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Rachael Ojima Agarry

Introduction

Children are key members of any society whose existence cannot be ignored. By nature, they are so tender and could barely help or defend themselves in times of tough situations. They are characterized by their formative years and vulnerability. They are growing future adults who have no means to protect themselves in any way. As a result, each community is expected to consider the children to be of paramount interest wherein adults and the government protect the interest or rights of the child on every side. In Africa, children are cherished by all; that is why their upbringing and well-being is a communal affair. Every adult member of the community takes the responsibility of caring for the child; most of the time they give up their pleasure to ensure that children are all right.¹ As good as the intentions of many African adults are, they oftentimes violate the rights of children, especially the social protection right, consciously or unconsciously. It is therefore important to consider some key issues that will inform and guide against further infringement of children's social protection right in Africa.

The Concept of Social Protection

Vulnerability comes from the notion that certain groups in society are more exposed than others to shocks that threaten their livelihood or survival. Other groups are so defenseless that they live in a chronic state of impoverishment in which their livelihood is constantly at risk. Even a small decline in welfare for such people could be life threatening or could have permanent consequences for human capital. It is important to observe at the outset that the vulnerable include not only those who are already poor, but also those who are currently above the poverty line but who are potentially in danger of being affected by severe shocks and have little ability to manage risk—people who are most likely to “sink into poverty after a shock has occurred.”²

There is a strong relationship between human rights and development. Human rights and sustainable human development are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. For example, human rights are enhanced when poverty reduction programs empower people to claim their rights. The links between human rights

and development are clearly shown in the people-centered, poverty eradication, human rights mainstreaming, good governance and globalization.

Across Africa, the social protection agendas have gained increasingly significant political attention over the last decade, as governments pursuing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other development initiatives have sought to reduce population vulnerabilities in the face of emerging global challenges, shifting demographic patterns, and persistent drivers of inequality and exclusion.³ The term "social protection" is a set of interventions whose objective is to reduce social and economic risk and vulnerability, and to alleviate extreme poverty and deprivation.⁴ Social protection or assistance programs are ubiquitous in developed countries and are becoming more common in developing countries. It is fundamentally about the nature of the social contract between the state/country and its citizens, and each country's responsibility to provide a minimum level of well-being to its citizens.

In addition, social protection is increasingly seen as an important component of poverty reduction strategies and efforts to reduce vulnerability to economic, social, natural, and other shocks and stresses. It can play an important role in strengthening access to and demand for quality basic services and social welfare services by the poorest through childhood and beyond. Social protection can also facilitate a better balance between care-giving and productive work responsibilities which is critical for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly MDGs 4 and 5.⁵

Among some development partners, social protection is considered as part of the essential package of basic social services that each country is expected to provide for its citizens. However, the term social protection is used in different ways by different countries and organizations, hence, it has no single definition. The United Nations Children's Fund outlines the definition of social protection according to different bodies as follows:⁶

- The World Bank defines social protection as informal, market-based and public interventions that assist poor individuals, households, and communities to reduce their vulnerability by managing risks better.
- The Department for International Development (DFID) defines social protection as interventions that strengthen the capacity of the poor to protect their consumption and to support household investment in the assets required to manage and overcome their situation.
- The ILO refers to social protection as mechanisms that provide access to health care and protect citizens against the stoppage or reduction of earnings resulting from sickness, maternity, employment injury, occupational diseases, unemployment, invalidity, old age and death.
- As an example of a National Government's definition, the Malawi National Social Protection Strategy defines social protection as "policies and actions that protect and promote the livelihood and welfare of poor and vulnerable people."⁷
- The UNDP Poverty Centre defines social protection as interventions from public, private, voluntary organizations and informal networks to support

- communities, households and individuals in their efforts to prevent, manage, and overcome a defined set of risks and vulnerabilities. Other development partners, including NGOs, also have their definitions.
- UNICEF in a global conference on social protection refers to social protection as a set of transfers and services that help individuals and households confront risk and adversity (including emergencies), and ensure a minimum standard of dignity and well-being throughout the lifecycle.

The Livingstone Accord represents a major political landmark for social protection in 13 countries in Eastern and Southern African regions, under the auspices of the African Union, that have committed themselves to developing national social protection strategies, and integrating them into national development plans and budgets.⁸ Consequently, the commitment creates new opportunities for working with governments on the fulfillment of children's rights to survival, development and protection.

