

Livelihood-Based Social Protection for Orphans and Vulnerable Children:

Success Stories from Malawi



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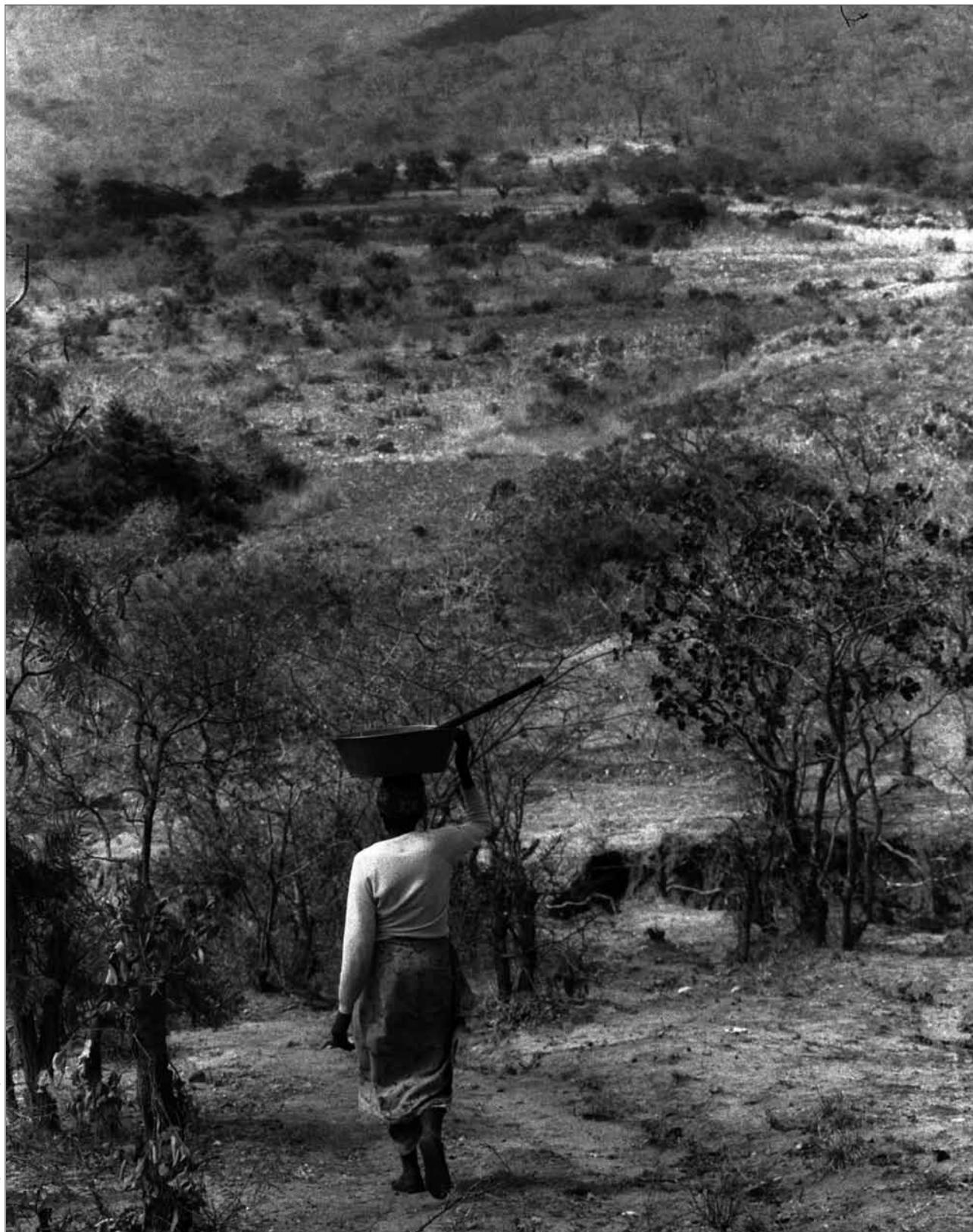
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Acronyms

ADP	Area Development Programme
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CADECOM	Catholic Development Commission of Malawi
CAHC	Community-assisted Household Childcare
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CBCC	Community-based Childcare Centre
CBO	Community-based Organization
CMC	Community-managed Childcare
CMDC	Community-managed Day Childcare
CMRC	Community-managed Residential Childcare
COPE	Community-based Options for Protection and Empowerment
CORE	Communities Responding to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic
CPAR	Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief
DA	District Assembly
DfID	Department for International Development (UK)
ESCOM	Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi
EU	European Union
FAO	Farming and Agriculture Organization
FBO	Faith-based Organization
FY	Fiscal Year
GNCH	Good News Children's Home
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation Agency
GVH	Group Village Headman
HBC	Home-based Care
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
JFFLS	Junior Farmer Field and Life School

MANASO	Malawi Network of AIDS Support Organizations
MASAF	Malawi Social Action Fund
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoCS	Ministry of Community Services
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEPD	Ministry of Economic Planning and Development
MoH	Ministry of Health
MSH	Management Sciences for Health
NAC	National AIDS Commission
NGO	Non-governmental Organizations
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NPA	National Plan of Action
NRU	Nutritional Rehabilitation Unit
OSA	Orphan Support Africa
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
RAAAP	Rapid Assessment, Analysis and Action Planning
RHVP	Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme for HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSL	Village Savings and Loans
WFP	World Food Programme



Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce to you this network paper, which documents success stories from Malawi of livelihood-based social protection programmes for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). The programmes have improved the lives of the children they reach significantly. They have demonstrated that with a livelihood-based approach, notable changes can be achieved in children's lives, including improved food and nutrition security, acquisition of productive livelihood skills, improved health, spiritual and social life, and reduced poverty and vulnerability. There is an urgent need to learn from these stories and increase our efforts to extend and replicate such programmes throughout the region, so that we can reach a larger number of vulnerable children.

This study is a result of the joint efforts of several stakeholders that form the Regional Inter-Agency Task Team on Children and HIV and AIDS (RIATT) in East and Southern Africa. In particular, I wish to mention the national OVC Technical Working Group and the National Social Support Technical Committee. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Community Development gave continuous support and guidance to the study.

RIATT is a regional multi-sectoral mechanism that was formed in October 2006, with a broad representation which includes participants from the African Union, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Parliamentary Forum, international cooperating partners, civil society partners and academia, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). These stakeholders share a common objective of galvanizing and coordinating efforts to alleviate the impacts of poverty and HIV on children in these regions in a sustainable manner.

This paper is a critical document for sharing best practices and lessons learned and advocating for the promotion and scaling up of livelihood based social protection programmes for orphans and vulnerable children. This type of programming addresses the core of the issue of the persistent vulnerability of children as a result of HIV and AIDS, poverty and other social challenges which persist, despite the extensive work being done by a number of social services and humanitarian organizations. The paper

documents durable solutions that meet the inadequacies of current interventions and programmes.

