



**ASSESSING THE RESPONSIVENESS OF SOCIAL SAFETY NETS
TOWARDS REDUCING VULNERABILITY AMONG CHILD-HEADED
HOUSEHOLDS**

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACCs	Area Coordinating Committees
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AU	African Union
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
CGP	Child Grant Programme
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSG	Child Support Grant
CWACs	Community Welfare Assistance Committees
CT-OVC	Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children
FBOs	Faith Based Organisations
FCG	Foster Care Grant
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSFP	Ghana School Feeding Programme
HGSFP	Home-Grown School Feeding Programme
HIV/AIDS	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus; Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty
7NDP	Seventh National Development Plan
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
NSPP	National Social Protection Policy
OVCs	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PWAS	Public Welfare Assistance Scheme
SCT	Social Cash Transfer
SSNs	Social Safety Nets
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WFP	World Food Programme



Source image: <https://www.dw.com/en/children-rights-in-africa-young-but-not-powerful/a-4490412>

INTRODUCTION

Children’s rights assert that all children must be protected from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation but this is not always the reality for many children globally. As poverty, armed conflict and HIV rates continue to soar, the number of orphans and displaced children is equally increasing. **The United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) estimates that there are about 52 million orphans in Africa; a figure accounting for children who have lost either one or both parents to any cause of death and is under the age of 18.**

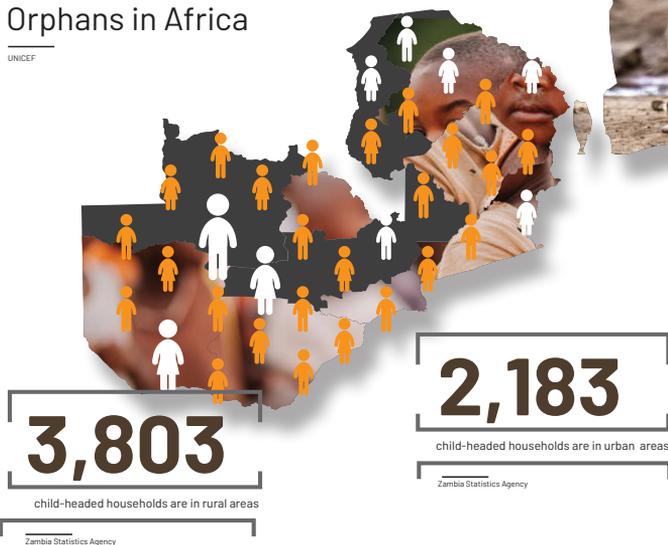
In many African countries, poverty, AIDS and armed conflict result in neglect of children and are major factors contributing to an overburden on and the undermining of traditional social support systems. Given these factors, the extended family is increasingly unable to cope with assimilating new members such as orphaned children, leading to destitution. Although child-care facilities have been helpful in absorbing some of these children, the system has been overwhelmed and in some cases can no longer cater for children over the age of 18, as such they get thrown out. This has resulted in a continued rise in the

prevalence rate of child-headed households. **The Zambia Statistics Agency identified a total of 5,986 child-headed households in the 2010 Census. The demographical data shows that 3,803 child-headed households are in rural areas while 2,183 are in urban areas.** This situation has been exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS epidemic that has left many children destitute, orphaned and living on the street. Similarly, rising levels of poverty and a break-down in traditional family structures has also contributed to child-headed households.¹

52 million

Orphans in Africa

UNICEF



Source & Image: <https://ukaid.org/many-orphans-worldwide>

1. Van Dijk, D. & Van Driel, F. (2009). Supporting Child-Headed Households in South Africa: Whose best interests? *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35(4),915-927. Retrieved February 5, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/40600037

Child-headed households refer to households managed by children aged 17 years or younger. It is argued that this responsibility placed on children negates their basic rights such as; the right to family care, the right to a childhood, the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health, the right to education and the right to protection against all forms of abuse and negligent treatment, among others. They are thought to be one of the most vulnerable groups in society and at risk of many social and economic challenges that negatively impact them due to their age and inability to provide or access basic social amenities. This broadly perpetuates a vicious intergenerational cycle of poverty. Also, they tend to be most susceptible to hunger and disease, among many other social ills. These vulnerabilities are further heightened among children with disabilities. Moreover, poverty and a lack of access to income are key drivers of early engagement in sexual deviance, transactional sex and child marriages. Often, children have no means to meet their basic needs; a situation that forces them into these relationships in order to obtain food and other goods. In Zambia, these children often resort to begging on the streets for survival, thus increasing their risk to physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

