defines child protection as the measures and structures which prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children in all settings. The organisation believes that the building and strengthening of rights-based national child protection systems will lead to holistic, inclusive, sustainable and well-coordinated ways of protecting all children in all settings. In 2009, Save the Children launched the Child Protection Initiative which makes the protection of children without appropriate care a priority.

Under Article 19 of the CRC, children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally. States should establish ‘social programmes’ to ensure that children are properly cared for and protected from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them.

5. ‘Building rights-based national child protection systems – A concept paper to support Save the Children’s work’ produced by the Save the Children’s Child Protection Initiative.
7. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted General Comment 13 on Article 19 in 2011. It calls on States to ‘Establish and implement social programmes to promote optimal positive child-rearing by providing, through integrated services, necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child.’
As well as considering protection from caregivers in the home, the Convention is 
comprehensive in its consideration of the need for child protection in out-of-family 
care (Art. 22), in educational/school settings (Art. 28), involving substance abuse 
(Art. 33), in illegal and exploitative sexual practices (Art. 34), in work (Art. 32), 
through subjection to sale, trafficking, abduction and other forms of exploitation 
(Art. 35, 36), and in correctional and juvenile justice institutions (Art. 37, 40).

It is implicit in the CRC that violence against children is preventable – and 
not inevitable – and that states have a responsibility both to reduce levels of child 
maltreatment through preventive measures and to provide protection, justice and 
care for children whose rights are violated.

A child protection system requires a multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral 
approach (linking closely, for example, with work in education, health, social 
welfare and criminal justice). It aims to strengthen the capacity of all actors to 
protect children and to develop systems and mechanisms that provide meaningful 
protection for all children in the longer term. It aims to focus on preventive 
measures from a broad social welfare perspective which recognises the impact 
of poverty and social exclusion on the capacity of families and communities to 
care for their children. Such a systematic response is also intended to contribute 
to better coordination and more efficient use of financial and human resources.

In 2008 UNICEF produced its own Child Protection Strategy in which it 
defines a child protection system as

"the set of laws, policies, regulations and services needed across all social sectors – 
especially social welfare, education, health, security and justice – to support prevention 
and response to protection-related risks. These systems are part of social protection, 
and extend beyond it. At the level of prevention, their aim includes supporting and 
strengthening families to reduce social exclusion, and to lower the risk of separation, 
violence and exploitation. Responsibilities are often spread across government agencies, 
with services delivered by local authorities, non-State providers, and community groups, 
making coordination between sectors and levels, including routine referral systems, a 
necessary component of effective child protection systems.”

The UNICEF strategy defines some key considerations to be taken into account 
when building effective national child protection systems. These include initiatives 
to strengthen gender equality, social protection, coordination between sectors, 
rule of law, as well as special measures to reach vulnerable and excluded groups.

1.2 What is social protection?

The duty to implement social protection policies for children flows directly from 
a number of human rights, in particular the right to social security and the right 
to an adequate standard of living, which are enshrined in the CRC and other 
key international human rights instruments.20 These are rights in themselves but

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19. As above
20. See Universal Declaration of Human Rights (articles 22 and 25), the International Labour 
Organisation (ILO) Convention 102 (1952) on Social Security (Minimum Standards), articles 
9, 10 and 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, article 
5 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 
article 11 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against 
Women, article 27 of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All 
Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, article 26 of the Convention on the Rights 
of the Child and article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
also contribute to the fulfillment of other rights; crucially this includes the right to protection from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

There is a diversity of views on the scope of social protection. Some agencies see social protection in quite narrow terms as a form of social welfare provided to ‘vulnerable’ groups such as those with disabilities, widows or orphans. Others adopt a very broad approach including job creation programmes, livelihood programmes, law reform and even universal education within its boundaries. In this broad approach, the boundary between what is social protection and what is development more broadly construed can be hazy. Yet a common theme in these definitions is that social protection measures are concerned with the ways in which individuals, households, or communities’ resilience can be strengthened.

For the purposes of this study, the concept of social protection is defined in accordance with the view that such interventions can be ‘seedbeds’ of social change. Social protection is understood as a set of public actions that address poverty, vulnerability and exclusion as well as provide means to cope with life’s major risks throughout the life cycle. This definition has the benefit of including transformative aspects of social protection which address vulnerabilities arising from social exclusion and discrimination. Social protection can take many forms. The UN Social Protection Floor for example talks about governmental obligations to ensure access to essential services (education, health, social services etc) as well as realising access by ensuring a basic set of essential social transfers in cash and in kind.

Cash transfers can be given to households as a unit when they meet poverty or vulnerability criteria, to an individual in a particular population group such as an elderly or disabled person, or to families based on the presence of individuals such as children, girls, or fostered orphans. They can be unconditional or tied to obligations of recipients to participate in work, training, education, health, nutrition, or other services or activities – or they can be linked to these activities but not obligatory.

Conditional cash transfers (CCTs) are utilized with two main objectives: to provide poor households with a minimum threshold of income (reduce poverty in the very short run) and to improve the accumulation of human capital for the next generation (reduce poverty in the longer run). There is a large body of evidence supporting the success of CCTs throughout most of the developing world, particularly in relationship to schooling. Virtually every country in

Latin America has such a programme. Elsewhere, there are large-scale programs in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Turkey, and pilot programs in Cambodia, Malawi, Morocco, Pakistan, Egypt and South Africa, among others.

The Brooks World Poverty Institute at the University of Manchester has developed a database of social protection interventions in developing countries. They organise interventions using the following typology: pure income transfers; transfers plus interventions and integrated poverty reduction programmes which ‘not only combine a wider range of interventions than conditional cash transfer programmes but also have the distinctive feature that the income transfer is not the dominant component of the programme’. In the wake of recent successive crises, (food security, fuel, financial and economic), governments, donors, UN agencies, civil society and academics have begun refocusing their attention on social protection schemes. In some regions these schemes are being rethought as part of a larger set of interventions, short, medium and long term, that aim to cushion individuals in times of crisis and provide possibilities for a longer term move out of chronic poverty with a focus on empowerment and equity.

1.3 Social protection and child protection

The CRC refers to the conditions of material, social, economic, civil and political deprivation underlying poverty in a number of different Articles including: the right to non-discrimination, life, survival and development, social security, an adequate standard of living, education, family relations and parental guidance, birth registration, protection and participation. Addressing child poverty therefore requires a focus not just on raising family incomes or on improving access to health and education services but also on the broader components of child poverty envisaged in the CRC: equity, discrimination, participation and protection.

