Who are the Vulnerable Children?

The World Bank’s Policy Framework

Presentation for the Workshop ”Helping Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in Africa: Tips for Practitioners” Washington DC, October 27-29, 2004
A Strategy for Social Protection


- **SRM includes**
  - three strategies to deal with risk: prevention, mitigation and coping,
  - three levels of formality of risk management: informal, market-based and public, and,
  - many actors: individuals, households, communities, non-governmental organizations, governments at various levels, and international organizations,
  - all against the background of asymmetric information, and different types of risk.
Vulnerability: A core concept of SRM

- In the Social Risk Management Framework “Vulnerability” is defined as:

  "the likelihood of being harmed by unforeseen events or as susceptibility to exogenous shocks”

- A vulnerable household is a household with a poor ability to:
  - prevent the likelihood of shocks hitting the household,
  - reduce the likelihood of a negative impact if shocks were to hit,
  - cope with shocks and their negative impact when realized.
What is Child Vulnerability?

- In the perspective of SRM, OVC are children who typically face a higher risk than their local peers of:
  
  ✓ infant, child and adolescent mortality
  ✓ low immunization, low access to health services, high malnutrition, high burden of disease
  ✓ low school enrollment rates, high repetition rates, poor school performance and/or high drop out rates
  ✓ intra-household neglect vis-à-vis other children in the household (reduced access to attention, food, care)
  ✓ family and community abuse and maltreatment (harassment and violence)
  ✓ economic and sexual exploitation, due to lack of care and protection.
Child vulnerability is relative

- A child is vulnerable if there is a high probability, relative to others in the population, that a shock (such as famine) will cause a negative outcome (such as malnutrition).

- While all children by nature are vulnerable to some extent, they are not equally so:

Child vulnerability is a relative, not an absolute state. The degrees of child vulnerability can be seen as a downward spiral where each loop downward in the spiral leads to a situation where the child is more likely to experience a negative outcome as a result of a shock. The 'spiral' concept adds to the vulnerability definition by allowing for multiple stages of vulnerability.
The Downward Spiral of Child Vulnerability

A child in a poor household or a household with a poor social network is even more vulnerable.

Even an ordinary child depends on the support and supervision of caring adults.

The child loses protection and/or is gradually forced to support him/herself.

The child disconnects completely with family and household.

A shock to the household worsens the situation (one parent dies, loses his/her job, becomes ill or disabled, covariant shock to community...)

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Interventions should happen at all levels of the spiral!

Prevention for children@risk

Coping for the most critically vulnerable
The downward spiral simplified: A cause-consequence tree with some examples

**Prevention**
- HH in extreme distress/poverty/crisis
  - hunger
  - conflict
  - desperation
  - parental illness/mental illness

**Mitigation**
- HH unable to cover child’s special needs
  - child disabled or traumatized
  - parental limitations
  - extreme demands
- HH neglecting, abusive or ignorant
  - alcohol/drugs
  - ignorance
  - violence
  - step-parenthood
- HH affected by war or natural disaster
  - displacement
  - refuge
  - migration
- Death of parents
  - AIDS
  - war
  - maternal death
  - other cause

**Coping**
- Expulsion of child/child runs away
  - In the street or public places
    - Car stations
    - other stations
    - markets
    - street lights
    - other public places
  - In the worst forms of child labor
    - mines/quarries
    - domestic servitude
    - brothels
    - armed forces
    - abusive farms
  - In institutions
    - orphanages
    - SOS villages
    - juvenile detention
    - jails
    - shelters
  - Abusive/neglecting households
    - bad foster care
    - child domestic servitude
  - Caregivers unable to cover children’s needs
    - elderly relatives
    - too many ch.
    - ch. traumatized by parental death
    - disabled ch.

**Positive outcome**
- Child headed households
How Many?

- 39 million orphans (or 12.3% of 0-15 year olds), 16 million of whom orphaned by AIDS (28% of all orphans)
- 7 million double orphans, 5 million of whom because of AIDS
- 3 million 0-14 year old children live with HIV/AIDS
- 5+ million displaced or refugee children
- 120,000 child soldiers
- 2+ million children severely injured or traumatized by conflict
- 3 million children of the street, 27 million in the street
- 600,000 children in “worst forms” of labor
- 2+ million children in hazardous work (domestic servants, mining)
- 10+ million disabled children

ABOUT 20% OR OVER 70 MILLION (0-17)
5 main OVC areas for Bank’s involvement

- Orphans in general, and children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS in particular.
- Children associated with armed groups and other children made vulnerable by armed conflict.
- Street children.
- Children in the worst forms of child labor.
- Children living with a disability.