Evidence indicates that household and community level poverty are among the risk factors for child protection violations. Research further suggests that certain child protection issues, including sexual exploitation, unnecessary family separation, child labour and child marriage have a more direct link to poverty.² Social Safety Nets (SSNs) are believed to be a means to break this cycle of poverty by implementing programmes that offer equitable access to basic social amenities that impact the quality of life for all.³ SSNs refer to specific target programmes that aim to mitigate a particular social problem such as inequality, poverty and vulnerability.⁴ These are often non-conditional programmes, designed to provide regular and predictable support to poor and

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2. Peterman, A., Neijhoft, A., Cook, S. & Palermo, T. (2017). Understanding the linkages between Social Safety Nets and childhood violence: A review of the evidence from low- and middle-income countries. *Health Policy and Planning*, Vol. 32, Iss. 7.
 3. Fiszbein, A., Schady, N., Francisco, H. G., Ferreira, M. G., Kelleher, N., Olinto, P. & Skoufias, E. (2009). *Conditional Cash Transfers: Reducing present and future poverty*. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, The World Bank.
 4. Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare. (2014). *National Social Protection Policy: Reducing poverty, inequality and vulnerability*. <https://www.mcsw.gov.zm/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/NATIONAL-SOCIAL-PROTECTION-POLICY.pdf>

vulnerable populations, and are key components of larger social protection systems.⁵ They have equally emerged as a primary policy tool to address poverty and vulnerability. Similarly, **social protection refers to policies and practices that protect and promote the livelihoods and welfare of people suffering from critical levels of poverty and deprivation and/or are vulnerable to risks and shocks.** It supports development through building human capital, thus breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty and promoting the reduction of both social and economic inequalities.

A clear example of a Social Safety Net mechanism is the social cash transfer programme. **Strong evidence indicates that cash transfers have resulted in considerable reductions in poverty globally.**⁶ Further, evidence documented around the world suggests that SSNs play an important role in improving child well-being, regardless of whether these programmes are explicitly child-focused. For instance, cash transfers are commonly linked to well-being outcomes for children such as **improved nutrition, management of illness, improved school enrolment and mental health among beneficiary households.**^{7,8} However, in order for social protection programming to be responsive to child-headed households there is need for an even balance between social grants such as social cash transfers as well as care through social welfare services that provide the care and protection of vulnerable children. This balance is argued to be the foundation of an effective social protection system needed to sustainably lift children out of poverty and enhance their inclusion and resilience. It is important to note that poverty is a complex aspect and consists of various overlapping deprivations that include lack of income but may also include; **limited access to information, housing, sanitation, health care, education, as well as sexual, physical or substance abuse.**⁹

5. Honorati, M., Gentilini, U. & Yemtsov, R. G. (2015). The State of Social Safety Nets. Washington, DC. World Bank Group.
6. Miller, E. & Samson, M. (2012). HIV-sensitive social protection: State of the evidence 2012 in sub-Saharan African. UNICEF. <https://www.unicef-irc.org/files/documents/d-3826-HIV-Sensitive-Social-Prot.pdf>.
7. Lagarde, M., Haines, A. & Palmer, N. (2007). Conditional Cash Transfers for improving uptake of health interventions in low- and middle-income countries: A systematic review. *JAMA* 298:1900-10.
8. Owusu-Addo, E. & Cross, R. (2014). The impact of conditional cash transfers on child health in low- and middle-income countries: A systematic review. *International Journal of Public Health*, 59:609-18.
9. UNICEF. (2017). Children and the Namibian Budget: Social Assistance and Welfare. https://www.unicef.org/esaro/UNICEF_Namibia.

All these aspects intersect to re-enforce one-another, creating a complex matrix of poverty and vulnerability. It is therefore imperative that the Government strives to provide a range of adequate cash and care interventions to address the challenges faced by such households.