Evidence suggests there is a range of complex and inter-linked factors contributing to child protection violations including poverty, lack of access to quality education, rural–urban migration, displacement due to armed conflict or natural disaster, trafficking, child labour, harmful traditional practices such as early marriage, gender-based violence and discrimination due to gender, political, ethnic or religious background.

The UN Study on Violence against Children emphasises that “vulnerability of children to violence is linked to their age and evolving capacity. Some children, because of gender, race, ethnic origin, disability or social status, are particularly vulnerable .... It goes on to list groups of children considered as particularly vulnerable: “...children with disabilities, orphaned children... indigenous children, children from

ethnic minorities and other marginalised groups, children living or working on the streets, children in institutions and detention, children living in communities in which inequality, unemployment and poverty are highly concentrated, child refugees and other displaced children. Gender also plays a key role, as girls and boys are at different risk for different kinds of violence. Global issues also play a part, including increasing inequality between and within States, migration, urbanisation, and armed conflict.

The WHO report on child maltreatment finds that ‘Numerous studies show that child maltreatment is more frequent among poorer communities and households in societies with high economic inequalities. Measures to reduce poverty and economic inequalities ought thus to have significant effects in reducing child maltreatment ... although the scientific evidence has not been established.’ It is worth emphasizing that some child protection issues, such as exploitation, sexual exploitation, child trafficking and child labour have an immediate link with poverty whilst with other child protection issues, such as sexual abuse and corporal punishment, the link is not so immediate. Put simply, the risk of experiencing certain forms of violence, exploitation and abuse increases for children and adolescents who are poor.

Integrated poverty reduction programmes are based on an understanding of poverty as a multi-dimensional phenomenon and often seek to address issues of social exclusion and discrimination. Although the CRC does not contain an explicit right to freedom from poverty, if child poverty is defined as being a multidimensional phenomenon then all of the rights contained in the CRC would be relevant to a greater or lesser extent in any response to child poverty. Unless poverty eradication programmes, including social protection mechanisms, address all of these elements then they can only be partially effective.

32. WHO defines ‘child maltreatment’ as ‘the physical and emotional mistreatment, sexual abuse, neglect and negligent treatment of children, as well as to their commercial or other exploitation.’ Preventing Child Maltreatment, a Guide to taking action and generating evidence, WHO p. 16
2. The impact of social protection on child protection

2.1 Overview

There is a sound evidence base confirming that social protection initiatives such as conditional and unconditional cash transfer schemes as well as integrated poverty reduction programmes can have a positive effect on children’s lives whether they are explicitly child focussed or not. Much of the current large-scale, longitudinal evidence of cash transfers benefits for children comes from Latin America and may or may not be readily transferrable in other contexts such as Africa. However, new research is being compiled regularly, including an ongoing evaluation by Save the Children and UNICEF of a number of Africa-based social transfers in Malawi, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Mozambique.

This section considers the available evidence and what is says with respect to the impact of social protection programmes on the root causes of child protection issues as well as on some specific child protection issues. It examines the way in which social protection mechanisms can help to prevent, identify and respond to violations of children’s right to protection through encouraging parents and carers to register their children, through encouraging school attendance, through reducing child labour, sexual and other exploitation and early marriage, through reducing household economic vulnerability and discrimination and marginalisation and through supporting parents and children with for example access to child-care.

2.2 Limitations

There are a number of difficulties in drawing definitive conclusions regarding the impact of social protection interventions on child protection. Social protection programmes are implemented in a variety of distinct social, economic, political and cultural contexts, each of which involves different child protection issues so it is impossible to provide a “one-size-fits-all” analysis. Furthermore, the impacts of social protection programmes vary widely according to their objectives, their design and their level of implementation.

As we have noted, evaluations rarely consider child protection explicitly. It is not clear whether the lack of information regarding child protection in the literature is because the relevant data is not available (i.e. was not collected) or rather that it is available but not considered important given the objectives of the evaluations.

Finally, the long-term effects of social protection programmes in addressing poverty are not yet fully understood since they have been in existence for less than twenty years. It remains to be seen whether proven increased educational attendance and performance and improved health will be able to be translated into increased opportunities for moving out of poverty in the longer-term.

2.3 How social protection measures can help reduce the risk of violence, exploitation and abuse

‘If you get home and you find food and you eat you become energetic again and help. Then there is no fighting with granny. You are happy to get water because she got food for you.’

Grandchild of pensioner, interviewed as part of evaluation of the impact of pensions on the lives of older people and grandchildren in the Kwa Wazee project in Tanzania’s Kagera region.

Reduced economic vulnerability

The evidence shows that cash transfers – which provide support for food purchases, transportation, education, health care, and other expenses – can have positive impacts on reducing children’s poverty. This is the case whether the transfers are targeted directly at children or indirectly affect them by raising household income. Together with an increase in the minimum wage, Brazil identifies the expansion of its cash transfer programme, “Bolsa Família”, as the reason for its having met MDG target 1 (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger) ahead of schedule. An increase in family income can also have an impact – either positive or negative – on the risk that families will have recourse to child labour to supplement household incomes.

South Africa instituted a means-tested Child Support Grant in 1998. Initially it was for children aged 0–15 although this has since been extended to 0–17 years. The objectives of this grant are to reduce poverty and vulnerability among children. In 2009, some civil society organisations in South Africa consulted with children and caregivers to ask what it means for them that the Child Support Grant stops when a child is 15 years old. Their responses do not illuminate any direct child protection outcomes, but they demonstrate quite how important the Grant is for these families and how it supports families to care for their children.

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36. ‘When the grant stops, the hope stops: the impact of the lapsing of the child support grant at age 15’ (2009) Children’s Institute, Black Sash and ACESS
When the Child Support Grant stops at 15:

- Children go hungry
- Children’s education suffers
- Families’ and children’s dignity suffers
- Grandparents have to use their pensions to care for their children
- There is an impact on younger children as less money to spend on them
- Families can’t afford to buy electricity and water
- Families can’t pay for transport to look for work, attend clinics, job interviews, schools and social services
- Families lose hope in their children escaping poverty

Source: ‘When the grant stops, the hope stops: the impact of the lapsing of the child support grant at age 15’ (2009) Children’s Institute, Black Sash and ACESS.

