

CHILD SENSITIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION

Addressing Child Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa



Save the Children

Save the Children is the world's leading independent organization for children. We work in around 120 countries. We save children's lives, we fight for their rights; we help them fulfil their potential.

The Africa Platform for Social Protection (APSP) is a network of organizations operating at grassroots, national and regional level with a commitment to promoting and strengthening the social contract between states and citizens. To achieve this, the APSP promotes active engagement of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the shaping of Social Protection policies, programmes, and practices in Africa.



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Preface

Children from poor households are more likely to receive poor healthcare, inadequate nutrition, achieve lower educational attainment and consequently not achieve their full potential. They are likely to grow up into poor adults and continue the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

Social protection policies are an essential element of realizing child rights and breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Policies designed and implemented with children in mind can significantly increase positive outcomes for them, including: educational attainment, health care access, adequate nutrition and reduce the risk of abuse, exploitation and neglect.

Save the Children and the Africa Platform for Social Protection believe that child sensitive social protection as a concept can reduce the vulnerability and poverty among children by ensuring that social protection measures lead to meaningful investment in children.

This publication is a joint effort to build a common understanding on what Child Sensitive Social Protection (CSSP) is and why is it needed. We hope to inspire civil society and governments working on social protection to see children and child poverty differently. However, the key lies in understanding the principles of CSSP and the modalities of implementing social protection policies and programs.

As part of the CSSP framework for the region, this publication will feed into an operational toolkit that will guide on the process of analyzing child deprivation in a particular country or regional contexts; interrogate existing social protection policies and programs; and offer options for engagement with the view of enhancing CSSP outcomes.

Sincerely



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Child Sensitive Social Protection is an initiative that Save the Children and The Africa Platform for Social Protection (APSP) want to advance in Sub Saharan Africa with the aim to reduce vulnerability and poverty among children by ensuring that social protection measures lead to meaningful investment in children. This paper is an effort to build a common understanding on what is Child Sensitive Social Protection (CSSP) and why is it needed.







I. Why focus on children and social protection in Sub Saharan Africa?

Africa is home to 465,124,000¹ children under 18 years and has among the worst child development indicators. Nearly 21 % of children in Sub-Saharan Africa are underweight, 37% are stunting and 9% are wasting². 1 in 9 children dies before the age of five in Sub-Saharan Africa compared to the average 1 in 152 children in developed countries³. The region, from 2009 to 2013 was home to more than 32,711,000 of the world's children who lack a basic education⁴. Progress towards closing the gender gap in education has been slow. Child labour is still rampant. Recent estimates suggest that at least 38,736,000 children (between the ages of 5 to 17) in Africa are engaged in hazardous labour⁵ about 15.1% of the total population.

Child poverty and vulnerability are multi-dimensional and closely entwined with how resources and labour are organised within the household. Households that remain in a constant state of chronic poverty or slide into poverty due to various stresses and shocks often resort to coping mechanisms that may have an adverse impact on children; such as depriving them

of adequate nutrition, health care, education, protection and sometimes even life. Moreover, a large proportion of children may be pushed into hazardous labour and other forms of exploitation and abuse. Children are particularly vulnerable due to their age and dependency on adults. It is widely accepted that shocks and stresses during childhood can have detrimental consequences throughout life – negatively affecting children's capacities and opportunities.

There is a growing consensus that development prospects of very poor and vulnerable children, especially in Sub Saharan Africa, can only improve when programs focus more rigorously on protecting children from circumstances that render them deprived of essential childhood development opportunities. There is compelling evidence around the world that investments in social protection can bring positive impacts for children, for example in promoting safe delivery, improving health seeking behaviour and child health, improving child growth monitoring and lowering rates of stunting, increasing school attendance, and reducing child labour.⁶



Impact of Social Protection on children's wellbeing: The South African Approach

South Africa has introduced a comprehensive social protection system, including a Child Support Grant, Disability Grant, Old Age Grant and an Expanded Public Works Programme, that addresses risks and vulnerabilities at different phases of the life-cycle. These programmes reach a quarter of all South Africans. The Child Support Grant is a key child-focused programme, which has been progressively expanded coverage since its introduction to include more vulnerable children. The programme has had wide-ranging positive impacts on food security and nutrition, education, health, livelihoods and employment. Other programmes have also demonstrated impacts on a range of child outcomes; for example the Old Age Grant has had positive impacts on nutrition and education, especially where the recipient was female.

2. What is Social Protection? **(a definition by Save the Children)**

Social protection is defined as:

A set of public policies, programmes and systems that help poor and vulnerable individuals and households to;

- reduce their economic and social vulnerabilities,
- improve their ability to cope with risks and shocks and;
- enhance their human rights and social status.