International and Regional Instruments on the Rights of Children

The challenge with child-headed households is that the situation grossly infringes on the rights of a child to experience an enjoyable childhood and attain their highest potential as enshrined in the Declaration of Human Rights and the various instruments that uphold these rights. Hence, the Right to Social Protection has been recognized by a number of Regional and International Conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 25) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 9 and 10) to which most African Union (AU) Member States are signatories. **In addition, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) also recognizes that children have the right to social security, including social insurance. Social protection contributes to the realization of specific social security rights, as well as other rights such the rights to education and survival.** Zambia signed and ratified these key instruments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1991 and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) in 2008, among others, that underpin children's rights at a global level and has strived to advance the rights of children through the Constitution and the National Child Policy at a national level. The latter was developed in 2006 as Governments' commitment to child protection.¹⁰

Social Safety Nets and the National Budget

As poverty, inequality and vulnerability continue to persist, the Government through the Seventh National Development Plan (7NDP) aims to reduce poverty and vulnerability as targeted in Pillar 2. **According to the Zambia Living Conditions Monitoring Survey of 2015, 54.4% of Zambians are classified as**

10. ECPAT International. (2014). Global Monitoring: Status of action against commercial sexual exploitation of children-Zambia. 2nd Ed. Bangkok: ECPAT International.

poor while 40.8% are extremely poor and 13.6% are moderately poor. These statistics are a major concern and affirm the need for strong social protection programs to cushion the effects of poverty and vulnerability in society.



In the 2020 budget, **Social protection** was allocated **K2.6 Billion** representing **2.4%** of the **total K106 Billion National Budget**.



According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the initial annual cost of a **basic social protection package should be set at about 3.7 to 10.6% of GDP.**¹¹ The Government ratified “***ILO Recommendation 202, the Global Social Protection Floors***”. However, it has been slow to fully implement these minimum standards. Going by the budget allocations targeting social protection in the last 3 years, there has been a reduction in allocations. For instance, in 2018 the allocation was 3.2%, 2.5% in 2019 and 2.4% in 2020 respectively. This could mean that programmes may not be able to effectively recruit more vulnerable households as beneficiaries beyond the current set target. This suggests that Zambia has failed to meet the basic social protection threshold for budgeting proposed under ILO recommendation.

It is argued that social protection is often viewed as consumptive expenditure by some elite sections of society thus Governments fail to prioritise social safety nets in the national budget. On the contrary, these interventions must be viewed as an investment in human capital development and as a comprehensive strategy to enhance inclusive growth in the country.¹² Hence,

11. ILO. (2008). Zambia Social Protection Expenditure and Performance Review and Social Budget. ILO: Geneva.
 12. Kalebe-Nyamongo, C. & Marguette, H. (2014). Elite attitudes towards cash transfer and the poor in Malawi. The Developmental Leadership Program, International Development Department.

social protection remains a critical area of concern and programming with the Social Cash Transfer (SCT), Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) and Public Welfare Assistance Scheme (PWAS) being the major focus areas by Government that target vulnerable children.

SOCIAL SAFETY NET PROGRAMS BY GOVERNMENT TARGETING THE WELFARE OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN

Social safety nets are critical interventions that are aimed at tackling poverty by targeting households that are considered to be most at risk of vulnerability. These include **female-headed households, child-headed households, orphans and vulnerable children, the aged and persons living with disabilities**. The Ministry of Community Development and Social Services is the focal point for coordination of social protection programs. Furthermore, other stakeholders such as Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) are strategic players that partner with Government to supplement its efforts. The National Social Protection Policy (NSPP) is the legal framework that supports programming aimed at vulnerability and poverty reduction. It provides for various social safety net programs such as the SCT, PWAS and the Home-grown School feeding programme.

1. Social Cash Transfer

The programme was first piloted in 2003 in Kalomo district and has since been scaled up with a **targeted reach of 700,000 beneficiaries**, but it is not clear how many of these are children or child-headed households due to the multi-categorical targeting of the scheme. It is coordinated under the **Ministry of Community Development and Social Services together with DFID, UNICEF, Irish Aid, Sweden and the Finnish as cooperating partners. The current budget allocation stands at K1 Billion**. This intervention aims to reduce vulnerability by targeting the most destitute and incapacitated households in society to meet their basic needs, particularly health, education, food and shelter. As a response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic which had led to a growing

number of households with no adult breadwinner and those headed by the elderly, children and chronically ill persons, the scheme was developed. It **targets households headed by children or females keeping orphans, headed by elderly people aged 60 and above** keeping orphans, and those with at least one member with a disability.