A review of a number of cash transfer programmes in Southern Africa (including cash for work, direct cash transfer and pension schemes) found that vulnerable children were able to benefit from cash transfers even if they were not targeted directly. Pensions are often shared among family members and so contribute to overall income. This is especially the case in Southern Africa, where the high levels of AIDS-related mortality have left huge numbers of children in the care of grandparents and non-contributory pensions for older persons in South Africa and Namibia have frequently been used by grandparents to pay their grandchildren’s school fees. In South Africa, the most common motivation for pension sharing outside the household is to help with the education costs of relatives living elsewhere.

Lesotho’s universal social pension allowed older people as well as the children living with them to increase their food consumption. The relative regularity and predictability of pension income made it possible for pensioners to purchase more expensive and nutritious food such as meat for themselves and their dependants. Pensioners in Lesotho also spent some of their pension to access health services, by paying for transport, consultation fees and medicines.

An evaluation conducted into the impact of small scale pension provision in North Western Tanzania found that: ‘children from homes receiving cash transfers scored statistically significant higher scores on a depression scale than the other group. It was also clear that more money coming into the home improved the relationship between children and grandparents because it reduced stress. Children felt more loved when their grandmother was able to meet their material needs, and conflict between the generations was reduced.’

Raising family incomes is an important focus when addressing child poverty and can contribute to providing a supportive and secure family environment thereby reducing risks of neglect, abuse, violation and exploitation. However, straight cash transfers could be criticised for failing to address the broader factors


which contribute to children’s vulnerability. As well as raising income, we also need to consider the ability of children of diverse backgrounds (age, gender, etc) to access services such as clean water and sanitation as well as education. Such access can be more dependent on local provision than on the ability to pay.

Furthermore, the use of household targeting methods can put children at a disadvantage by ignoring the fact that children and in particular, girls often receive fewer resources regardless of overall household income. They also do not reach children who live and work outside of conventional households, such as children in child-headed households, orphans, street children, children living under the care of the state, children of illegal immigrants or those without papers – this is likely to be a small number of children overall but a highly significant group in terms of their risk of experiencing violence. Raising household income may serve to reduce the stressors contributing to the risk of violence and abuse against children, however, this abuse can still be present but overlooked and hidden. What is required is a system that works to prevent violence but that is also robust enough to identify and address it.

**Increased access to education**

School attendance can have a protective effect for children – it has been described as a ‘vaccine’ against violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. There are many examples of social protection programmes that directly target improvements in the school enrolment of children of beneficiary households by imposing conditionalities related to school attendance and performance rates. Straight cash transfers also enable families to absorb the costs associated with schooling such as uniforms, books and exam fees.

An evaluation of the provision of pension plus child benefit to older people in Tanzania found that the added household income helped children’s education in many and varied ways: ‘there was evidence that children in households with pensions have clearly improved education chances: They are better nourished, they are healthier and they are cleaner. They are less likely to get stigmatized in school for smelling bad, for not having a proper school uniform or shoes, or for not having school material like pens or exercise books. Their opportunities for doing homework after dark are also improved.’

Other programmes, such as school feeding programmes or initiatives that provide fee waivers or subsidies for low-income families with children, also appear to be associated with higher school attendance levels. In some countries, gender discrimination has been tackled by providing girls with a stipend to encourage school attendance. The Female Secondary School Assistance Project in Bangladesh for example has been recognised as successful in raising enrolment rates.

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Increase in uptake of birth registration

Article 7 of the CRC states that: 'the child shall be registered immediately after birth.' Birth registration is an important element in any child protection system since it confers a legal identity, a name, a nationality and status as a citizen. Birth registration can be used to stop underage enrolment in military service, prevent child labour and assist in prosecuting cases of sexual exploitation of minors. It can help to prevent forced marriage of young girls before they are legally eligible. A birth certificate in many countries is also needed to access basic services, to access immunization, to enrol in school and to take public examinations, enter university, open a bank account and to access social protection benefits where they are available.42

However, UNICEF estimates that around 51 million children go unregistered every year43. The UN Study on Violence states that: 'Many Governments lack systems for consistent registration of births, leading to a lack of formal identity that can place infants and small children at risk'. Yet, very many conditional cash transfers include a condition related to obtaining identity documents such as birth registration and have had success in increasing the overall numbers of children registered.

Reduction in early marriage

Early marriage can lead to the denial of the right to education, early pregnancy and, since child wives tend to be married to older men, unequal power dynamics within the marriage and a higher incidence of domestic violence, including rape. Married adolescent girls tend to have higher rates of HIV infection than their sexually active, unmarried peers44. Both Bangladesh and India, amongst others, have social protection programmes which explicitly aim to delay the marriage of girls and increase their enrollment in secondary school.

In Bangladesh, the Female Secondary School Stipend Project was established to increase the enrollment of girls in secondary schools, thereby delaying marriage and childbearing. As married girls are excluded from the stipend, there is a clear incentive for parents to delay the marriages of girls. A 2009 review of this project found that, while causality is difficult to establish, data suggest that the stipend programme has contributed to the rise in enrollment of girls in secondary schools. Questions remain as to the impact of the stipend programme on delaying marriage, empowerment of girls and women, and enhancing employment opportunities and a thorough assessment of the impact is required. The review suggests that the programme should have focussed more on ‘the broader economic and social context, so that more opportunities would have been created for social and economic participation of girls’46.

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46. As above
There is also some evidence of a relationship between the impact of CCTs targeted at girls’ education and the risk of early marriage and risky sexual behaviour. The Zomba Cash Transfer Program (ZCTP) is a randomized ongoing conditional cash transfer intervention targeting young women in Malawi that provides incentives (in the form of school fees and cash transfers) to current schoolgirls and recent dropouts to stay in or return to school. An evaluation found that an average offer of US$10 per month conditional on satisfactory school attendance – plus direct payment of secondary school fees – led to significant declines in early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and self-reported sexual activity among programme beneficiaries after just one year of programme implementation. For programme beneficiaries who were out of school at baseline, the probability of getting married or becoming pregnant declined by more than 40% and 30%, respectively. More than a third of all programme beneficiaries also delayed their onset of sexual activity by a full year. ‘Overall, these results suggest that CCT programs not only serve as useful tools for improving school attendance, but may also reduce sexual activity, as well as teen pregnancy and early marriage.’