The Child-Sensitive Social Protection

Children are more at risk, vulnerable, and are more sensitive to an array of economic, social, and environmental shocks and stresses than adults in a number of ways. The long- and short-term effects of this irregularity will directly tell on the economies and total development of the country. Hence, there is a need for a deeper understanding of the range of existing social protection policies and programs in Africa and their impacts, both direct and indirect, on children.

Child-sensitive social protection is an approach that aims to improve opportunities and development outcomes for children through a multi-dimensional understanding of their well-being, with sensitivity to the manner in which risks facing children differ from those of adults and those in distinct stages of child and adolescent development.⁹ The approach is not limited to children alone, but also includes the households, communities, and individual caregivers who play crucial roles in determining children's socio-economic vulnerability.

The following approaches to child-sensitive social protection based on the transformative social protection framework were proposed.¹⁰

- *Protective:* Child-sensitive social protection aims to safeguard household income and consumption levels so that children's basic well-being can be maintained. In other words, the basic elements for the child's livelihood such as provision and access to good health facilities, nutrition, security and shelter from hazards need to be in place for the child's well-being.
- *Preventative:* When children are not properly care for by adults and government of a country, they turn out to become nuisance and problematic to the society. Child-sensitive social protection therefore seeks to provide households with alternatives to potentially negative coping strategies, which might otherwise increase child risk, such as dropping out of school, child labor or inadequate adult care.

- *Promotional:* Due to the vulnerability of children, child-sensitive social protection supports active investment on the path of government, organizations, and philanthropic individuals in critical aspects of children's development, including schooling and health.
- *Transformative:* Children like any other human being deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. As a result, child-sensitive social protection addresses structural and societal power imbalances that might otherwise create or sustain child vulnerabilities, while also encouraging greater equity and empowerment.

Children's Right to Social Protection in Africa

Children as human beings equally have rights to live a meaningful life maximizing their potentials. According to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), all human beings are born free and equal in status and rights.¹¹ People understand instinctively that everybody irrespective of one's status is born with the same rights and that we all have an obligation to protect those rights. The link between social protection and the realization of people's rights is specifically enshrined in the constitution of virtually all the African countries, and is backed up by a range of international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

Nevertheless, it is important that the authorities know their human rights obligations and should implement them in order to give their citizens the good life they deserve. Under the International Human Rights Law, countries are legally obligated to establish social protection systems, which flow directly from the right to social security, which is articulated in Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in Article 9 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). This is in line with the Part 1 Article 1 of African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) of 1999. The Charter clearly states the obligations of States as follows:

- Member States of the Organization of African Unity Parties to the present Charter shall recognize the rights, freedoms and duties enshrined in this Charter and shall undertake to the necessary steps, in accordance with their Constitutional processes and with the provisions of the present Charter, to adopt such legislative or other measures as may be necessary to give effect to the provisions of this Charter.
- Nothing in this Charter shall affect any provisions that are more conducive to the realization of the rights and welfare of the child contained in the law of a State Party or in any other international Convention or agreement in force in that State.
- Any custom, tradition, cultural or religious practice that is inconsistent with the rights, duties and obligations contained in the present Charter shall to the extent of such inconsistency be discouraged.

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) defines a "child" as a human being below the age of 18. The idea through this definition is that the child is a human being with rights and dignity. The charter recognizes the child's unique and privileged place in African society and that African children need social protection and special care. It also acknowledges that children are entitled to the enjoyment of freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly, thought, religion, and conscience.

In addition, the ACRWC aim is to protect the private life of the child and safeguard the child against all forms of economic exploitation and against work that is hazardous, interferes with the child's education, or compromises his/her health or physical, social, mental, spiritual, and moral development. It also calls for protection against abuse and bad treatment, negative social and cultural practices, all forms of exploitation or sexual abuse, including commercial sexual exploitation, and illegal drug use. It also aims to prevent the sale and trafficking of children, kidnapping, and begging of children.