Children are considered to be beneficiaries of the programme and often are also recipients of other safety nets such as the PWAS or HGSFP. A 'Child-headed household' is defined as one in which the head is 19 years or younger; is not married and is verified by community members to be a child-headed household. Such households are considered to be incapacitated since they have no persons fit for work or to sustain the household's basic needs. **Beneficiaries of the scheme receive K90 and are paid bi-monthly (K180) while persons with disabilities receive double transfers of K360.** Currently, the scheme is non-conditional; however, during the piloting of the programme in Monze district households were required to agree to send their children over the age of 5 to school and to maintain a clinic-card for their children under the age of 5. Similarly, in Chipata district, children enrolled in secondary school received a bonus in addition to the basic grant. Although these conditions were critical to ensuring the funds impacted the lives of the beneficiaries, they were not implemented in the final phase of the programme due to a lack of adequate staff and capacity by the Ministry to monitor these prerequisites.

The Department of Social Welfare revealed that a donor funded supplementary cash plus programme is being piloted in Lusaka and the Copperbelt to run along-side the SCT. The Service Efficiency and Effectiveness for Vulnerable Children and Adolescents (SEEVCA) initiative was introduced in 2017 and promotes community level case management of vulnerable children. It aims to show the value of combining social protection programming, especially social cash transfers, with case management to increase access to services for households caring for highly vulnerable children and adolescents. Through this project, the Government is committed to addressing existing vulnerabilities, and expanding social protection initiatives, especially the SCT programme, to provide a solid foundation for additional support to vulnerable children and

adolescents. The SCT programme contributes to reducing vulnerability and expanding protection for the most marginalized Zambians. Although still in its pilot phase, **the programme has reached 49,478 children (boys 23,564 and girls 25,914), including from many child-headed and female-headed households.**

The impact on households receiving SCT is immense. An impact evaluation carried out between 2010 and 2014 found that the cash transfers improved all socio-economic indicators: schooling, health, general well-being, possession of shoes and blankets, and the regularity of meals. It was revealed that families were able to meet PTA fees, access health services and improved food security and nutrition (**afford more than 1 meal per day**). Similarly, household assets had increased due to investment in small livestock such as chickens and goats from which families could sell to send their children to school. Households were also able to hire labour for tilling their fields. In addition, it has been observed that there is a multiplier effect of the transfers, adding between 49 and 69 Ngwee in value to every Kwacha transferred. Through spill-over effects, the SCTs have been instrumental in strengthening communities through improved social cohesion as households become actively involved in community activities. Beneficiaries are also able to grow their local economy, in that purchases for basic needs are made within their communities.

Evidence from another study¹³ revealed the positive impact that social cash transfers have had on children's education, since they were able to stay in school as parents and caregivers could afford to pay user fees (PTA) and purchase school requisites from the transfers. Similarly, their food intake had improved and they no longer went to school on an empty stomach. It was further revealed that households recorded an increased spending on health, food and nutrition including groceries. These findings highlight the impact that SSNs have on children and in reducing their vulnerabilities. However, there have been a number constraints in the administration and disbursement of funds.

13. Chibanda, D. (2019). Social Cash Transfers and Children's Rights in Zambia. *Sociology and Anthropology* 7(1): 20-37, 2019. DOI: 10.13189/sa.2019.070103.

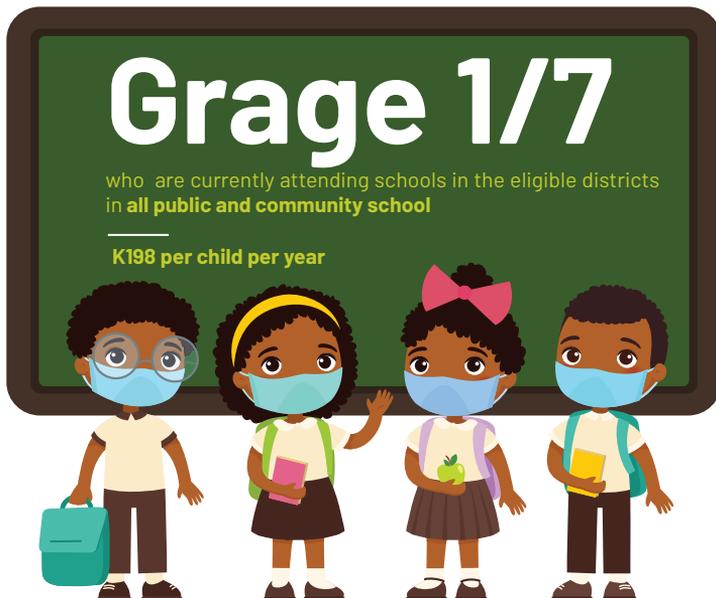
Delays in funding from the Government has resulted in beneficiaries not receiving this assistance on time. These delays undermine the very essence of the programme which is aimed at reducing vulnerability, risk, hunger and poverty among its targeted beneficiaries, especially children. This puts them at even greater risk of dropping out of school, hunger and poor health since they are particularly dependent on these grants. It is argued that erratic disbursement of funds results in beneficiaries resorting to negative coping mechanisms that are detrimental such as taking children out of school, cutting down on health care, substandard nutrition, and engaging in less productive activities.¹⁴ Thus, it is imperative that the Government addresses these administrative challenges, ensures timely release of funding and prioritization of the programme if it is to attain its objectives.