Social protection is increasingly recognised as an effective tool to address poverty, promote equality, equity and social justice while enhancing resilience, especially of the most deprived and vulnerable populations in the face of social, economic and environmental risks. Social protection is often seen to operate through four interactive dimensions combining preventive, protective and promotive elements with transformational change. Across the full spectrum of contexts, social protection can:

- **Protect** poor and marginalised households from shocks, thereby contributing to relief from poverty and deprivations
- **Prevent** deprivations or worsening of deprivations and support shock management
- **Promote** economic opportunities and human capital development
- **Transform** power imbalances in society that create, and sustain vulnerabilities

Broadly social protection can be categorised as:

- **Social assistance**, including non-contributory cash transfers (conditional and unconditional), in-kind transfers or a combination (examples are pensions, school feeding programs, public works programs, etc.)
- **Social insurance**, such as unemployment benefits, health insurance.
- **Relevant national legislation, policies and regulations**, such as maternity policy.

In addition, **traditional or informal social protection** are mechanisms designed for members of society often provided through family and community networks. Formal social protection should be carefully managed to enhance, rather than disrupt, existing informal systems⁷.

Social Protection also provides a means of coping with key life cycle risks and vulnerabilities and can play a vital role in strengthening access to and demand for quality basic services, thus increasing the effectiveness of investments in health, education, and water and sanitation as part of an essential package of services for citizens. It is also being viewed as a key investment in human capital and in breaking inter-generational poverty traps, results that are more likely when children's interests are taken into consideration from the outset.



Examples of social protection instruments to address the needs and vulnerabilities of people across the life cycle

Life cycle stage	Social protection instrument	Envisaged Outcomes
Pregnancy, Early Childhood	Maternity grants; child grants;	Reduce infant mortality, Reduce mortality of mothers during child birth
School Age	Child grants; education stipends; family allowances; school feeding programmes; disability grants	Increase access to education services, improved learning outcomes, reduced dropout rates, improved nutritional uptake, active participation of disabled children in education and access to health
Youth	Education/training stipends; employment guarantee schemes/ public works; disability grants	Improved access to productive livelihoods for all including the disabled
Working Age	Employment guarantee schemes/ public works, family allowances, health insurance; disability grants	Risk mitigation outcomes, improved access to productive livelihoods, reduced dependence of disabled on others besides having improved self esteem and decision making possibilities
Old Age	Pensions	Coping mechanism, livelihood guarantee