SADC statistics from 2008 indicate that 15 per cent of children in Malawi were orphaned. There are even harsher realities in other parts of the region, such as Zambia and Zimbabwe, where about 20 per cent of children were estimated to be orphaned. Malawi is a country of over 13 million people, where two million children suffer chronically from not only lack of food and nutrition security, but the dignity that comes from a self-realized productive livelihood. It is vital to look beyond the need for immediate solutions to pull these orphaned and vulnerable children out of destitution, and to pursue more sustainable long-term interventions that ensure that children do not regress when support is no longer available; interventions that provide the needed assistance but also ensure that children are empowered to realize their full potential in life and play their much-needed role in nation-building.

I hope that this paper will be widely read and will inspire the promotion, development and up-scaling of livelihood programmes that take a holistic view of human development and prioritize the sustainability and predictability of livelihoods over short-term outcomes.

Cindy F. Holleman
Sub-Regional Emergency Coordinator of
Southern Africa





Part 1: Situation Analysis

Acknowledgements



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Chronology of OVC Social Protection Initiatives in Malawi

1991	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified
1991	First National Consultation on the Situation of OVC held, leading to the formation of the National Task Force on OVC
1992	OVC policy guidelines produced
1993/4	OVC Needs Assessment & National OVC Situation Analysis on Care Practices commissioned
1996	Foundation laid for a National Orphan Care Programme
1999	Orphan Care Training Manual and Best Practices Compendium produced
2003	National Orphan Care Policy adopted
2004	RAAAP process commissioned
2005	NPA for OVC, 2005-2009 adopted

Adapted from NPA 2005-2009, June 2005

Introduction

Background

This Situation Analysis Report is part of a broader review and assessment of agricultural and livelihood-based social protection for orphans and other vulnerable children (OVC) programmes in Malawi that are deemed to have potential for replication and scaling up. The United Nations (UN) and Partners Alliance for livelihood-based social protection for OVC champions this initiative against the background of a widely acknowledged need for a coordinated approach and response among a multiplicity of stakeholders to reduce transaction costs, and improve efficiency and effectiveness in the efforts that are intended to build a better future for OVC. During the Global OVC Partners Forum in October 2003, a decision was made to undertake joint rapid assessment, analysis and action planning (RAAAP) to act as a basis for OVC national responses. The overall objective of the RAAAP process was to identify immediate key actions needed to significantly scale up national multisectoral responses in a number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, the need for coordination and leadership on OVC issues was acknowledged and expressed by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) ministers in 2004 through the Cape Town Declaration, and further by the inter-governmental conference in 2006 through what is known as the Livingstone Call for Action.

Following such appeals for greater commitment, cooperation and action to provide social protection, countries in the region have made various responses. By mid 2005, sixteen countries in southern and eastern Africa, including Malawi, completed the first RAAAP phase which resulted in the design of the SADC National Plan of Action (NPA) for OVC. The UN and Partners Alliance for livelihood-based social protection for OVC was formed in early 2006 between UN agencies (FAO [Food and Agricultural Organization], UNICEF [United Nations Children's Fund] and WFP [World Food Programme]), governments (line ministries for the NPA), and civil society organizations such as CARE (Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere) and Oxfam.

In Malawi, the RAAAP process was commissioned in 2004, facilitated by a national task force for OVC with support from the technical working group on

OVC which comprised technical staff from UNICEF, UNAIDS (Joint United Nations Programme for HIV/AIDS), USAID (United States Agency for International Development) and WFP. The RAAAP contributed a great deal to the development of the 2005–2009 NPA for OVC. The development of the NPA was facilitated by a country steering committee which comprised members from key line ministries of government, UN agencies, donors, the National AIDS Commission and the chair of the national task force for OVC.

The need to reconsider the livelihood part of the social protection agenda for orphans and other vulnerable children

In Malawi, it is generally acknowledged that the development of the NPA has raised the profile of OVC and led to improvements in funding OVC projects. However, it has also been argued, both in the country and in the region, that support to OVC projects has mainly focused on education and child protection without adequately addressing the livelihood-based social protection needs of OVC¹. Based on this assertion, FAO was mandated to review and assess innovative agricultural and livelihood programmes from the perspective of the emerging social protection agenda for OVC and in the context of HIV and AIDS in the eastern and southern African regions, in order to identify promising practices that could be replicated and scaled up. This study is therefore part of this regional effort.

1. A framework to review and assess innovative agricultural and livelihood programmes related to the emerging social protection agenda for children vulnerable to and from HIV and AIDS, February 2006.

Discussion of Key Terms and Concepts



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Social protection

Social protection is broadly defined as: “all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalized, with the objectives of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalized groups” (Norton, A., *et al*, 2001).

From this perspective, social protection efforts deal not only with absolute deprivation, risks and vulnerability of the poorest, but also cover initiatives that aim to guard against shocks and stresses that would push the currently non-poor into a downward spiral of poverty. ‘Public’ in this case refers to actions or responses of government and civil society organizations, or a combination of institutions from these sectors. According to Norton, the overall rationale for social protection is “to promote dynamic, cohesive and stable societies through increased equity and security”.

Social protection interventions can be classified into three categories depending on their primary function in impacting on people’s livelihoods (Dorward, A., *et al*, 2007). These are: 1) welfare instruments which provide relief and sometimes recovery from deprivation; 2) risk-insurance instruments which seek to avert deprivation by establishing robust and accessible recovery mechanisms; and 3) resilience-building instruments which aim to enhance real incomes and capabilities, build assets and promote resistance.

Similarly, the regional hunger and vulnerability programme (RHVP) summarizes the perspectives of the various models into three important functions of social protection as: to provide for those who are unable to provide for themselves; to prevent shocks from devastating households; and to promote households by helping them to lift themselves out of poverty (RHVP, June 2007). Within this framework, social protection interventions could be said to be designed for:

- *Provision or risk coping.* These include the most basic safety-net transfers to save lives during emergency, for example, disaster relief.
- *Prevention or mitigation.* These social transfers aim

to prevent deprivation or destitution before it happens by various insurance mechanisms, for example, savings and credit clubs.

- *Promotion or risk reduction.* These social transfers aim to protect livelihoods as well as enhance incomes and capabilities, for example, school meals support both nutrition and education, and conditional cash transfers.
- Other frameworks include a fourth category, *transformation*, which seeks to address concerns of social equity and exclusion. Transformative interventions include changes to the regulatory framework to protect socially vulnerable groups, as well as sensitization campaigns to transform public attitudes and behaviour and enhance social equity, for instance, the HIV/AIDS Anti-Stigma Campaign (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004).