Children in Africa are affected by many different types of abuse, including economic and sexual exploitation, gender discrimination in education and access to health, and their involvement in armed conflict. Other factors affecting African children include migration, early marriage, differences between urban and rural areas, child-headed households, street children and poverty. Furthermore, child workers in Sub-Saharan Africa account for about 80 million children or 4 out of every 10 children under 14 years old, which is the highest child labor rate in the world.¹²

It is a common saying that children are the future leaders in the society, and they therefore deserve to be cared for and protected. As promising as children are to the continuous existence of the society, they are the most vulnerable members of the society. Millions of children in Africa have no access to education, work long hours under hazardous conditions, are forced to serve as soldiers in armed conflict, or languish in institutions or detention centers where they endure inhumane conditions and assaults on their dignity as humans.¹³

As a result, there is need for intervention programs that will promote the well-being and interest of the African child. Hence, demand for social protection programs especially for children within more empowered segments of the poor population in African societies is on the increase due to the historically high levels of poverty, faster economic growth, rapid urbanization, and increasingly open, pluralistic political systems. Resources required to meet this demand are substantial and bound to compete with investments required to accelerate and broaden the current economic recovery process. However, countries that fail to address the demand are likely to face social as well as political unrest.

International Food Policy Research Institute revealed that African governments are spending substantial and increasing amounts of resources on health and education, but efforts need to be made to noticeably improve access to these public services for the poor and vulnerable.¹⁴ It added that governments of African countries can and must make significant progress in developing functional social protection schemes as stability and growth of their economies depends largely on the extent to which progress is achieved in the well-being of their citizens, which invariably affects their productivity.

For centuries, the rights of children have been argued and the concept touches raw nerves when adult decisions and actions are put to the test.¹⁵ In addition, rights are entitlements, valuable commodities we do not have to beg to get.¹⁶ In other words, children are entitled to certain things in life, which will make their existence valuable and meaningful to them, and they are not supposed to struggle to get these benefits. Melton declares that in Africa, children's rights have not received general public or political support.¹⁷ He added that the rights of children are being perceived to be jeopardized rather than advancing them.

UNICEF revealed that in 1989 governments worldwide promised all children the same rights by adopting the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child.¹⁸ These rights are based on what the child needs to survive, develop, participate and to fulfill their potential. These rights apply equally to every child, regardless of who they are, or where they come from.

Children have rights as humans. The child's rights protect the child as a human being. The Convention on the Rights of the Child states clearly in 2003 that all children have rights that are inherent human rights, and that these should not be perceived as optional, as a question of favor or kindness to children, or as an expression of charity. These rights generate obligations and responsibilities. More than acknowledging the vulnerable nature of the child and the social responsibility to provide special assistance and protection, the Convention promotes the value of the child as a citizen, a partner in decision-making and in the broader process of social change.

The CRC thus envisions the "whole child" as a full, valuable, participating member of society. Children's rights are constituted by fundamental guarantees and essential human rights which state that children's rights recognize fundamental guarantees to all human beings—the right to life, the non-discrimination principle, the right to dignity through the protection of physical and mental integrity.¹⁹ Also, children's rights are civil and political rights, that is, the right to identity, the right to a nationality. In addition, children's rights are economic, social and cultural rights—the right to education, the right to a decent standard of living, the right to health. Children's rights include individual rights such as the right to live with his/her parents, the right to education, and the right to benefit from a protection. It also includes collective rights—e.g., rights of refugee and disabled children, rights of minority children.

The devastating effects of poverty, ill health, under nutrition, and poor education affect the physical, emotional, and cognitive development of millions of children in Africa who are overrepresented among the poor.²⁰ Indeed while poverty denies opportunities to people of all ages, there are several key reasons for a child-oriented approach in social protection. First, children have a right to social protection and to have their interests pronounced in policy. Second, children are at a higher risk of poverty because they are not independent economic actors and rely on the distribution of resources within their households or communities. In addition, children experience poverty in distinctly different ways from adults because poverty in childhood has immediate effects that influence a child's well-being. These can be sustained into adulthood (life course poverty

transmission) and also facilitate the transmission of disadvantage into the next generation (intergenerational transmission of poverty).

Children are key actors who often make huge contributions to the economic and social lives of their households. Yet there is still far too little understanding of how children experience poverty and vulnerability and what impoverishment means to them, or how their perceptions and priorities interact with those of local communities and the agendas of local, national and international agencies. The extent of generalized child vulnerability in Africa calls for evidence-based social protection measures to address poverty among children, households and communities.