In spite of the success recorded by the SCT, welfare officers are concerned that children normally do not have information on the various safety nets available to them and in some cases may not have the confidence to seek assistance. They are equally apprehensive over the decision-making abilities of children on their own welfare and that of their peers. Prioritisation and use of funds received was also highlighted as a challenge for children managing households. Thus, adequate funding of the programme is required in order to empower community level mentors to foster basic life skills within such households. They also alluded to the fact that these pay-outs can sometimes be open to abuse among beneficiaries or care-givers of vulnerable children. The Ministry has a system in place to monitor how these funds are used within beneficiary households through community volunteers. Once neglect of children is reported, such a household is required to undergo counselling to improve the living conditions of the child. In a case where there is no reformation, the SCT is withdrawn from such a household and children may be placed in alternative care living facilities in line with their current needs.

14. Sanfilippo, M., de Neubourg, C. & Martorano, B. (2012). The impact of Social Protection on Children: A review of the literature, Office of Research Working Paper WP-2012-06. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research.

2. Home-Grown School Feeding Program

The programme is a social safety net that was initiated in 2013 with assistance from the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and is running under the Ministry of General Education. Not only does it aim to keep vulnerable children in school, but it also seeks to improve their nutrition. **In its initial phase, the programme covered 22 districts selected on the basis of a food security measure and education test scores of a particular district. Coverage has since been scaled-up to 38 districts. As of 2019, the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) has been rolled out to reach 1,250,000 primary school going children.** The main objective of this programme is to improve attendance and consequently the quality of education in schools, especially for learners from vulnerable and food insecure households. **It is targeted at all public and community school going children from grades 1 to 7 who are currently attending schools in the eligible districts.** They receive free school meals daily, prepared from locally sought maize meal, pulses, and oil. The value of the school meals is the equivalent of **K198 per child per year.**



A study¹⁵ assessing the impact of Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) in primary schools in Chipata district found that learners' school attendance scored 71% improvement after implementation of the programme. Teachers also noted a positive behavioural change in attitude among learners. The study concluded that the introduction of the programme led to an improved retention of learners by 70%. A similar study¹⁶ also reported positive educational outcomes among learners in a rural school of Kapiri-Mposhi district. It was reported that school attendance among learners had improved from 80% to 94% after the introduction of the programme. **There was a notable reduction in absenteeism among pupils from 15 per day to 4. Academic performance also recorded positive progression, improving from 60% to 90% pass rate while the failure rate equally reduced from 40% to 10%. Similarly, learners that progressed to the next grade had improved from 65% to 88%.** This is evidence that the programme has the potential to increase equitable access to education, particularly, among poorer households. Likewise, it has a positive trickle-down effect in that, access to education has the potential to uplift families and communities out of poverty. Children have continued to benefit immensely from this intervention since there is a correlation between children's performance, nutrition and food security in the home. Research further suggests that food insecurity contributes to high dropout rates among children, particularly in rural areas where they provide labour in exchange for food or assist the family to produce food.

3. Public Welfare Assistance Scheme

The Public Welfare Assistance Scheme (PWAS) is the oldest social welfare programme in Zambia, assisting mainly secondary school children with education bursaries. This programme is aimed at cushioning the adverse effects of socio-economic shocks, and other negative effects resulting from poverty and the HIV/AIDS pandemic which have been a prominent challenge in the country. The current budget allocation for this intervention stands at K122.2

15. Zimba, J. (2018). Does School-Feeding Initiative Matter? An assessment of its impact on quality education and positive behaviour change of learners in Primary Schools of Chipata District of Zambia. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)* Volume 5, Issue 5, May 2018, PP 75-83.
16. Phiri, W. & Chisala, A. (2017). A critical evaluation of the school feeding programme in rural schools: A case of St. Pauls Secondary School Kapiri-Mposhi, Zambia. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development* Volume 4; Issue 7; July 2017; Page No. 119-123.