Social support framework for Malawi

Social protection can mean different things to different people depending on the situation and objectives. In Malawi, a decision was taken in November 2006 to use the term ‘social support’ and not ‘social protection’. For this reason, and for the purposes of this report, the terms ‘social support’ and ‘social protection’ have been used interchangeably.

Social support initiatives in Malawi have largely been in the form of social safety-net provision to the ultra-poor, orphans and other vulnerable groups in times of disaster such as floods and droughts. Social support provision of relief food, clothing or shelter is regarded as a moral obligation of government to save lives and alleviate the suffering of its citizens. However, there is increasing realization that social safety nets must be complimented by durable mechanisms for promoting production among the poor and vulnerable in order to increase their ability to produce for themselves and reduce dependence on handouts.

For this reason, the then Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (MoEPD), now the Ministry of Development Planning and Cooperation, has drafted a framework to guide the planning and implementation of social support interventions in Malawi (Draft Social Support Policy, November 2008). The framework draws extensively from the other livelihood and social protection frameworks. The social

support framework, in particular, focuses on households and individuals below the Malawi poverty line.

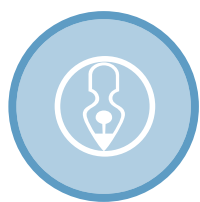
Livelihood-based social protection

Livelihood. A livelihood comprises people, their capabilities and their means of living, including food, income and assets. Simply put, a livelihood is a ways people make a living and meet the needs of their lives.

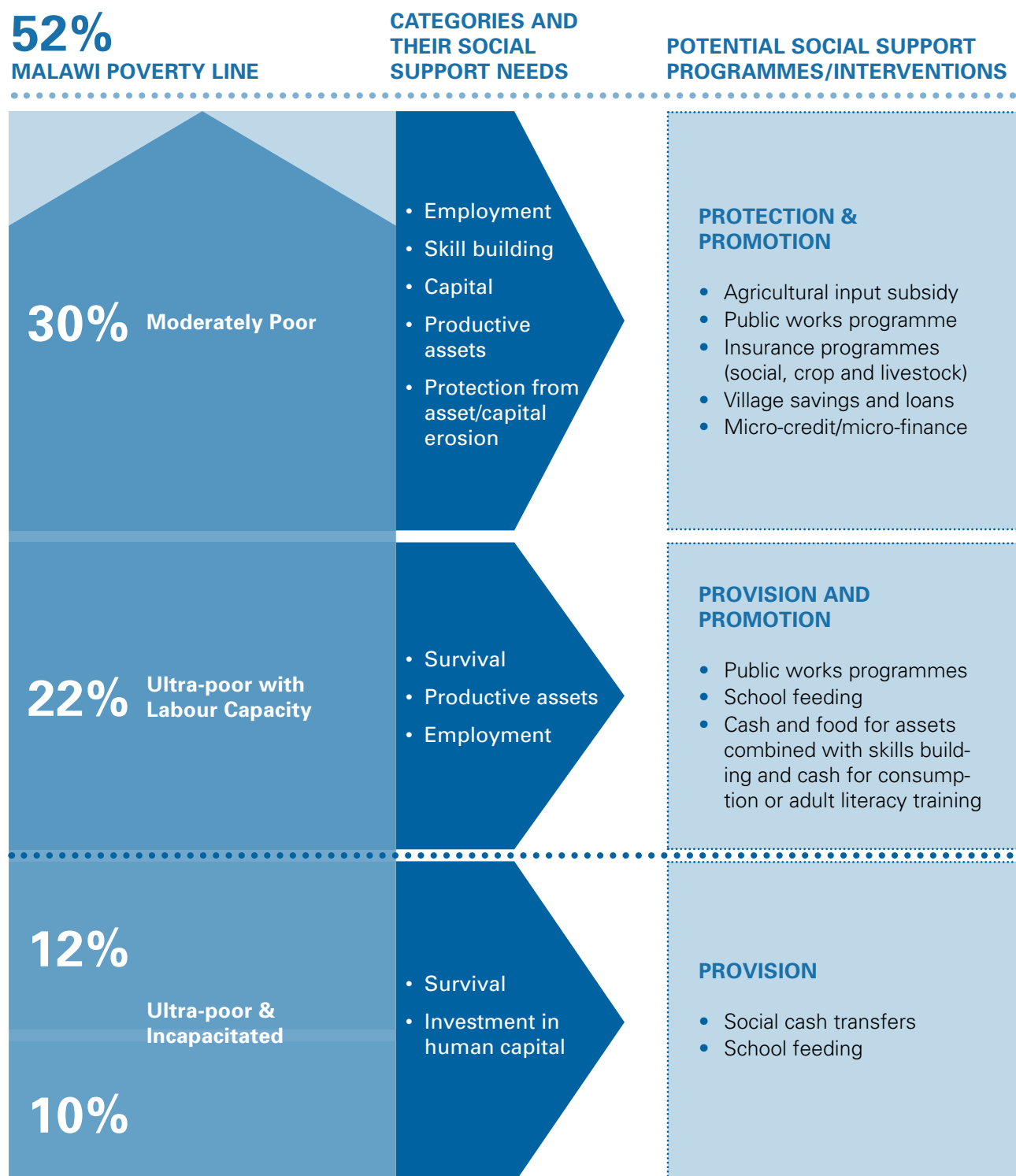
Livelihood-based social protection. An initiative therefore qualifies to be a livelihood-based social protection intervention if it provides means of bringing the most vulnerable groups into the development process through protection, prevention and promotion within a transformative agenda to ensure the immediate and future livelihoods of these groups.

Devereux and his colleagues have argued that “although there are linkages between some form of social protection and livelihood promotion, social protection is never enough on its own to address the underlying causes of chronic poverty and vulnerability, which in rural Malawi are largely a product of lack of assets at the household level and market failures at the sectoral level, in a context of recurrent natural risks and policy failures at the national level” (Devereux, *et al*, 2006). According to RHVP, substantial and sustained investment (to reduce vulnerability) is required in the following priority areas:

- Strengthening production such as improving security of access to land, livestock and farm inputs, promoting small-scale irrigation, supporting more diversified, sustainable and drought-resilient farming systems, and building in measures to adapt to climate change, especially in small-scale agriculture;
- Supporting markets, especially in food and agriculture;
- Enhancing off-farm employment opportunities;
- Building infrastructure and assets;
- Improving basic services such as health and education services, including those aimed at curbing HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria;
- Reducing social marginalisation and exclusion;



Draft Outline Social Support Programme



*To be funded jointly by Government with support from development partners through a single Social Support Basket Mechanism

- Strengthening governance institutions and policy processes; and
- Expanding public revenue.