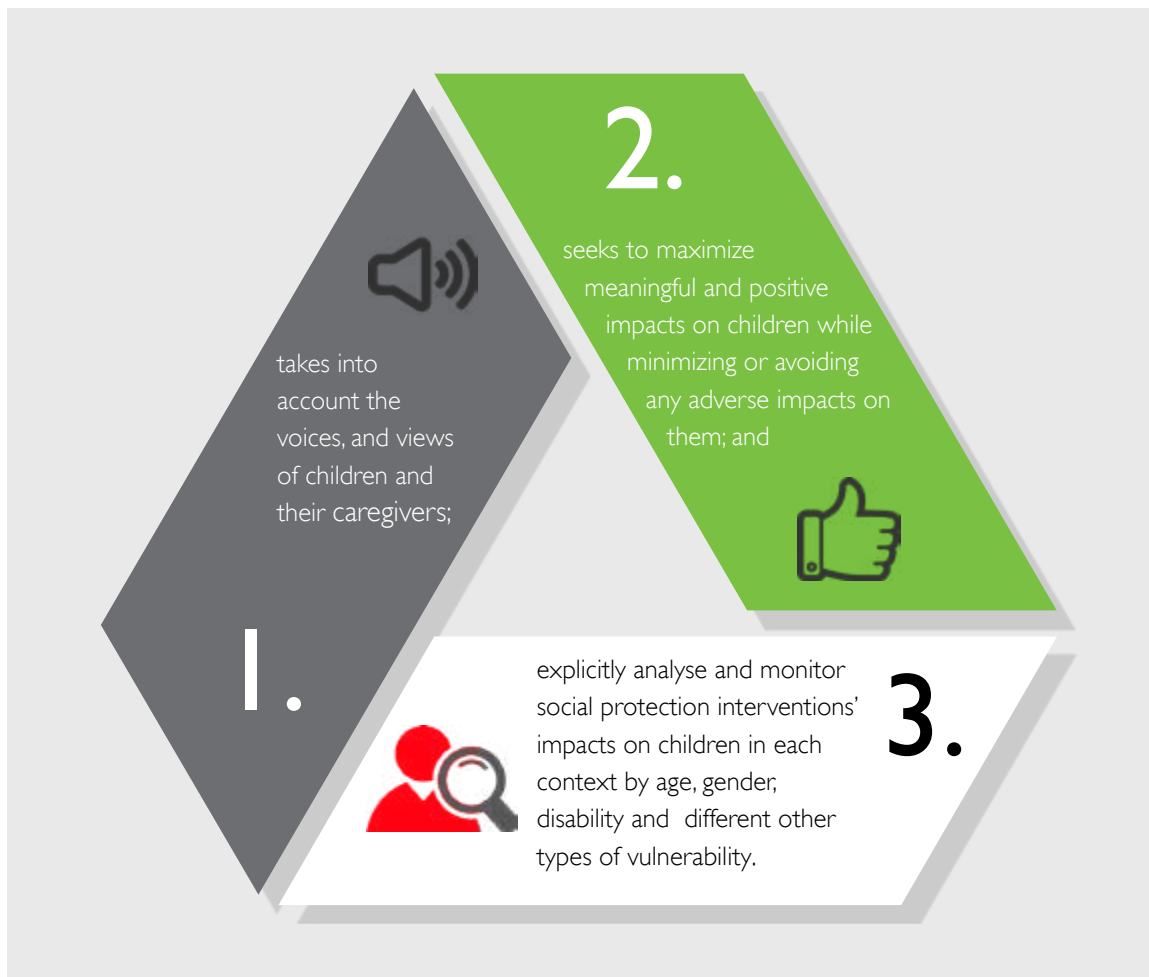




3. What is Child Sensitive Social Protection?

Child Sensitive Social Protection is defined as:

Policies, programmes and systems that address the specific patterns of children's poverty and vulnerability and recognize the long-term developmental benefits of investing in children. In particular, CSSP:



Child Sensitive Social Protection includes:

- **child-focused and/or family-based programmes** that directly address children's needs and rights and improve child development as well as,
- ensuring that **all social protection is child-sensitive**, by maximising impacts for children and minimising harms on children, girls and boys alike.

Why does Social Protection need to be Child Sensitive?

Children have the right to social security and an adequate standard of living as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC Articles 26-27). Moreover, children are dependent on adults for the fulfilment and realisation of their rights and their vulnerability to multiple dimensions of poverty and deprivation can have long-lasting detrimental effects on their physical, emotional and cognitive development.

Insufficient consideration of children in social protection programme design may lead to adverse impacts for children, such as increases in child work, domestic violence or inequalities; and/or the disruption of schooling or child care arrangements. Existing evidence shows that well-designed and implemented social protection programmes can successfully address several dimensions of child well-being. A move towards a more child sensitive

approach to social protection has recently been advocated at the highest levels in the international development community. If social protection programmes take into account the specific needs, vulnerabilities and rights of children, they can ensure enhanced positive effects for children across a range of deprivations and reduce the need for negative coping strategies that impact on children. Programmes that enhance income for households or provide support in meeting children's needs, coupled with child-sensitive design and messaging, enable and encourage families to invest in children's education, health and nutrition, both in normal times and during a crisis. The box below outlines the key rationale and principles that guide child sensitive social protection.⁸





- Social protection is a basic human right for children, enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Children, in many cases are dependent on adults to claim their rights and entitlements
- Children are particularly vulnerable to multiple dimensions of poverty and deprivation that can have long-lasting effects and can put their lives and future well-being at risk.
- Significant individual and social returns accrue to investments in children's well-being, particularly from an early age.
- Lack of attention to the specific needs of children in social protection programmes can blunt the positive effects of such programmes or lead to adverse impacts, meaning unintended effects from a design/ implementation flaw could lead to antagonism.
- Poor and vulnerable families and caregivers need significant support to provide optimum care for their children.

Child-sensitive social protection (CSSP) takes into account children's particular risks and vulnerabilities either through specific child-focused interventions (for example in health, nutrition, education, child protection) or through measures that aim to ensure child-sensitivity within broader social protection initiatives that do not explicitly target children, viz, public works and widow pensions.



End Notes:

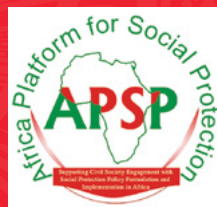
1. UNICEF, 2015
2. UNICEF, 2015
3. UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, 2012
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5. IPEC, 2008
6. See for example Serrat, O. (2013) 'Social Protection Index brief: Social assistance programs in Asia and the Pacific'. Manila: ADB; ADB (2013) 'The Social Protection Index Assessing Results for Asia and the Pacific'. Philippines: ADB; Sanfilippo, M., C. de Neubourg and B. Martorano (2012) 'The Impact of Social Protection on Children: A review of the literature', Working Paper 2012-06, UNICEF Office of Research, Florence; DSD, SASSA and UNICEF (2012) 'The South African Child Support Grant Impact Assessment: Evidence from a survey of children, adolescents and their households' Pretoria: UNICEF South Africa
7. Harvey et al., 2007
8. Drawn from the Joint statement on 'Advancing Child Sensitive Social Protection' (2009) and UNICEF Social Protection Strategic Framework (2012)
9. Principles of CSSP as reflected in the Joint statement on 'Advancing Child Sensitive Social Protection' (2009) and UNICEF Social Protection Strategic Framework (2012)

References and for more information

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