Decrease in child labour
A wide variety of different sorts of social protection measures can help to reduce the risk of child labour. Cash transfers can provide a buffer against shocks at the household level so that families do not need to resort to relying on children to generate household income; this can preempt children entering into child labour in the first place. Cash transfers can also help reduce the use of child labour, by undermining the economic foundations for these practices. Fee waivers for orphans and vulnerable children can increase access to education and this may affect the likelihood of children resorting to child labour. Access to early childhood care for parents and carers can reduce child labour by freeing up older children from looking after their younger siblings whilst their parents are at work. Youth employment training can result in increased income and increased access to formal employment thereby reducing the vulnerability of both young people and their households.

The ILO recently reviewed a number of CCT programmes in Latin America to determine their impact on child labour. They found that reducing child labour is not an explicit objective in the majority of current CCT programmes in Latin America but that nonetheless ‘they are an excellent means for countries to help prevent or reduce child labour.’ This report does also emphasise the importance of ‘going beyond’ simple cash transfers tied to prohibiting the beneficiary from engaging in child labour and to addressing the attitudes and beliefs which support the use of child labour at the same time. They give the example of Jornada Ampliada

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(Extended Day) within the PETI programme in Brazil (now absorbed into the Bolsa Familia) by which awareness is raised amongst families and communities about the risks of child labour for children.

The decisions and circumstances leading to children being engaged in child labour are hugely complex. The risks are framed by the household economy and its dependence on child labour, along with the size of the cash transfer on offer, parental attitudes towards education, and the quality of the schooling on offer. These are all factors affecting outcomes and a transfer itself or prohibition attached to it may not always be the key variable. There are ways in which social protection measures can take these factors into account: for example, they need to ensure that they are not just about promoting school attendance but that they also promote quality education. Also, former child labourers may have specific educational needs and require ‘catch up’ education and this should be reflected in social protection programming aimed at reducing child labour.

Children whose grandparents were beneficiaries of the Kwa Wazee project in Tanzania’s Kagera region, were asked to talk about the difference between orphan children living with a granny who got no pension and those children who lived in a house with a pension:

- They have sometimes no food, or they have only “ugali” (maize flour porridge) without any sauce or vegetables.
- Instead they use just water, and there is no salt in the ugali. They spend some days without food.
- They are beggars – they go to neighbours where they can get support.
- They have torn clothes, and only short trousers or short clothes.
- They are often dirty, because they have no soap.
- The skin is not fine, because they have no soap and no body oil.
- Those without support have no exercise books and would be beaten by the teachers.
- We get time to rest, because we have not to work like the others (e.g. to weed for money, to cut grasses to sell)
- We wear shoes at school, others not.
- They sleep better because they have clean blankets.
- Those without support have no uniform and are chased from the school.


Addressing exclusion and discrimination

Gender inequity is one of the most pervasive underlying causes of child protection violations. Particular forms of gender-based violence, such as sexual exploitation, occur disproportionately against girls. Dowry related abuse, acid throwing, and early marriage affect girls and women, as do harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation. Expectations around masculinity often force boys into violent or exploitative situations or labour settings which affect their own health and wellbeing such as the recruitment of boys into armed groups and drug gangs.

Although there are many contributing factors to the violence and exploitation in these examples, gender norms and values are important root causes and determine how violence affect girls and boys differently. Discrimination on the grounds of disability, sexual orientation, HIV status and other issues of diversity are also powerful reasons for abuse and violence against children of all ages.
A number of social protection interventions have the explicit objective of reducing discrimination experienced by marginalised groups. In India, a pilot project began in March 2008 whereby the family of a girl child (preferably the mother) is given cash provided the child is registered at birth, immunised and enrolled and retained in school and unmarried at the age of 18. The payments are staggered as an incentive to educate daughters: ‘the more subtle and intangible objective is to change the attitudinal mindset towards the girl. This will force the household to look upon the child as an asset rather than a liability since her very existence has led to income inflow to the family.’

Papua New Guinea’s draft national Child Protection strategy includes a pilot social cash transfer programme as a way to address discrimination against women and children. The aim is to reduce the dependency of poor women on the informal “wantok” system (extended family, kin and clan groups). Programme objectives include poverty reduction, mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS on affected children, women’s empowerment and reduced domestic violence.

Furthermore, some social protection interventions have influenced gender relations by paying cash transfers to women and expecting women to fulfill associated conditions such as ensuring their children attend school. This has particularly been the case in Latin America but many social cash transfer pilots in Africa have also selected women in households as the recipient of transfers.

There is clear evidence that women will tend to put funds to better use than most men. There is also evidence that receipt of CCTs increases women’s participation in household decision-making. Evidence from CCTs in Mexico and Nicaragua found that while there were some tensions arising from designating women as beneficiaries, on balance women and men alike favored giving the benefits to women, because they both believed women make better spending decisions, and because the programme became to be seen as a women’s and children’s programme, so that it was less threatening to men’s identity as the breadwinner. A study of the Child Support Grant (CSG) in South Africa, which looked at intrahousehold dynamics and the role of women as the primary caregivers and thus cash recipients, found that while there were some tensions with male partners over the CSG, for the most part it was accepted without problems. A DFID review of the evidence for the impact of cash transfers finds that ‘by addressing gender imbalances in access to education and putting cash directly in the hands of women, cash transfers can increase their bargaining power within the home and improve allocation of intrahousehold resources for human development.’

56. DFID Cash Transfers Evidence Paper April 2011
Improving health outcomes

Social protection programmes can affect children’s health in several ways. The extra household income of cash transfers can help to cover costs directly associated with accessing health care, including transportation expenses, medical fees, and the opportunity costs of time. It can also contribute to an improved diet and nutrition and information about health education may be integrated into their delivery. Similarly, food transfers have reduced malnutrition among children.

Research indicates a possible relationship between social protection and declines in child mortality; for example, by eliminating financial disincentives, cash transfer programmes directed at families with small children have demonstrably increased the number of regular medical check-ups for such children, thus reducing the risk of child mortality. Such programmes have also been effective in increasing the child immunization rates and reducing the incidence of illness.

Evidence also shows the positive impacts of social protection for people living with HIV/AIDS and their families. For example, the RESPECT Project, a pilot cash-transfer programme in the United Republic of Tanzania, uses cash as an incentive to reduce risky sexual activity among young people, male and female, who are at high risk for HIV infection and to provide counselling and periodic screening for sexually transmitted infections. The final outcomes of this approach have yet to be seen.
3. Can social protection measures do more to protect children?