The UN and Partners Alliance identify four important points that must be considered when dealing with livelihood-based social protection for OVC:

- Not all social protection is livelihoods based;
- Targeting is critical, particularly with regard to OVC in the context of HIV and AIDS, and within their household and community environments;
- The purpose of livelihood-based social protection is to protect the destitute, to prevent the vulnerable from sliding into destitution, and to promote future livelihoods of OVC. This purpose is framed by a transformative agenda towards empowering OVC and meeting the needs of caregivers; and
- The mechanism of livelihood-based social protection must be accessible, inexpensive and predictable – excluding ad hoc welfare-type interventions.

Both these standpoints strengthen the importance of considering livelihood within the broader social protection framework. Within the Malawi social support framework, livelihood issues come in at the following two stages:

- Provision and promotion (ultra poor households with labour); and
- Protection and promotion (moderately poor households).

The basic consideration is that poor and vulnerable households have some capacity to engage in productive economic choices and can therefore be assisted to earn a living and eventually graduate out of poverty. OVC and households taking care of OVC prominently feature in this category.

Orphans and other vulnerable children

The Malawi Government defines an orphan as a child under the age of 18 years who has lost one or both parents because of death. A vulnerable child is defined as a child who has no parents or guardians, stays alone or with elderly parents, or lives in a sibling-headed household, or has no fixed place of abode and lacks access to health care, material and psychological

care, education and has no shelter (National OVC Policy, 2003).

By implication, not all orphans may be vulnerable children, and not all vulnerable children are orphans. However, increased deaths of prime-age parents due to AIDS and the resultant failure of the extended family system to cope with the burden of care and support for the orphans has increased the probability of orphaned children being vulnerable. In other words, a child who has lost one or both parents faces very high risk of future poverty.

Devereux *et al* have noted that “many Malawians are more vulnerable today than in the past because hazards appear to have increased.” They cite as some of the factors that have decreased people’s ability to cope as being erratic rainfall and food production, increased spread of HIV, volatile prices and markets failures, and an overwhelmed informal social support network that is no longer able to provide assistance. They further observe that “poorer households care for more orphans than richer households, and female-headed households have, on average, more orphans across the income range, with poorer female-headed households caring for the most orphans” (Devereux, *et al*, 2006). This implies that many more children (orphan and non-orphan) face a high risk of poverty due to natural and man-made disasters.

The importance of the extended family system in providing care and support for OVC, as recognised by the National Policy on OVC (2003), cannot be challenged. However, it is also acknowledged, as highlighted above, that extended families have generally been over-stretched to the extent that without external support, they may not cope with the increased burden of OVC care and support. Besides, most of the support that is provided by or through the extended family system tends to be for relief to minimize deprivation and save lives of OVC; it is rarely designed to empower the communities or OVC to develop mechanisms for averting deprivation and building resilience.

Orphans and Vulnerable Children: Related Policies and Strategies

The Government of Malawi has committed itself to uplifting the livelihoods of OVC through various policies, strategies and legal instruments, and by adopting or ratifying international agreements and charters.

An important step towards this process was the development and adoption of the National Policy on Orphans and other Vulnerable Children in 2003; its overarching goal is “to facilitate support for care, protection, and development of OVC in a coordinated manner in order to provide them with an environment in which they realize their full rights and potentials.” Among other issues, the policy emphasizes the importance of extended family and active participation of communities in providing care and support through community-based approaches. Guided by this policy, the National Plan of Action (NPA) for OVC 2005-2009, launched in 2005, is another

milestone that has improved funding opportunities and enhanced responsive action for OVC interventions by the government and its partners. The plan commits the Government of Malawi to take practical steps to ensure that the rights of all OVC are fully met. It outlines actions to be implemented and financial requirements necessary to promote the survival, growth, development, well-being and protection of OVC in the country.

Following government’s commitment and adoption of these two documents, through the grants facility, the National AIDS Commission committed a total of US\$19.5 million from the Global Fund for five years (beginning in 2005) to intervene in three strategic areas of the NPA:

- Social cash transfer scheme;
- Legal environment; and
- Monitoring and evaluation.



The fund also provides support in capacity building (strategic area 4).

With the funding support, the National Social Cash Transfer Programme piloted cash support for 5,000 ultra-poor households and 10,000 orphans which enhanced school attendance by OVC. In 2007, a total of 15,543 OVC received bursaries to attend secondary school, which significantly reduced drop-outs among OVC at secondary school level. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology reached 635,000 pupils (82,500 OVC) with a school feeding programme in primary schools.

Community-based childcare centres (CBCCs) provided food support to 82,000 orphans (20 per cent of the beneficiaries). Communities have established communal gardens to provide food for CBCCs as well as other vulnerable population groups such as people living with HIV (Draft Extended HIV and AIDS National Action Framework 2010–2012).

The grant facility support from the National AIDS Commission (NAC) also enabled the then Ministry of Women and Child Development, now the Ministry of Gender, Children and Community Development, to create awareness of the plight of OVC.

The ministry has also been able to develop different sets of guidelines and relevant policies, such as:

- The National Policy on Early Child Development (2006), whose goal is to provide the Malawian child with high quality services in early childhood care that ensure the child's survival, growth, protection and development that would lead to his/her active participation in national development.
- The Foster Family Guidelines (2008), whose intention is to provide criteria for targeting foster families that may not have enough economic resources to care for the OVC. Other guidelines developed include:
 - » Education support;
 - » Management of childcare homes and orphanages;
 - » Formation of community-based organizations (CBOs) and faith based organizations (FBOs); and
 - » Alternative care.

The NPA is now due for review as its implementation period expires at the end of 2009.

Malawi's Growth and Development Strategy (2006-2011). Issues of OVC have also been fully recognised in the broader national economic framework. This strategy is the overarching policy framework of government for wealth creation and economic growth as a means for reducing poverty on a sustainable basis. The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) distinguishes five thematic areas, namely: sustainable economic growth; social protection and disaster management; social development; infrastructure development; and improved governance.

Issues of OVC feature prominently in the second pillar (social protection and disaster management) upon the realization that "such categories of people are vulnerable to risks and typically lack appropriate risk management instruments, and this constrains them from engaging in higher return economic activities to enable them to move out of chronic poverty." The aim, therefore, is to increase assets of the poor and most vulnerable to enable them to meaningfully engage in sustainable growth and improve their lives. By designating social protection as the second pillar in this strategy, government has demonstrated its strong commitment to reduce poverty and vulnerability among OVC and ultra-poor members of society. Key strategies outlined under this pillar include:

- Providing efficient and effective support to the poor and the most vulnerable with very limited means of production;
- Improving planning and integration of knowledge on the needs of the chronically poor;
- Providing opportunities for poor farmers and rural communities to graduate from poverty by facilitating their integration into mainstream agricultural productivity and enabling them to create wealth;
- Promoting a savings culture in public works programmes; and
- Providing capital for income-generating activities.