Studies revealed that the West and Central African region (WCA) have the highest aggregate poverty and vulnerability levels in the world, as well as some of the most challenging governance environments. Demographically, children make up a very high percentage of the population (an average of 50 percent), but most countries in the region are significantly off-track in terms of meeting the child-related MDGs. This underscores the urgency of a child-sensitive approach to social protection interventions.

A child-sensitive approach to social protection needs to be informed by an understanding of the multiple and often intersecting vulnerabilities and risks that children and their caregivers encounter and how the ways in which experience of these vulnerabilities changes throughout childhood. Social protection can be conceptualized not only as being protective but also as preventative (preventing households from resorting to negative coping strategies that are harmful to children such as pulling them out of school and involving them in child labor), and promotional (promoting children's development through investments in their schooling, health and general care and protection).²¹

In addition, social protection can also be transformative, helping to tackle power imbalances in society that encourage, create and sustain vulnerabilities, and to support equity and empowerment.²² In the case of children, this can include measures that protect their rights as well as ensuring that all children have a voice and agency in their families, schools and communities, irrespective of gender, religion, ethnicity, race, class, ability or disability.

Operationally, Overseas Development Institute (ODI) refers the framework of social protection as a set of initiatives, formal and informal, that provide:

- Social assistance to poor children and households, including regular, predictable transfers (e.g., cash or in-kind, school scholarships, school feeding programs, health service fee waivers) from governments and non-governmental entities. These aims to reduce poverty and vulnerability, increase access to basic services and, in some cases, promote asset accumulation.
- Social services for marginalized groups of children who need special care, including child fostering systems, child-focused violence prevention and protection services, rehabilitation services after trafficking, and basic alternative education for child laborers.
- Social insurance to protect children and their families against the risks and consequences of livelihood, health and other shocks. Such insurance typically takes the form of subsidized risk-pooling mechanisms, with potential

contribution payment exemptions for the poor; and social equity measures to protect children and their families against social risks such as discrimination or abuse, including anti-discrimination legislation (e.g., laws to protect children from trafficking, early child marriage, harmful traditional practices or to ensure special treatment and rehabilitation services for young offenders). Such measures also include affirmative action measures (e.g., scholarships for children of ethnic minority or indigenous communities) to try to redress past patterns of discrimination.²³

Specific Vulnerable Conditions Affecting the African Child

Countries in Africa, specifically in west and central Africa, are highly vulnerable to a variety of economic, environmental, and socio-political shocks and stress, but there is also much diversity between countries. Countries in the region span different levels of economic development, ranging from high-income in Equatorial Guinea to middle-income in Congo, low-income to middle-income in Ghana and Senegal and least developed in Mali and Niger. There is also a diverse range of governance contexts including recent conflict (Congo, Niger), political fragility (Equatorial Guinea), and relatively open and vibrant democratic political cultures (Ghana, Mali and Senegal). Poverty rates also differ, from 29 percent in Ghana to 76.8 percent in Equatorial Guinea.

Taken as a whole, however, the region has the highest under-five mortality rate; accounts for more than 30 percent of global maternal deaths; lags far behind in universal primary education (with a net enrolment rate of just 62 percent); and has high child stunting indicators at 36 percent.²⁴ Children in WCA are exposed to the risks of exploitation, including child labor and trafficking, which can be particularly aggravated in the context of violence and conflict. In countries such as these, children are recruited as fighters, cooks, porters and so forth, which exposes them to a host of risks, including psychological trauma, drug addiction, and social stigma, in addition to the obvious risks posed by extreme violence.

Social and cultural factors also influence high rates of poverty and vulnerability. Vulnerability is often a complex interplay of different factors, including gender relations, discrimination and power imbalances. Gender inequality is pervasive in the region: the 2007/08 Gender-related Development Index (GDI) finds 12 WCA countries in the 20 lowest ranking countries.²⁵ Girls grow up vulnerable to male violence, ill-health, early marriage and maternal death, and face limited work opportunities and persistent poverty due to lack of education.

Domestic violence is also believed to be widespread and a number of harmful gendered traditional practices persist in the region. The most widespread is Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or Cutting (FGC). Prevalence varies widely between countries, from less than 10 percent in Ghana, Niger and Cameroon to over 90 percent in Guinea and Mali. Other practices include various forms of indentured labor and exploitation, ranging from the tradition of *talibe* (a form of indentured labor of boys to local mosques) in countries such as Mali and Senegal, to that of *troski* (a form of indentured sexual slavery) in northern Ghana.