“We are going to go where [the indigent] live. We want not only to provide subsidies, we want their children to study, to have health assistance, and we want to include them into social networks and into the society in its entirety. We are going to build a bridge between them and their rights, so that they can exercise them to defeat their conditions of extreme poverty”.

Ricardo Lagos, President of the Republic of Chile. Presidential address, May 2002

3.1 Transfers, access to services and transformation

To maximise the potential for social protection measures to protect children, programmes could include a ‘transformative’ element such as measures to modify or regulate behaviour towards children by redressing power inequalities that heighten children’s risk of violence or measures that strengthen children’s capacity to protect themselves. However, in many cases, transfers, services and transformative components are not linked. This represents a missed opportunity in relation to child protection particularly in terms of preventing, identifying and responding to cases of abuse and exploitation.

There are a number of ways to arrange the provision of complementary services focussed on child protection. Such activities could include: support for family and carers in parenting; linking schools to child protection services; supporting children themselves in responding to violence and abuse; using the structures of social protection mechanisms as contact points to identify and respond to children at risk; and linking up with community-based child protection agencies. Important considerations are who should be targeted as beneficiaries of such services and how such services could be linked to existing social protection programmes and structures.

3.2 Supporting parents and carers

There is great potential for social protection mechanisms to teach positive parenting skills. The WHO finds that ‘[t]he evidence that programmes focusing on parenting improvement and support are effective in preventing child maltreatment is strong. The two most widely evaluated and widely applied models for delivering these strategies are home visitation programmes and training in parenting.’

Many social protection mechanisms already include home visitation and training for parents in relation to issues such as health and nutrition. In Egypt, for example, a pilot project was launched in 2009 to provide cash transfers to female heads of households in exchange for their attendance at gender, health and life-skills workshops, registering of children at birth, immunisation of children, attendance at school and regular monthly visits from social workers to their homes. Beneficiaries are provided with a calendar to ensure they meet their conditions which includes 12 messages relating to health and nutrition but also encourages parents to treat girls and boys equally and raises awareness about the dangers of child labour. These messages are also the main subject for discussion during the monthly social worker visit.

Kenya’s cash transfer programme for orphans and vulnerable children includes a component whereby approximately every four months, a volunteer visits the beneficiary households. These volunteers are from the community and trained to orient the family on issues related to compliance with conditions, collection of benefits, and any other problems they may have. The visit also serves the purpose of identifying potential problems affecting a given household that may require specialized assistance. The Kenya scheme also provides families with lectures on child and maternal health and nutrition and prevention and treatment of chronic illness for beneficiaries.

Malawi’s Dowa Emergency Cash Transfer (DECT) programme included a well-developed system of sensitization messages relating to women’s empowerment and the importance of education. These were delivered on paydays whilst beneficiaries were waiting for their turn to collect the cash payment. The DECT programme disseminated messages using teachers and facilitators, as well as local music and drama groups that shared messages via songs and plays. In general, beneficiary impressions of the sensitization campaign were largely positive. The use of local musicians and actors, as well as the dancing that often accompanied the music, mitigated the boredom of waiting in line for the cash transfer. And beneficiaries often found the teachers and facilitators to be effective and funny.

There is potential for these strategies to include child protection components. For example:

- visits by social workers/para social workers/community volunteers to parents and children in their homes to provide support, education, and information relating to positive parenting;
- parent education, usually delivered in groups, to improve child-rearing skills, increase knowledge of child development, and encourage positive child management strategies.

### 3.3 Linking schools to child protection services

As well as encouraging and motivating children to attend school, social protection measures can give children exposure and access to school-based child protection services and referrals (provided that these exist). In South Africa the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and the NGO Media in Education (MiET)

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has recently piloted a programme based on MiET’s concept of “Schools as Centres of Care and Support.” This includes a package of training for school management, staff, and support teams, to identify vulnerable children, refer them to support agencies, and assist them in gaining access to resources such as food, grants, and psycho-social support. Schools can also be centres for interventions which support families such as after school care and support programmes. There are of course significant challenges inherent in the idea of shouldering schools with an enhanced child protection role including lack of finances, lack of supporting structures for referral, lack of capacity and lack of political will.

Furthermore, it is not a given that schools are safe places for children where they will be free from violence, physical and sexual abuse, and physical and humiliating punishments. When planning social protection interventions which are likely to increase the overall numbers of children attending school, it is vital that child protection concerns within schools are also considered. In Côte d’Ivoire for example, child protection in schools is strengthened by having Codes of Conduct for teachers forbidding sexual abuse and physical and humiliating punishment. School Management Committees and teachers have also been given explicit training on how to identify and respond to child protection concerns59.

3.4 Supporting children in responding to violence and abuse

There is considerable evidence that children play an active role in shaping their own development and the environment in which they live and can bring their own insights, experience and creativity to bear to respond to violence, neglect, abuse and exploitation. When given the appropriate opportunities to engage in their own protection, children will often learn important life and pro-social skills which in turn enhance their resilience and development. Children themselves must participate as important actors in their own protection and all interventions in their lives need to be in part accountable to them. There is scope for integrated social protection interventions to include components which reinforce children’s healthy sense of belonging, connectedness and positive trusting relations with key adults and peers. Children should also be consulted and involved in the development of social protection schemes.

In Tanzania for example, a Psychosocial Support Programme for grandparents and grandchildren was established in 2005 as part of the KwaWazee pension provision programme. Twice per month grannies and grandchildren meet separately to discuss issues such as daily life, health issues and specific stress factors emanating from the fact that older people have been forced to accept new roles of principal caretakers for children who have lost their parents. These regular meetings are voluntary and not a condition of receipt of the pension. However, they are closely linked to the pension programme and help to improve the relationship among children and their grannies.

