

Enhanced Protection for Children Affected by AIDS

A companion paper to
*The Framework for the
Protection, Care and
Support of Orphans and
Vulnerable Children
Living in a World
with HIV and AIDS*



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

All children have the right to protection. A child whose family is wealthy can still be raped or beaten. A girl in a loving family may still be married against her will where this is the social norm. But the risks for children increase when their families are poor, when children lack access to basic services or are stigmatized within their communities.

Parents are children's first line of protection, and the risks of exploitation and abuse increase when parents or caregivers are absent due to illness, death or abandonment. Because such problems are likely to cluster in the lives of children affected by AIDS, they are particularly vulnerable to protection violations. Reaching this group of children can be difficult because they may be hidden from view due to the stigma surrounding HIV.

Children affected by AIDS share many vulnerabilities with children who have disabilities, children who are discriminated against due to the colour of their skin and children who have lost their parents as a result of armed conflict. The past seven years have seen increasing engagement by the international community on HIV and children.

Many international and non-governmental organizations have endorsed *The Framework for the Protection, Care and Support of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Living in a World with HIV and AIDS (The Framework)*, which outlines key strategies and actions. In October 2005, the *Unite for Children*,

Unite against AIDS global campaign was launched. Among the central goals of the campaign are the protection, care and support of children affected by AIDS. Many countries heavily affected by the epidemic have responded by developing their own plans of action for orphans and vulnerable children, creating a mechanism for coordination and oversight as governments work closely with civil society.

The *Enhanced Protection* companion paper to *The Framework* provides additional information, new research and outlines recommended actions for protecting affected children from increased vulnerability, and for reducing their increased risk of abuse, exploitation and neglect.

Protection for children affected by AIDS requires strengthening national and community-level

responses for all vulnerable children. Governments and civil society organizations, as well as their partners, can make real progress towards this goal by enhancing social protection, legal protection and justice, and alternative care. This work must be underpinned by efforts to address the silence and stigma that allow HIV-related discrimination, abuse and exploitation of children to continue.



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Actively seeking the perceptions and experiences of children in these circumstances is key to supporting their resilience and agency. Protection also requires strengthening government authorities that hold the bulk of responsibility, so they can more efficiently provide oversight and coordination. This responsibility often falls to government social welfare agencies but may include agencies for health, education and other sectors. Priority actions needed in each of these areas are detailed in the following matrix.

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Save the Children Alliance, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and World Vision.

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MATRIX OF ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The actions and recommendations presented below invite governments and donor organizations to mobilize resources in protecting children affected by AIDS and to partner with civil society and communities in designing and implementing responses appropriate to their needs.

ACTION AREA	ACTION
Social protection	Implement social transfer programmes to ensure the most vulnerable families are able to meet their basic needs.
	Invest in family support services and ensure appropriate links with social assistance programmes for maximum impact.
	Engage and partner with communities in planning and monitoring social transfers and family support services.
Legal protection and justice	Combat disinheritance , especially among orphans and widows, by amending legislation, sensitizing community leaders to existing laws, making the process of registering and executing wills easier, and promoting public education on wills and trusts.
	Improve civil registration systems by eliminating fees, making civil registries more accessible through decentralization and linking birth registration with other commonly accessed services.
	Strengthen and/or develop specialized child protective services in police, justice and social welfare systems that provide a safe environment and sensitive procedures for children who experience abuse and exploitation.
	Strengthen, develop and implement legislation and enforcement policies on child labour, trafficking, sexual abuse and exploitation that are in line with international standards to protect children and criminalize and penalize offenders.
	Support community-based monitoring mechanisms that include building the capacity of teachers, health and community workers, and youth organizations to identify children at risk, report on cases of abuse and exploitation, and provide referrals.
Alternative care	Develop effective means of supporting and monitoring informal care arrangements to ensure children are protected in extended families and other settings where parents are not present.
	Improve the formal care system to reduce overuse, guard against protection violations, encourage appropriate permanency planning, and provide opportunities for children and caregivers to express their preferences.
	Develop government and community-based protection and monitoring mechanisms that are supported by national guidelines and standards for care providers.

CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATIONS

ACTION AREA	ACTION
Address stigma related to HIV, abuse and exploitation	Facilitate open discussion to promote community-owned social change for children and ensure appropriate participation.
	Sensitize the media to issues of HIV and protection risks, and develop guidelines for reporting abuses.
	Train national and community leaders to stimulate discussion on child protection issues and HIV.
Strengthen the state's social welfare sector	Increase budgetary allocations to government agencies responsible for social welfare, alternative care and protective services within national frameworks, to a level adequate, at minimum, for providing statutory services and coordinating and regulating services provided by local government and non-governmental agencies.
	Invest in human resources within the social welfare system to increase the size, competency and reach of staff from both government and non-governmental service providers.
	Develop regulations, guidelines and coordination mechanisms aimed at improving implementation of social protection policies and ensuring more effective service provision.

This publication reflects the experience of endorsing agencies around an issue of common concern. The principles and policies of each agency are governed by the relevant decisions of its governing body. Each agency implements the interventions described in this document in accordance with these principles and policies and within the scope of its mandate.

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Bernard van Leer Foundation



Better
Care
Network



CCABA: The Coalition
on Children
Affected by AIDS



Global Action for Children

Global AIDS Alliance



HelpAge
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