Food Security Policy (2006). This policy identifies social protection as an important component of ensuring food security (the right to food) for the most vulnerable sections of society. This calls for the government and other stakeholders to "provide distinctly targeted safety nets cautious of the need to avoid creating dependency and negative impacts". The social protection interventions are supposed to

be “designed to enable the vulnerable to gradually build up their assets so as to escape the threat of poverty in a sustainable way and to increase their resilience to shocks”. One of the social protection interventions identified is food aid. This is supposed to be provided for desperately vulnerable people whose needs cannot be addressed through any meaningfully viable programmes other than being supported by special programmes. Other interventions include agricultural input support and subsidies.

National Nutritional Policy (2006). This national policy also seeks to improve the nutritional status of vulnerable groups (infants and young children, pregnant and lactating women, school-aged children, the youth and elderly). Some of the strategies to be implemented include building communities’ capacity to adequately care for the socioeconomically deprived and nutritionally vulnerable groups, and to develop dietary needs for vulnerable groups in Malawi. The policy also calls for promoting and supporting palliative care and community-coping mechanisms for HIV-positive and affected households.

The National Safety Nets Strategy and Programme (2003). This programme aims to improve the livelihoods of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in society by enabling them to enhance their productivity, thereby increasing their self-reliance. The objectives of the programme include the provision of economically justifiable social support that protects assets and enhances the productivity of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. The programme also undertakes to analyse the impact of safety-net interventions on the most vulnerable and marginalized groups and how such impacts affect national productivity.

The key principles for the programme include community participation and sustainability; enhanced productivity; transparency and accountability; and gender balance. Some of the key interventions include targeted nutrition programmes that provide supplementary feeding services to malnourished children (especially orphans) and destitute families. Another key intervention involves direct-transfer programmes that provide support to the poor and vulnerable groups who have very limited access to

factors of production, including people in disaster situations and orphans.

Draft Social Support Policy (2008). This policy intends to contribute towards the fight against extreme poverty and vulnerability. After the realization of the failures of the safety-net programmes to reduce poverty and vulnerability due to poor coordination, lack of commitment by implementers and poor funding, the Social Support Policy will provide an opportunity for proper coordination of programmes by government that will target the moderately poor to enhance their productivity, and the ultra-poor for welfare support. For the first time, there is an attempt by government to distinguish between the two social categories of the poor, i.e. moderately poor and ultra-poor. The policy further distinguishes between the ultra-poor that have labour resources and those that cannot fend for themselves. These are important distinctions, since some poor people have been left out of safety-net interventions as well as mainstream development interventions. By considering production-oriented special programmes for the ultra-poor, the policy will enable vulnerable groups to fully participate in economic development and avert dependence. These categories, of the ultra-poor and the moderately poor, are the target categories for the livelihood-based social support interventions.

Once adopted, the policy may significantly improve the situation of OVC. A number of development partners such as the European Union, the Global Fund through NAC, Irish Aid, the German Technical Cooperation Agency and the United Nations Development Programme, and potentially Australian Aid and the UK Department for International Development, have pledged financial and/or technical support for the implementation of the social protection programmes, but this is dependent on the approval of the policy. There is concern, however, that the policy is taking too long to be adopted. Other challenges include inadequate understanding of social protection among stakeholders and inadequate political will and commitment to implement social protection programmes. There is some doubt regarding the policy’s impact on development. There is, therefore, a need to increase human capacity to champion the initiative and intensify social protection awareness campaigns.

National Coordination Structures for Orphans and Vulnerable Children: Related Initiatives



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National OVC Steering Committee. The committee oversees and advises key policy makers on matters related to the implementation of the National Plan of Action for OVC. It is chaired by the principal secretary in the Ministry of Women and Child Development and is composed of principal secretaries, directors and representatives from key OVC stakeholders (government line ministries, UN agencies, donors, international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs).

OVC Technical Working Group. This working group provides technical assistance in specific domains related to and in support of the implementation of the National Plan of Action for OVC. It comprises relevant technical experts from government line ministries, UN agencies, donors, international and local NGOs, CBOs and FBOs.

National Social Support Steering Committee. The Ministry of Economic Planning and Development will be the coordinating agency and secretariat for the National Social Support Programme. It will be responsible for matters of policy and resource mobilization and will comprise principal secretaries from the key line ministries, heads of missions for the development partner institutions and civil society. The steering committee will be chaired by the Chief Secretary to the Malawi's President and Cabinet.

National Social Support Technical Committee. This will be responsible for providing technical direction and recommendations on programme implementation. It will comprise directors and is chaired by the Secretary for Economic Planning and Development.

A Review of Programmes Related to Orphans and Vulnerable Children

Social cash transfer scheme

Cash transfers are increasing in popularity as a means of addressing issues of vulnerability and food insecurity, and as alternatives to commodity transfers. Cash transfers are also known to have potential for empowering beneficiaries through strengthening their livelihoods and contributing to the growth of local economies.

A social cash transfer scheme is currently piloted in the seven districts of Mchinji, Salima, Machinga, Mangochi, Likoma, Chitipa and Phalombe through funding from the NAC Grant Facility (Round 5 Global Fund OVC) HIV and AIDS Pooled Funding Partners, UNICEF and Australian Aid. The Ministry of Women and Child Development implements the programme through district assemblies.

By February 2009, the programme had transferred funds to 23,651 households, giving an average of K2,000 (about US\$14) per household per month with an average annual cost, including 15 per cent administrative costs, of US\$200 per household per year. The programme funding requirement is anticipated to increase from around US\$6 million in 2008/09 to US\$59.2 million in 2013/14, and coverage to increase from 23,651 households to 295,708 households in the respective years.

Some reported challenges of the programme include:

- Delays in payments to beneficiaries, mainly during crucial months of January to March;
- Failure of some beneficiaries who graduate out of the programme to sustain themselves before sliding back into destitution, and therefore the need for durable mechanisms for resilience and continued follow up for beneficiaries to understand long-term health, human development and economic impacts of cash;
- Inadequate training for volunteers who do the targeting; and
- Targeting mechanisms that exclude equally deserving households.

The World Food Programme (WFP) has also been involved in social cash transfer schemes, mainly through two pilot projects, one of which was implemented in Nsanje and Chikwawa districts in

2005 involving 16,600 people at a cost of around US\$500,000. The second project was conducted between October 2008 and May 2009 in Machinga and Mangochi districts. It involved 11,100 households at a cost of US\$2.97 million. The pilot project in Machinga and Mangochi is aimed at testing the relative advantages and disadvantages of conditional food transfers, cash transfers, and a mix of food and cash transfers. The conditionality is that transfers (foods, cash or food and cash) are made after participation in identified community asset-creation activities.