59. Rewrite the Future – Côte d’Ivoire Report to Sida, Save the Children Sweden (2009)
3.5 Establishing contact points with children at risk

Many social protection measures create potential contact points where children at risk can be identified and responded to; for example, at initial eligibility assessments; via conditions such as attendance at school or visits to health clinics; by house visits from health or social workers as part of the contract. Sherr et al. suggest that at the contact moment or venue, it is possible to explore the placement of professionals or paraprofessionals with a specific remit to assist in identifying and responding to child protection issues. Alternatively, countries that have no infrastructure for social welfare or who lack social service practitioners may still utilize contact opportunities by including elements of child protection provision into the training of social protection programme staff. This would create a body of skilled people coming into contact with children at various points in the process who were able to identify and respond to child protection concerns. However, Sherr and Mueller also make the crucial point that it may not in fact be of benefit for children to see a social worker or lawyer and that we need to consider the possibility of there being negative outcomes to such referrals such as stigmatisation.

Chile Solidario is often held up as the best example of an integrated national social protection system and has been particularly successful at inter-governmental cooperation and in linking beneficiaries with social services. It began in 2002 and understands extreme poverty as a multidimensional problem that relates not only to lack of income but also to the scarcity of human and social capital and to families’ vulnerability to common events, such as sickness, accidents and unemployment. The scheme has seven dimensions or pillars: identification, health, education, family dynamic, housing conditions, work and income. The seven dimensions are broken down into 53 minimum conditions for quality of life, and the family is considered to have overcome the state of extreme poverty when it can achieve all of them.

It requires participating families to sign a contract to meet the 53 specified minimum conditions seen as necessary to overcome extreme poverty. In exchange, they receive from the State: psychosocial support, protection bonds, guaranteed cash subsidies, and preferential access to skill development, work and social security programmes. The cash transfer itself is primarily intended to motivate beneficiaries to make use of social worker’s help and services. For the first two years, beneficiary families are enrolled in the Programa Puente and receive help from a social worker and decreasing amounts of money. After leaving Programa Puente, beneficiaries receive a bonus and are eligible for more subsidies from the State and preferential access to social assistance programmes. Chile Solidario includes skills development, work assistance, social security, services for vulnerable children and families such as school loans, programmes for at-risk children and domestic violence survivors, and family support visits by social workers, who play a key role in linking participants to services.

61. As above
From a child protection perspective, where social protection programmes link effectively to social services it is likely that there will be more awareness and use of these services. A crucial component of Chile Solidario is the provision of psychosocial support which consists of periodic personal visits by a professional or technical staff to each home. The basic role of the visitor, known as “family support”, is to form a link between the families and the public and private networks for social skills development. The visits last for 24 months, and act to stimulate and empower the family as a nucleus. It also allows social workers to come into contact with children who are potentially vulnerable to violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation and potentially to address their situation.

### 3.6 Linking community structures for child protection with social protection

Strengthening the capacity of the local community to protect its children is always a crucial part of child protection systems building and it is increasingly clear that the mobilization of community structures which protect children can complement government initiatives. In various countries, close working relationships have been established between national or local government and community groups for the protection of children. In some places – where government is either too weak to assist or where it constitutes one of the main threats to children (as in some cases of armed conflict) – local structures may be the only ones available for the protection of children, but in normal cases a cooperative combination of governmental and local assets is possible and to be preferred.

There is scope for community-based child protection groups to link with social protection programming so that such groups can refer those they are working with to any social protection scheme and can also be a watchdog for specific child protection violations that may require deliberate intervention. In the Malawi cash transfer pilot for example, it is Community Social Protection Committee members and Child Protection workers together with the extension workers and representatives from the overseeing District Assembly who monitor the use of an element of the transfer designed to encourage school attendance.

UNICEF defines the roles of the community in this Pilot in the following terms: ‘the CBOs play a great role in following up on particularly vulnerable cases identified through the cash transfer scheme and assure, together with extension workers and child protection workers, that the social cash transfer scheme is being linked and integrated with other social services like health and education as well as being complemented by Home Based Care, Early Childhood Development and Psychosocial Support. Cash transfers can tackle the root causes of poverty at the household level but children need an integrated package of care, support and protection and CBOs are key in helping to complement the cash with HBC, PSS, HIV prevention, protection from abuse, malaria prevention and building of life- and livelihood skills’.

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64. See ‘First Line of Protection: Community-based approaches to promote children’s rights in Africa’ Save the Children Sweden (2009)
65. These are defined as: a group of local people, sometimes volunteers, that aims to ensure the protection and wellbeing of children in a village, urban neighbourhood or other community.
4. Challenges in integrating child protection and social protection interventions

4.1 Political viability

A crucial question to ask is, is it politically viable for social protection programmes to include child protection components? The primary objectives of a social protection programme will depend on local conditions and need but also the political priorities (of governments and donors) who will be asking ‘who is it acceptable to give ‘hand outs to?’ Violence against children by adults within the family is one of the least visible forms of child maltreatment, as much of it takes place in the privacy of domestic life, but it is nonetheless widely prevalent in all societies. The WHO considers that there is significant reluctance on the part of the state to enter into the domestic sphere in order to protect children and this may be reflected in a lack of political will to include child protection services as a part of social protection measures: ‘The traditional “privacy barrier” between the domestic and public spheres has inhibited the evolution of policies and legal instruments to prevent violence within the family and provide services for those affected by it. The absence of accurate and comprehensive data is one of the clear indications of the presence of this veil, hampering the development and evaluation of successful strategies to address this serious problem.’

4.2 Short-term funding

Social protection programmes require resources, administrative capacity and political will. With any social protection programme it is crucial to ask, how much will it cost? Is this affordable? Who will pay for it? A significant barrier in many countries is the lack of a tax base and in many low-income countries the majority of social protection programmes are financed with the support of donors. Establishing effective child protection systems is a slow and long-term enterprise and social protection programmes with an explicit focus on child protection need to have long time windows for piloting, design and implementation in order to have an impact on children. Many donors have short time windows (Zambia’s pilot cash transfer scheme for example has a four year window). This may prove to be a limiting factor and in the long run, the sustainability of these programmes needs to rely on governmental funding.

4.3 Lack of governmental coordination

Building and strengthening rights-based national child protection systems can lead to holistic, inclusive, sustainable and well-coordinated ways of protecting all children in all settings. As a way of attaining this, it is very important to ensure that child protection is integrated across all relevant ministries, departments and local government bodies including of course those responsible for social protection. This requires institutionalised mechanisms for harmonisation and coordination. There is a real need to strengthen relationships within government between those concerned with child protection and those with social protection.