These vulnerabilities impact children in ways such that social protection policy and programming must remain particularly sensitive, given the impacts that child deprivation can have both present effect but across children's life-courses and inter-generationally.²⁶ Consequently, there is a pressing need for a more detailed understanding of the wide variety of social protection policies and programs that presently exist throughout the continent, and the impacts they have on children—whether they directly target children or affect them indirectly. An understanding of the central challenges and opportunities facing social protection systems can help to inform current and future efforts to extend social protection to the most marginalized and vulnerable children on the continent.

Challenges of Child-Sensitive Social Protection in Africa

In Africa, there are challenges that affect the effectiveness, accessibility, and sustainability of existing social protection efforts, and the introduction of new initiatives aiming to tackle the multi-dimensional risks and vulnerabilities affecting the African child. These challenges are: the political economy of social protection, fiscal space constraints, socio-cultural attitudes, and weak evidence generation and dissemination systems.

The *political economy* of many African states poses serious limitations to social protection policy and programming across the continent. Governance systems are often characterized by neo-patrimonial patronage structures manifested in political and fiscal centralization, which directly impedes both legal rule and human development objectives.²⁷ Many African states also suffer from political instability as a result of ongoing violent conflicts. Such instability not only puts households and communities directly at risk, but also creates dysfunctions in governance and accountability, which limit the state's ability to provide for children's security from abuse and poverty.

Second, most African states face serious *fiscal space constraints*, which although varied between sub-regions nonetheless remain a consistent challenge for most governments. The ILO estimates that universal social assistance demands roughly 3 percent of a country's GDP, while 1 percent is required for a social pension, and 1–2 percent for child-related transfers and roughly 3–4 percent for basic health insurance.²⁸ In the poorest African countries, these necessary fiscal resources may not exist, while even in middle-to-higher income states, fiscal space is routinely limited by governance and administrative capacity deficits, exacerbated by downturns in government revenue during times of economic challenge.²⁹

Moreover, many countries rely heavily on expensive food and energy subsidies, which are often regressive and disproportionately limited to high-income households, yet which have simultaneously become entrenched behind difficult-to-remove institutional barriers.³⁰ Fiscal space constraints, in turn, typically presage the need for heavy involvement from multilateral and bilateral donors in the design, implementation, promotion and evaluation of social protection policy and programming. This support can, however, often result in limited government ownership and control over program objectives. Donors may also hold distinct

or even conflicting social protection agendas, hampering more harmonized policy and programming inputs. The result is often reduced high-level political buy-in for social protection approaches.³¹

Third, tensions between the wider aims and principles of social protection and those of traditional *socio-cultural attitudes*, beliefs, and practices toward children and gender often impede broader progress toward transformative child-sensitive social protection programs. At the governmental level, African political traditions typically downplay the importance of the state as a provider of fundamental security and well-being, while fears persist of the role of social transfers in fostering cultures of dependency among populations.

Broader social values and attitudes toward child vulnerability and protection are, as noted above, also often at odds with the goals of child-sensitive social protection, particularly regarding traditional harmful practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), early child marriage, and the discriminatory treatment of children by gender, age, ethnicity, and/or disability. Such attitudes may impair progress toward social protection and social equity in the household and the wider community, and increase risks and inequalities to children in terms of both their basic livelihoods and the achievement of wider justice for children.³²

Finally, the absence of an institutionalized evidence-based political culture presents a challenge to effective social protection policy development and programming. This should not be under-estimated. Reliable data on poverty and vulnerability, and related social spending, disaggregated by gender and age, is very limited in most countries in African. This makes it difficult to tailor social protection initiatives in a child-sensitive way. Data constraints are further compounded by limited capacity of many government institutions, NGOs and national legislatures to oversee and effectively use data, even when data exist. Monitoring, evaluation and learning mechanisms to track progress and promote knowledge sharing about ongoing social protection initiatives are also very rudimentary and poorly coordinated in most contexts.

How to Improve Child-Sensitive Social Protection in Africa

With the above challenges in mind, African governments and their development partners wishing to improve the effectiveness of their social protection efforts should heed the following suggestions.