Reported achievement, particularly from the first WFP pilot in Nsanje and Chikwawa, was increased irrigated land (271 hectares) and increased yields. However, household food consumption was lower than planned because households spent 20 to 40 per cent of their cash transfers on non-food items.

Junior farmer field and life schools

Junior farmer field and life schools (JFFLS) are an initiative that aims to empower vulnerable teenage girls and boys (12 to 20 year-olds) with agriculture and life skills that will ensure improved livelihoods and the long-term food and nutrition security of their households. JFFLS is a hands-on, out-of-classroom agriculture and life skills learning programme for vulnerable children and youths. Malawi piloted eight JFFLS in Mangochi and Ntcheu districts.

A team of three volunteer facilitators is recruited, comprising a school teacher or youth group coordinator or child protection coordinator, a lead farmer for improving agricultural skills, and a social animator who is an expert in drama, the arts, dance and creative activities. Eligible children are recruited into the programme by the community using criteria which has been agreed upon, and with the consent of the children concerned. Community members are also involved in the identification of the interventions to be introduced and location for the field training.

Emphasis of JFFLS is placed on low-input production and labour-saving technologies to address the loss of adult labour. Emphasis is also placed on skills and knowledge that children have not learned due to illness or death of one or both parents. By including traditional knowledge, the approach also aims to maintain indigenous knowledge about local crops,

medicinal plants and biodiversity.

Part of the food produced is sold to provide income for the OVC and their households, and part of the food is provided directly to participants for consumption in their households.

Potential constraints and challenges include:

- Unavailability of capital starter-packs for graduating children who require implements, seeds and other materials so they can continue production. Initially resources were not available to support these which limited opportunities following graduation. If these are unavailable at the end of the programme, it has usually been extended.
- Further practice and utilization of techniques outside of training and following graduation may be limited in some cases where children's guardians do not provide the environments or opportunities to practice them.

Farm input subsidy programme

This programme is aimed at improving the food security and incomes of resource-poor smallholder farmers. These include AIDS-affected households, child-headed households, elderly-headed households, and female-headed households. The programme has been in place since the 2005/6 season as a roll-out programme across all the districts in Malawi. In 2008/09 the following inputs were distributed:

- Fertilizer targeting 1,500,000 maize farmers and 200,000 tobacco farmers;
- 1,900,000 coupons for purchasing improved seeds; and
- 435,000 flexible coupons to purchase either fertilizers or seed.

It is widely acknowledged that the programme has improved the food security situation in Malawi and has turned the country's situation around from a predominantly food-importing country to a food self-reliant one. Anecdotal evidence also shows that most beneficiaries of the programme have improved household food security and have also made some income from the sale of crops. However, there have been questions raised on whether indeed the poorest and most vulnerable categories really benefited from

the programme, considering the inherent weaknesses in the programme in terms of inclusion/exclusion errors, high probability of the poorer beneficiaries exchanging their coupons for cash or other necessities, and in some cases delays or unavailability of the inputs.

The major significance of the programme is that it has received substantial local and international support, and government is strongly committed to implementing the programme in the future. It is therefore likely to continue receiving funding from government and development partners.

Community initiated/driven projects

The Ministry of Women and Child Development, through the district social welfare offices, facilitates community-initiated social support interventions for OVC. Through this approach, CBOs initiate or are facilitated to develop livelihood-based interventions targeting OVC in particular. Some of the typical intervention activities include:

- Food security for OVC and households keeping OVC through village gardens, small livestock and nutrition supplementation for community-based childcare centres;
- Education support through provision of basic school requirements and necessities such as school uniforms, exercise books and writing materials;
- HIV and AIDS awareness and life skills through general awareness meetings and special sessions for children and OVC; and
- Income generation such as maize mills, dairying and *ganyu* (piece work) to raise money for assisting the OVC with the basic necessities of life.

Although such initiatives face many challenges such as inadequate funding, poor management and commitment, in principle they present huge opportunity for:

- Relatively lower administrative/overhead costs since activities are planned and managed by the communities;
- Development of a sense of ownership and empowerment through local capacity in design and management; and
- Minimal disruption to the status quo.

Livelihood-based social support projects

A number of livelihood-based social support projects have been completed, are being implemented, or are being planned or initiated by international and local NGOs, FBOs and government or donors. Some of the completed or on-going projects have been detailed in the Annex. The common features of these projects are:

- Definite funding from a single donor or a consortium of donors;
- Defined project timeframe, usually between one and five years;
- Usually administered from outside the community; and
- Formally documented and usually includes formal evaluation.

Although this is the most common and popular form of development intervention, there are usually problems with the sustainability of activities after the project has been phased out. 'Boutique' projects have also been criticized for lacking broad-based impact and replication of good lessons. As a result, there is now a stronger push for scalability, replication and sustainability of project interventions.

School feeding programme

The World Food Programme implements the school feeding project in primary schools of 13 districts: Kasungu, Lilongwe, Salima, Dedza, Mangochi, Thyolo, Nsanje, Ntcheu, Chikwawa, Chiradzulu, Zomba, Mulanje and Phalombe. This is done in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Although the programme covers all primary school pupils in the target schools and districts, girls and orphaned boys are the main target. For example, an individual take-home food ration of 12.5 kilogrammes of cereals is provided to all girls and orphaned boys in the upper classes (Standards 5 to 8) during each month of the lean period (January to March) on condition that they attend classes for at least 80 per cent of the school days in the month.

The programme supports 635,000 pupils of which 63,500 boys and 330,200 girls are OVC. Some of the reported benefits so far are:

- School attendance by OVC has improved; and
- Food security for households fostering OVC has improved through take-home rations.

Some challenges noted are:

- Since the school feeding programme only tackles the food aspect, it has little or no control over provision of other aspects of livelihood such as agriculture and vocational skills, which may be equally important for the OVC to build sustainable livelihoods and enhance their future prospects.
- Unless adequate funding is guaranteed, for example through the national budget, the programme may not be sustained into the future.



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Emerging Issues

Policy link

The Social Support Policy, apart from taking too long to be completed, came in much later after policies such as OVC and early childhood development policies were developed. In principle, these earlier policies should devolve from or link to the broader policy. It may therefore be necessary to review such policies in line with the Social Support Policy once it is adopted. There is also a call for reconsideration of the earlier policies as to whether these should continue to stand as policies or be framed as strategies supporting the broader policy. Sometimes too many policies tend to be confusing. On the other hand, very broad policies may sometimes fail to provide adequate guidance in specific areas, such as OVC. It is recommended that a thorough review be carried out to make such a decision.