Million which is a combined allocation with the Food Security Pack programme. The Social Welfare Department under the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services is responsible for implementing this programme and it also operates on a decentralized model that enables community players to assist with targeting and identifying households and individuals in need across all Districts. Area Coordinating Committees (ACCs) and the Community Welfare Assistance Committees (CWACs) are responsible for identification, prioritization and assisting individuals in need. The Department offers assistance in form of educational support, health care support, social support and repatriation of stranded persons. Additionally, education support is offered to children from households registered under PWAS and they are provided with necessary school requirements for primary and secondary school. The core target groups are aged persons, the disabled, the chronically ill, single headed households, orphans and neglected children and minor disaster victims. This programme directly supports the 2nd Pillar of the 7NDP in reducing poverty and vulnerability.



According to the Department of Social Welfare, there are about **178 child-care facilities in Zambia with over 6,000 children**. These institutions are run by NGOs and FBOs and the department coordinates these facilities in accordance with the Juveniles Act.¹⁷ Case managers are responsible for conducting inspections before children are placed and do follow-ups on case management for children that may be in conflict with the law. The social welfare officers also act as mediators in the courts for such children. The Department of Social Welfare is in charge of networking with, regulating and providing guidelines to NGOs that provide care services to children such as children's homes and orphanages in line with national obligations to Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) as enshrined in international conventions, national policies and laws. They also offer assistance to them through small grants to aid their operations.

17. Juveniles Act-Chapter 53 of the Laws of Zambia.

Although Government policy views institutional care of children as a measure of last resort and encourages community participation in the care of vulnerable children, care services such as adoption and foster care are provided for. The Government promotes family-based care for orphaned children through its **“National Advocacy and Communication Strategy on the promotion of family-based care for children in Zambia.”** These guidelines address the provision of alternative care and re-integration with family members. It is perceived that the family is an essential part of socialisation and fostering of norms and values, hence the need to re-unify children with kinship relations. In a case that foster care and institutional care are the only hope, the department facilitates the process of identifying families and institutions that can take up these children. The promotion of local and international adoptive care has equally helped reduce the vulnerabilities of children that face destitution and are fending for themselves. The department oversees and regulates adoption and fostering in Zambia. Adoption services provide children a permanent home, legal protection and security in accordance with the Adoption Act¹⁸ while foster care services provide children in need of care, temporary adult care and security in accordance with the Juveniles Act.

Another impact the PWAS programme has on children is in supporting Government policy towards increased access to free primary education. The programme through the Department of Social Welfare supports in-direct schooling costs in addition to the OVC bursaries towards education of orphans and vulnerable children offering K300 on average per instance. This support is in-kind and is a once-off on-demand support that goes towards indirect schooling costs which include parent-teacher association (PTA) fees, uniforms, books, transport, food supplies, lodging, accessibility support and disability support. Although PWAS is the oldest safety net that supports vulnerable children, it is underfunded and viewed as a supplementary programme to compliment other safety net interventions. Funding under this programme is erratic and insufficient to target many of the children that need it.

18. Adoption Act- Chapter 54 of the Laws of Zambia.



South Africa

The Child Support Grant (CSG) and the Foster Care Grant (FCG) are social safety nets that are targeted at supporting vulnerable and orphaned children in South Africa. Being the largest social protection programme in Africa, it reaches approximately 11 million children and has been running since 1998. The CSG gives US\$28 per child under the age of 17 years, while the FCG gives at least three times of the CSG to an adult that acts as a caregiver. These interventions have the potential to support child-headed households; however the downside of the programmes is that, the funds can only be accessed by an adult or persons older than 18 years, acting as a caregiver.¹⁹ This poses a challenge for children in such households to access these funds as the adult may appropriate them for their own personal needs and not in the best interest of the children. In the same vein, an identity document is a requirement in order to access FCG funds and this has made it challenging for older siblings that may not be in possession of such documents.