Avoid a narrow approach to child-sensitive social protection: As highlighted above, an array of potentially complementary social protection instruments are available, and should be selected on the basis of a carefully considered child-sensitive vulnerability assessment. The popularity and ubiquity of cash transfers as a centerpiece of African social protection programming throughout the last decade too often obscures opportunities to advance broader, multidimensional protection agendas. Cash transfers can indeed be critical in reducing household insecurity and poverty, and promoting human capital development. However, in pursuing these approaches exclusively, governments risk failing to take into account the deeper social dimensions of child vulnerability, such as its inter-generational origins or roots in embedded discrimination or harmful practices. They can also fail to make

use of the wider array of improved social protection mechanisms, such as social insurance, social equity measures and legislation, in-kind transfers, and subsidized services. Given the many socio-cultural impediments to improving child-sensitive social protection agendas, it is also important to expand the horizons of social protection systems beyond strict social service delivery and transfers, to a more ambitious agenda of transformative change aimed at redressing the power inequalities in societies that lead to child vulnerabilities in the first place. At the same time, the design and rollout of formal social protection initiatives needs to be informed by an understanding of more informal social protection mechanisms, in order to identify potential synergies and avoid undermining more indigenous safety net approaches for children.

Avoid overly complex program design: In light of the serious limitations to administrative and coordination capacity that are present throughout many African governments, careful thought should be given to avoiding unnecessary complexity in social protection programs and mechanisms for eligibility. A cost-benefit calculation must be made regarding universal versus targeted approaches based on the fiscal space and political economy of the country in question. Pursuing a targeted approach may reduce overall costs in comparison to a universal approach, and therefore represent the better choice for fiscally constrained states; however, it is important to keep in mind that targeted approaches can also often require costly investments in skilled staff and sophisticated monitoring and conditionality mechanisms.³³

Do not overlook short-term stop-gap measures while developing longer-term social protection systems: Developing new, efficient social protection systems and/or improving existing systems are important, but such efforts can also prove to be lengthy undertakings. Until well-functioning systems are in place, governments must also retain the ability to provide short-term responses to vulnerabilities facing their populations in the present. Growing evidence regarding the potentially regressive and cost-ineffective nature of universal subsidies compared to more targeted approaches, for instance, may point to the need for reform; however, rapidly dismantling popular programs such as food subsidies in response can increase vulnerability in the interim. If political leaders do not introduce such measures properly, with good public communication, they can provoke popular backlash against otherwise-needed social protection reforms.

Improve the evidence base, knowledge management and lesson sharing around child-sensitive social protection policy and programming: It is imperative to enhance current understanding of existing child-sensitive social protection efforts, through expanded and better-coordinated research efforts, monitoring and evaluation. A stronger evidence base could greatly improve existing understanding of how child-sensitive program design and implementation may best be tailored to existing social protection policies and programming. At the same time, better data could equip policymakers with a powerful tool, skills needed to equip these ministries with the ability to present and defend their budget proposals with confidence when dealing with more-powerful finance ministries. Greater capacity-building and training in key ministries charged with child-sensitive social protection policy—particularly for allocating limited resources and advancing their social

protection agendas through the use of persuasive evidence that shows the advantages of child-sensitive social protection for governments and communities, both in the short-term and inter-generationally.

Conclusion

The vulnerability of children in the African continent is very alarming. Many children are exposed to life-threatening situations with little or no defense, but over the last decade across Africa, the governments have been pursuing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other development initiatives in order to reduce the population of vulnerable members. One of the interventions is the social protection whose objective is to reduce social and economic risk and vulnerability, and to alleviate extreme poverty and deprivation among the people of Africa. This initiative is meant to inform the authorities about their human rights obligations and how to implement them in order to give their citizens the good life they deserve.

However, there are challenges that affect the effectiveness, accessibility, and sustainability of existing social protection efforts, as well as the introduction of new initiatives aiming to tackle the multi-dimensional risks and vulnerabilities affecting the African child. These challenges range from the political economy of social protection, fiscal space constraints, socio-cultural attitudes, and weak evidence generation and dissemination systems. To tackle these problems, avoiding a narrow approach to child-sensitive social protection, avoiding overly complex program design, not overlooking the short-term stop-gap measures while developing longer-term social protection systems and improving the evidence base, knowledge management and lesson sharing around child-sensitive social protection policy and programming were suggested ways to improve the effectiveness of their social protection efforts.

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