Coordination

Issues of livelihood and social protection cut across sectors and disciplines. However, the actual institutions and people involved seem to be limited, to the extent that the same institutions and people are in different committees and technical working groups. It is even more difficult if one officer who participates in a lower committee is also asked to represent the institution in a higher committee, which is supposed to consider recommendations from the lower committee. In this light, the complaint that there are too many committees appears to be justified. However, it has also been argued that sometimes parallel committees are formed because the main ones are dormant. Dissolving the non-functioning committees may be difficult because of the legal factors that may be involved.

The real issue is not about whether there are too many committees, but rather the extent to which issues in one committee overlap with those of another. Too many overlaps could justify amalgamation of the committees and streamlining the terms of reference.

Common understanding of social protection/ support

Is it necessary to have a common understanding of social protection/support and its components? This question is raised since it emerged from the study that the concept of social protection in Malawi has

evolved and changed over time, depending on who or which institution exerted the most influence based on their mandate or area of interest. Variety in thinking has led to a variety of interventions, such as among social safety-nets, livelihood-based social protection and social cash transfers, to name just a few. The authors of this study subscribe to the perception of a social protection/support agenda as a graduated continuum in which other participants form intervention stages. The social protection/support agenda should be promoted as an integrated package with specific phases of intervention that link to the broader human development perspective.



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Challenges and Gaps

The policies and strategies for OVC are well articulated. The outlook is more positive with the drafting of the Social Support Policy. However, the current challenge is to have the Social Support Policy adopted by the Malawi Cabinet in time. The other challenge is ensuring that all the key stakeholders are aware of the existing policies as well as the new policy (after it is adopted).

With support from NAC's Global Fund, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Community Development recently embarked on intensive awareness campaigns, but have so far only reached out to 600 stakeholders; they acknowledge there are still huge gaps in the understanding of these policies. Therefore more resources will be required to speed up the process.

The programmes reviewed in this study reflect a wide variety of approaches of OVC interventions being applied in the country. While some of the programmes are at scale, most are still implemented as micro-scale projects. The challenge is how such programmes or projects, which seem to be doing well at micro level, could be replicated or scaled up for wider impact and faster results. Unfortunately, cross-programme information on what really works is currently unavailable. Moreover, there is inadequate knowledge among most programme designers and implementers about effective replication and scaling up of a programme or project.

This study will therefore try to assess various projects within different approaches of OVC intervention with the intention of documenting potential best practices and how they could be replicated and/or scaled up, including the costs involved. As part of the study, a capacity-building session for key OVC-related technical working groups will be organized and training materials for cascading the training developed.

Way Forward

The proposed next steps for the study will include:

- Discussion of the Situation Analysis Report with key stakeholders will further seek their views on criteria for prioritizing projects for study within each model or approach, for example, the duration in which the project has been implemented, OVC as the main target of the project or programme, and prominence of livelihoods within the project or programme.
- Preliminary field visits and discussions with project implementers will be done to prioritize projects based on the criteria for selection. One project within each model/approach (community-initiated projects, JFFLS, social cash schemes, school feeding programmes, livelihood-based social protection projects) will be chosen for the in-depth study.
- Detailed field assessment of each of the five prioritized potential best practices will be done to document evidence and compile an analysis of:
 - » Successes and challenges; and
 - » Elements of replication and scaling up such as institutional structures, effectiveness, sustainability, cost and adaptability.
- Costing of scaling up each of the promising models.
- Capacity building with emphasis on what scaling up entails.

Annex

Some livelihood-based social protection projects: programmes implemented in Malawi

Project title	Enhancing livelihoods and food and nutrition security in the vulnerable SADC countries
Targeted group	Vulnerable households
Targeted beneficiaries	Households, individuals
Implementing agency	MSH, Connect Hope, ADRA, CADECOM, CPAR, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Ministry of Irrigation and Water Development, WFP, UNICEF, MoEPD
Contact details	P. O. Box 30750, Lilongwe. E-mail: fao-mw@fao.org. Tel: 01 773 263. Fax: 01 773 263
Partners	FAO
Districts covered	Mchinji, Phalombe, Mangochi, Ntcheu, Lilongwe, Nkhosakota, Salima, Mwanza, Ntchisi
Donor or lender	Republic of South Africa
Funding type	Grant
Total cost	US\$1,593,172
Disbursed to date	US\$1,479,051
Data entry date	9 October 2007
Project approved	1 January 2006
Start date	1 January 2006
Completion date	31 October 2007

Objectives	Components	Planned project outputs	Indicators
To increase and intensify agricultural production/productivity and diversity to improve resilience of vulnerable households.	• Small-scale irrigation • School gardens • HBC/NRUs and JFFLS.	• Irrigation schemes established; technically and materially supported • 100 community demonstration gardens established and functional • Nutrition education activities built into work plan for HBC and NRUs • Improved agricultural and life skills for primary school pupils established.	• Number of irrigation schemes established, technically and materially supported • 100 community demonstration gardens established and functional • Nutrition education activities built into work plans for HBC and NRUs • Improved agricultural and life skills for primary school pupils.

Project title	Sustainable nutrition rehabilitation programme
Targeted group	Households with malnourished children, orphans, vulnerable mothers
Targeted beneficiaries	6,400 households, 32,000 individuals
Implementing agency	Christian Health Association of Malawi
Contact details	Private Bag 282, Lilongwe. E-mail: malawi@dca.dk. Web-site: www.danchurchaid.org. Tel: 01 775 180/01 771 258. Fax: 01 775 406
Partners	Danish Church Aid (DCA)
Districts covered	Karonga, Rumphu, Salima, Dedza, Mangochi
Donor or lender	European Union
Funding type	Grant
Total cost	US\$1,200,000
Disbursed to date	US\$429,881
Data entry date	31 March 2008
Project approved	1 December 2006
Start date	1 January 2007
Completion Date	31 December 2009

Objectives	Components	Planned project outputs	Indicators
1. Overall objective: To contribute to improved livelihood security of vulnerable rural households in Malawi by enhancing their food and nutrition status in a sustainable and rights-based development approach. 2. Specific objectives: • To facilitate community institutions, promote dietary, and crop and livestock diversification at both household and community level • To enhance appropriate mother and childcare practices in the communities • To promote community-based treatment of malnutrition • To provide rights-based capacity-building process. 3. Psycho-social programmes.	• Low input sustainable agriculture • Establishment of agro-forestry and fruit tree nurseries • Promotion of seed multiplication and communal seed banks • Small livestock integration • Small-scale irrigation • Community-based treatment of malnutrition • Community-based health education • Community-based growth and development monitoring • Strengthening linkages of community institutions in health and sanitary structures and other support institutions in delivery of health services.	• Communities adopt a diversified household diet through improved access to and utilization of nutritious food • Adequate mother and child care practices adopted by the communities • Appropriate community-based treatments of malnutrition adopted • Community capacity enhanced through partnerships and linkages support for nutrition-related initiatives.	• At least 70% of targeted households practise proper food storage, preparation and utilization practices and techniques • 50% of targeted households have at least two meals per day • 90% of targeted households with access to adequate seed materials • 80% of targeted households adopting recommended technologies/practices • 60% of the targeted households adopting recommended care practices • 50% reduction in mothers attending community feeding centres due to improved nutrition • 90% of malnourished children identified early at moderate state • 60% reduction of children referred to NRUs • Increased extension agent/household contact ration • Communities able to seek information and assistance on their own • 50% female representation in decision making.