Kenya



The Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CT-OVC) is a programme run by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development which was first piloted in 2004 and offers US\$20 per household, housing orphans and vulnerable children. The program has been running since 2004 and reaches approximately 250,000 households. This intervention was the Kenyan Government's response to the HIV epidemic and a recognition of disintegrating traditional family and community structures to respond to children in need.²⁰ The objective of the programme is to provide regular cash transfers to ultra-poor households living

19. Van Dijk, D. & Van Driel, F. (2009). Supporting Child-Headed Households in South Africa: Whose Best Interests? *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35(4), 915-927. Retrieved February 5, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/40600037.
20. Gibson, K. (2009). Multi-Year, Multi-Country Research Programme on the Impacts of Cash Transfers on Children in Eastern and Southern Africa-Kenya Country Report. UNICEF.

with OVCs to encourage fostering and retention of children and to promote their human capital development. The programme was aimed at improving access to basic social services among vulnerable children such as education, health and nutrition. As part of the conditions set to access this programme, a child was expected to have under-taken birth registration within 6 months of being a beneficiary, enrolled in school, children between 0-5 years should have attended a health facility for immunization and growth monitoring and an adult or caregiver was expected to attend awareness sessions once a year. Non-compliance by caregivers to meet these conditions resulted in a fine through reduction of the fund for every pre-condition not met. These penalties were instituted to ensure beneficiaries and caregivers used the funds for their intended purpose.

Ghana



The Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) is a programme run by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection in Ghana. The program came into inception in 2008 with a reach of approximately 150,000 households targeting the extremely poor with the elderly, disabled or orphans and vulnerable children. The programme provides cash and health insurance to extremely poor households across Ghana to alleviate short-term poverty and encourage long term human capital development. What is unique about this initiative is that, aside from direct cash payments, beneficiaries are provided free health insurance through the new National Health Insurance Scheme which began in 2004-05. Vulnerable households are eased off the pressure to access health services with out-of-pocket financing as they are covered through the Health Scheme.

Another impactful safety net is the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) which was launched in 2005 and was primarily aimed at realizing the Millennium Development Goals targeted at eradicating extreme poverty and

hunger and the achievement of universal primary education. **The programme objectives include; the reduction of hunger and malnutrition, increasing school enrolment, retention and attendance targeted at all primary and kindergarten pupils in beneficiary schools.** A study²¹ found that there was a notable 10.9% increase in pupil enrollment among beneficiary schools after the programme was implemented. It also revealed that the general retention rate had improved with a drop-out rate of 0.7% recorded in the 2012/2013 academic year. Although primary education is free, the retention rate among pupils in rural Ghana was fairly poor and this was attributed to the distance to schools, lack of school requisites and food insecurity, among others. The introduction and scaling up of the programme has shown positive results in class attendance and retention rates, thus advancing aspirations of achieving universal basic education among children.

Lesotho



Lesotho's Child Grants Programme (CGP) provides an unconditional cash transfer to poor and vulnerable households with the primary objective of improving the living standards of Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) through better nutrition and health status and increased school enrolment. The programme under the Ministry of Social Development has been running since 2009 and has a reach of approximately 25,000 households. The CGP is targeted at poor households with children, including child-headed households. Eligible households are paid quarterly with benefit sizes varying according to the number of children in the household. In mid-2015 the quarterly benefit size was approximately US\$36 for 1-2 children, US\$60 for 3-4 children and US\$75 for 5+ children.

Additionally, the National School Feeding Programme which dates as far back as 1961 is another important safety net programme. In 2014, a National School Feeding Policy was developed and three parallel programmes are currently

21. Konzabre, J. G. (2018). The Impact of Ghana's School Feeding Programme on enrolment and retention of pupils in Talensi District in upper East Region. *International Journal of Education, Learning and Development* Vol. 6, No. 6, pp.69-89, June 2018.

running.²² The first being the Government of Lesotho funded model which provides two daily meals: breakfast (maize-meal porridge with sugar) and lunch (mielie-pap with beans or peas). Another phase funded by the World Food Programme (WFP) supports about 920 primary schools with an estimated 186,000 beneficiaries, and also supports feeding of about 50,000 learners in more than 2,000 early childhood education centres under this model. The second model runs under the Ministry of Education and Training which provides five different meals, including vegetables and animal protein from eggs and milk. It supports 188 primary schools with 78,000 beneficiaries as well as 246 reception classes with 5,700 children. The third model, under the National Management Agent (NMA) supports 91,000 children in 18 constituencies across the country. Notable success has been recorded in learner retention and educational outcomes for children benefiting from these models.