4.4 Weakness of ministries

The UN Violence against Children study highlighted the costs of violence against children. Some more recent studies have highlighted the long-term costs of violence against children on the economy as a whole; for example, the estimated annual cost of child abuse in the US alone came to US$103.8 billion in 2007 terms\(^6\). Yet budget allocations to children’s protection services remain woefully inadequate and remain with under-resourced social development or women’s and children’s ministries with limited power and influence who may not be in a strong position to advocate for integrated child protection mechanisms within social protection programmes. In countries where departments for social welfare are also charged with responsibility for child protection (such as Zambia), there is a risk that the oversight of a major social protection programme may take resources away from other critical child protection services and roles.

4.5 Social protection programmes which create an increased demand for child protection services need to be able to meet this demand

One issue of concern is that many social protection programmes were developed in, and have been most successful in, middle income countries that have some institutional and administrative capacity to manage them but it is not clear if these results can be replicated in poorer countries. Social protection programmes with conditions such as immunisation or attendance at school have been seen to exacerbate already stretched systems and there is a risk of a break down of the whole system, at worst\(^9\). For example, in 2010, Young Lives evaluated the impact of social protection programmes on children in Peru\(^7\) where cash transfers have resulted in more children attending school and have improved the attendance and performance of teachers. However, increased demand for school has not been matched by increased investment.

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One argument against integrating child protection concerns is that such conditionality is inappropriate in circumstances where the social services on offer are of such limited capacity and poor quality as to make imposing conditions to attend them quite infeasible and irrelevant. Unless there is a parallel push for investment in public services, then social protection programmes which incorporate child protection concerns will simply not be effective. Women and girls, for example, may be prevented from meeting conditionality such as routine appointments with social workers imposed by a programme if social services are far away and transportation costs are too high, or if they fear being sexually assaulted while making the trip required.

4.6 Fear of over-complication

Child protection and social protection are complex, involved areas and governments are not necessarily comfortable working at the intersections of these disciplines. Conditional social protection interventions can be very cumbersome and difficult to administrate particularly in resource-poor contexts. They require:

- A means to establish eligibility and enrollment into the programme
- A mechanism to pay benefits
- If required a means of monitoring compliance with conditions
- Coordination amongst institutions concerned

There may be a reluctance to over-burden already cumbersome social protection mechanisms with more elements particularly in resource-poor countries without robust social welfare networks which are straightforward to link in with.

4.7 Getting the gender balance right

Gender has been a major factor in social protection interventions as exemplified by the payment of CCTs in Latin America to women in families with young children and there is clear evidence that women will tend to put funds to better use than most men. However, Molyneaux argues that this approach can marginalise men from child care obligations and reinforce damaging gender stereotyping within families. ‘If child welfare is understood to be enhanced by fathers’ involvement in caring, these maternalist models of care are unlikely to be seen as working in ‘the best interest of the child... fathers in particular should cease to be treated as marginal figures or hopeless cases’. Instead men and boys should be integrated into the work of social protection programmes so that violence against women and children within the domestic unit is addressed properly.

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4.8 Who to target and how to reach them?

Social protection interventions can be universal or targeted. In the case of categorical transfers (e.g. social pensions or child support benefits), the targeting criteria are kept as simple as possible – the minimum needed to define the category (e.g. age thresholds or age ranges). Children who are victims of violence or abuse do not comprise a homogenous category; they vary with respect to wealth or poverty, education, household structure, social status, and access to assets. With more precise targeting, such as ‘children most at risk of violence’ the criteria can become increasingly complex.

Little is known about the true accuracy of precision targeting and important institutional considerations arise including the effectiveness (and social impacts) of community participation in compiling beneficiary lists. Targeted social protection interventions can be fragmented, incomplete and result in stigmatisation. Receipt of social protection risks labeling client children and their families as different from and lesser than others, with the consequent risk of stigmatizing and excluding them socially. There is a significant risk of further stigmatization if child protection becomes a prominent part of social protection programmes.

4.9 Risk of perverse consequences

It is possible that certain social protection interventions have a perverse effect and in fact serve to increase children’s risk of violence and exploitation rather than to decrease it; for example, India’s National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) is an ambitious public work schemes which provides a minimum of 100 days of ensured employment to every household in all districts in the rural areas. There is some evidence that NREGS has encouraged child labour and the lack of childcare provision for participants has resulted in inadequate care for children who stay at home or are forced to work alongside their care takers. In South Africa, payments to foster or extended family carers mean that children are in better resourced households if parents give them up to other forms of care.


74. Save the Children Finland (2009) Feasibility Study on Child-Focussed Social Protection in South Asia

5. Recommendations for strengthening child protection within social protection programming

Social protection must be regarded as one element in a broad strategy aimed at ensuring the protection of children. As such it should be developed in coordination with other policies addressing the various factors causing or perpetuating harm to children. The main challenge is to shift the terms of the debate so that child protection is not seen as a complementary ‘add-on’ to social protection but rather as an integral component which can help social protection have optimum impact.

The following are some recommendations for how INGOs, NGOs and other relevant agencies can move the research, policy and advocacy agenda forward in relation to further integration between child protection and social protection.

Research and policy

Care must be taken not to assume that social protection can strengthen child protection in all settings or to extrapolate this from the literature. In short, we do not yet have the evidence available to clearly identify the features of successful pathways to integrating social protection and child protection. The following are some areas of research of suggested interest.76

- **Strengthen the evidence base**

There is a real need to strengthen the evidence base on the relationship between child protection and social protection in order to support future advocacy and inform programme planning. This should focus on impact as well as any benefits for institutional coordination and should consider whether there is robust evidence that an integrated approach to social protection from the perspective of child protection is optimal in all settings. It should consider which combination of interventions can address child protection most effectively in which contexts e.g. cash transfer with condition of access to education, birth registration, immunisation, regular meetings with social workers etc. It should consider how social protection programmes can maximise their impact on child protection even when it is not an explicit entry point? Also the implications of social programming and child protection in emergency and post-emergency contexts need to be considered.

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76. Many of these ideas are sourced from: Greenberg, Aaron and Sherr, Lorraine (2009) ’Social welfare and cash transfer meeting, Carmona, Spain’, Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies, 4: 1, 6–9
• **Share experience within different contexts**

Explore how lessons on integrated poverty reduction programmes from developed and middle-income countries can inform progress in low income countries taking into account difficulties in implementation such as lack of resources, lack of capacity, lack of confidentiality mechanisms etc. It is really important not to infer that programmes such as Chile Solidario are possible in other regions. One possibility is to look at implementation in lower income countries in Latin America such as Nicaragua or Honduras which may be more comparable with conditions in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa. Another possibility is to be selective about which components are able to be transferred and the role that community-based groups can realistically play.

• **Build consensus and political will around social protection and child protection**

Social protection programming can be highly politicised. It could be very useful to research how to build consensus within communities and the public at large regarding the importance of social protection and child protection systems; for example, find media friendly stories demonstrating the positive impact of linking the two.

• **Research into different modes of delivering social protection**

Further exploration of the question of universal social protection versus targeting is needed and examination of which method is optimal for strengthening children’s right to protection.

• **Examine how to reach children who are not in conventional households**

Of particular importance is to consider ways and means by which social protection can ‘reach’ children who are not living in conventional households (for example, children on the move, child-headed households, children without appropriate care who are living in institutions).

• **Examine the role of community-based child protection mechanisms**

The role, positive and negative, of community-based involvement in child protection and means by which this can be integrated into social protection; for example, is there any evidence that social protection interventions could ‘crowd out’ community based protection to the detriment of children’s best interests?

• **Develop indicators**

It is important to develop a set of core child protection indicators which could be included and integrated into existing social protection monitoring and evaluations. These might include birth registration coverage for boys and girls, access to auxiliary social workers (with minimum quality standards at community level) and an indicator that could track the confidential identification and referral of child protection violations picked up during contact points.

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77. It is worth remembering that in some countries up to 20% of GDP is expended on social welfare (Sweden, UK and Germany), while the poorest nations (Ethiopia, Kenya, and Mauritania) direct less than 1% of GDP to social welfare: Strengthening national responses to children affected by HIV/AIDS: What is the role of the state and social welfare in Africa? p 5 [http://www.childresearchpolicy.org/images/wilton_park_report_wps05-30.pdf](http://www.childresearchpolicy.org/images/wilton_park_report_wps05-30.pdf)
Advocacy and programming

- **Mapping at country level**
  At a country level there is a need for detailed mapping of the intricacies of existing social protection interventions prior to consideration of how child protection could be strengthened as part of them. This requires a mapping of all social protection schemes of relevance to children and consideration of the extent to which they are part of a comprehensive country strategy on social protection and the gaps where child protection is not being sufficiently addressed.

- **Assessment of political context**
  Political will is required to ensure the adoption of child-protection focussed social protection and the political context for social protection as well as for child protection needs to be investigated at country level. This will help to develop a clear picture of how dynamic political and institutional circumstances can affect the prospects for social protection initiatives with child protection components being adopted and succeeding in specific contexts. How are decisions made and policy processes played out? How are alternatives weighed up? What role do factors other than perceived affordability play? How can social protection schemes survive change in political (and economic) circumstances? How can financing be sustainable? At a local level, how will informal politics affect implementation?

  As entry-points agencies should consider influencing the development and implementation of social protection strategies and at country level consider if National Plans of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children and/or Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers could be useful vehicles for promoting child protection in social protection programmes. Evidence is crucial here (see section on Research above) to support an argument that social protection can have a positive impact on children’s lives. For example in Bangladesh the Ultra Poor Programme was adopted following from an assessment of the limited success of existing interventions in reaching the very poorest. Local partners also need to be supported to engage in policy development and planning of social protection at a national level so that child protection can be pushed up the agenda.

- **Building bridges between two disciplines**
  Efforts should be made to act as a bridge between the networks of international organizations and research institutes who are engaged in social protection and those engaged in child protection.

- **Strengthening duty bearers’ understanding**
  There is a need to demystify the concept of child protection so that civil society, donors and government have a better understanding of the benefits of building and strengthening a rights-based national child protection system which leads to holistic, inclusive, sustainable and well-coordinated ways of protecting all children in all settings. This needs to be done in parallel with influencing stakeholders to develop a model of social protection that fully integrates child protection.

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78. Introducing basic social protection in low-income countries (2007) Barrientos
79. See ‘Building rights-based national child protection systems – A concept paper to support Save the Children’s work’ produced by the Save the Children’s Child Protection Initiative.
concerns into policies and programmes by including access to transfers, services and transformative components.

- **Strengthening children’s engagement with social protection interventions**

  There is no evidence of children’s participation in the design of social protection schemes. There are very few examples where children have been asked about the impact of any cash transfer or other social protection scheme. There is a need to ensure that social protection measures aiming at strengthening child protection are informed by children’s perspectives and experiences (and those of their parents/care givers as well).

- **Linking community-based groups with social protection provision**

  Community-based groups may play a very important role as the first line of protection for children at risk of or victims of violence and abuse in developing local preventive and remedial activities. Community-based child protection committees with volunteers who work to identify and refer cases of violence and abuse against children in their neighbourhood could be supported alongside appropriate systems that link existing child protection community-based groups to social protection programming so that such groups can refer those they are working with to any social protection scheme and can also be a watchdog for specific child protection violations that may require deliberate intervention.

- **Resource allocation**

  The process of how states allocate resources is critical, not least as a means of determining the political priority afforded to strengthening child protection. Without knowledge of how much is being invested, both in financial and human terms, it is difficult to track progress or ensure accountability for reducing violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Budget tracking work should be undertaken so that there is more clarity about whether states are allocating maximum available resources to both social protection and child protection. This budget work should emphasise the efficiencies of savings possible in combining social and child protection.

- **Coordination of government structures**

  The various governmental agencies engaged in social protection and child protection should be assisted to define the terms of their cooperation with each other and supported in the initial stages of this cooperation.

- **Emphasis on evaluation**

  Social protection programmes which include child protection components must generate evidence to show exactly what works. The risk otherwise is of a number of pilot programmes being developed that have little hope of going to scale owing to inadequate evidence.

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80. See note above
6. References

General


The Brooks World Poverty Institute at the University of Manchester database of social protection interventions in developing countries
http://www.bwpi.manchester.ac.uk/resources/social-assistance-database-version-5.pdf

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IDS (2010) Social Protection in Africa where next?

Case studies


Save the Children

Feasibility Study on Child Focused Social Protection in South Asia, Save the Children Finland, South Asia Regional Office


Building rights-based national child protection systems – A concept paper to support Save the Children’s work produced by the Save the Children’s Child Protection Initiative (2010)

Intergovernmental

The UN Social Protection Floor Initiative
African Union Social Policy Framework


UN Study on Violence against Children (2006)