Lessons for Zambia



1. Upscale SSN programmes to reach more beneficiaries in need of social protection, particularly those impacting the welfare of children.
2. Improve targeting and ensure the programme is responsive to children's welfare, particularly with the Social Cash Transfer and the Public Welfare Assistance Scheme (PWAS).
3. Enhance the multi-sectoral approach to provide a balance of care and cash services, with special focus on support towards equitable access to healthcare, nutrition, education, shelter and protection for vulnerable children and those lacking adult care.
4. Enhance a rights-based approach in targeting and programming rather than viewing social protection as an 'in-kind' favour towards beneficiaries.
5. Ensure that social protection is given in a timely and predictable manner to avert negative mechanisms of coping with poverty and vulnerability.

22. Devereux et al. (2018). "School Feeding in South Africa: What we know, what we don't know, what we need to know, what we need to do". Food Security SA Working Paper Series No. 004. DST-NRF Centre of Excellence in Food Security, South Africa.

CONCLUSION

Since children tend to be the most vulnerable to poverty, a rise in HIV rates, war and displacement have exacerbated the rise in child-headed households across Africa. Equally, a rise in poverty has overburdened traditional social systems, thus causing a break-down in traditional family structures and making it difficult for children without parental care to be absorbed by extended family members. As a result, **social protection has been a fundamental policy intervention in upholding the rights and welfare of children, particularly, the most vulnerable in society. Social Safety Nets (SSN) seek to ensure equitable access to basic social amenities such as healthcare, education, food and shelter.** Taking these issues into consideration, the Government and its cooperating partners have been implementing and scaling up programmes as a response to the challenges presented. **These include the Social Cash Transfer, Public Welfare Assistance Scheme (PWAS) and the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) to alleviate the effects of poverty and vulnerability. These programmes have proved to be beneficial and responsive towards reducing the vulnerabilities faced by children.** However, it is imperative that a balance of cash and care programmes are targeted towards children in order to sustainably lift them from poverty and enhance their inclusion and resilience. Also, there is need to prioritise social protection programmes through increased funding and timely disbursement of funds.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) recommendation is set at 3.7% to 10.6% of GDP while Zambia set aside 2.4% of GDP in the 2020 budget. Evidence from other countries highlights the positive impact of SSNs on the education and nutrition outcomes of children hence the need to scale-up these interventions and increase budgetary allocations to them in order to meet the targets set out in the Seventh National Development Plan (7NDP) aimed at reducing poverty and vulnerability. There is equally need to ensure the responsiveness of these programmes towards children by itemizing allocations towards child-specific interventions and recording the reach and impact on children and their welfare particularly with regards to SCT which is the largest SSN programme and the most funded in Zambia. All in all, the policy

and regulatory framework towards social protection interventions is adequate. However, challenges such as administrative aspects and timely disbursement of funds undermine the responsiveness of these programmes. Delays in payouts may impact the households' ability to cope and maintain a basic standard of living; forcing children into risky coping mechanisms. Thus, Government is urged to ensure the payments are done in a timely and predictable manner.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. PMRC urges Government to strengthen the multisectoral approach in targeting and improving the vulnerability of child-headed households to access critical basic social amenities such as education, quality healthcare, proper nutrition, housing, water and sanitation.
2. We urge Government to prioritize funding towards child social protection in the budget to enable improved tracking and programming particularly towards interventions that support child-headed households, orphans and vulnerable children.
3. There is an urgent need to address delays in disbursement of funding towards social protection programmes as this undermines impact, particularly, on children.
4. We further urge the Government to adhere to International Labour Organisation (ILO) recommendations on social protection allocations under the National Budget which is set between 3.7% to 10.6% of GDP while the current Government allocation stands at 2.4% of GDP.
5. There is need to strengthen social welfare systems and support foster care within family structures through increased economic capacity at household level to take in orphaned children in order to reduce the burden on them to provide and take care of fellow minors.
6. There is need to increase the human resource capacity in the Department of Social Welfare in order to improve case management and targeting of vulnerable children at community level.
7. We appeal to cooperating partners to strengthen life skills programming and dissemination of information on the available programmes among vulnerable children to better equip them for newly acquired responsibilities and improved social welfare.

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Unlocking Zambia's Potential

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