Project title	Kunyinda Area Development Programme
Targeted group	Girl children, orphans, women
Targeted beneficiaries	22,843 individuals
Implementing Agency	World Vision Malawi
Contact details	P. O. Box 64, Ngabu. E-mail: andrew_khumalo@wvi.org, Web-site: www.worldvision.org. Tel: 01 427 349. Fax: 01 427 496
Partners	Government of Malawi
Districts covered	Chikwawa
Donor or lender	World Vision Germany
Funding type	Grant
Total cost	US\$426,500
Disbursed to date	US\$123,452
Data entry date	20 January 2007
Project approved	4 January 1999
Start date	4 January 1999
Completion date	30 September 2013

Objectives	Components	Planned project outputs	Indicators
To improve household food security.	• Livestock production • Drought-tolerant crop production • Food diversification.	• Livestock cross-breeding programme established • Farm input loan facility implemented • Drought-tolerant crop seed distributed • Crop diversification programme implemented.	• Number of live-stock cross-breeds • Number of farmers accessing farm inputs • Number of drought-tolerant crops.

Project title	Mlolo Area Development Programme
Targeted group	Children and other vulnerable groups
Targeted beneficiaries	4,600 households, 23,000 individuals
Implementing agency	World Vision Malawi
Contact details	Mlolo ADP, P. O. Box 2050, Blantyre. E-mail: petermakhunje@wvi.org Tel: 01 750 539. Fax: 01 752 580
Partners	Government of Malawi
Districts covered	Nsanje
Donor or lender	World Vision Canada
Funding type	Grant
Total cost	US\$369,165
Disbursed to date	US\$332,370
Data entry date	16 March 2007
Project approved	1 October 1999
Start date	1 October 1999
Completion date	30 September 2010

Objectives	Components	Planned project outputs	Indicators
Improved quality of life for the 23,000 people of Mlolo by FY2010.	- Fish farming - Growing of drought-tolerant crops like millet and sorghum - Awareness campaigns on HIV/AIDS, education and sponsorship - Provision of school supplies - Provision of medical aid to CIP - Provision of basics necessities like houses, clothes and food to needy CIP - Women's empowerment - Home-management activities - Cloth dying - Bakery programme.	- Maternal and child health and general community healthcare activities strengthened - Community awareness on the importance of primary education increased - Primary school education quality activities enhanced and supply of learning materials and facilities increased - Quality of education for 400 adults improved - Production services in conventional livestock and bees strengthened - Extension services in livestock production strengthened - Agricultural production for over 3,000 farmers in Mlolo enhanced - Forestation programmes for over 1,000 farming families put in place and supported - Support activities of food security managers and ADP agriculture staff - ADP agriculture staff's stationery and field attire needs to be addressed - Participation of both men and women in home-management activities strengthened - Monitoring and evaluation of project activities enhanced - Knowledge on assessing people's needs increased - Understanding of project management and involvement of staff and community leaders in decision making enhanced - Sponsorship system managed - Improved sponsorship-management practices - Monitoring and evaluation programme implemented - Increased and quick response to disaster mitigation measures to over 1,000 people in Mlolo by FY2003 - Community awareness initiatives on HIV/AIDS strengthened.	% increase in literacy level in girls, boys and adults - Increased net enrolment rate for primary school - Increased primary school pass rate and secondary school selection rate - Reduced dropout rate in primary schools % of households with food throughout the year % reduction in malnutrition levels in impact areas % increase in level of asset creation % increase in food crop production - Number of improved livestock breeds produced % of households adopting improved crop varieties - Number of farmers practising improved livestock husbandry techniques % of households with increased daily meal frequency - Number of farmers trained in fish farming technologies - Number of children with improved well-being - Zero over-due mail - Increased level of understanding of major stakeholders of sponsorship issues - Improved relationships among CIP, communities and sponsors - Reduced sponsor queries - Reduced CIP drops 95% of special mail processed by cut-off date and the remaining 5% processed within two weeks after cut-off.

Title of programme/project	Type of scheme	Objectives of programme	Implementing agency	Funding agency	Start date	End date	No. of direct beneficiaries	Consideration of HIV impact
COPE (Community-based Options for Protection and Empowerment) programme		To improve the immediate conditions and long-term prospects for the care and healthy development of children affected by AIDS in three communities in Mangochi district, promoting sound policy development and implementation, alongside viable programme interventions that can be adapted at the national level.		USAID			18,000 -26,000 children	To improve the immediate conditions and long-term prospects for the care and healthy development of children affected by AIDS in three communities in Mangochi district, promoting sound policy development and implementation, alongside viable programme interventions that can be adapted at the national level.
	Support orphans and vulnerable children	To improve the food security of households keeping orphans and other vulnerable children.	WFP partnering with NGOs		2003	2007	15,543	To improve the food security of households keeping orphans and other vulnerable children.
School feeding programme	School feeding	Support access to education and reduce gender disparities in access to education and skills training.	WFP partnering Ministry of Education	Various	2005	Annual	410,000	
Supplementary feeding for pregnant and lactating mothers and other vulnerable people	Supplementary feeding	Support improved nutrition status of children, mothers and other vulnerable people.	WFP partnering Ministries of Health and Education	Various including EU, DfID, UNICEF		Annual, throughout the year		Targets malnourished under-five children and pregnant and lactating mothers in food deficit areas.
Improving livelihoods through increasing food security (I-LIFE)	Rehabilitation of rural feeder roads by providing food for work for community participants; increases access	Targets child-headed households amongst other groups.	CARE and consortium partners	USAID	2004	2009	Seven districts	Participating family must have able-bodied above 16 years, etc.
Integrated food security/rain-fed and irrigation programmes		Households caring for orphans, chronically ill, resource-poor elderly, child-headed households.	Save the Children US	Save the Children US	2004	2006	Four districts	Focus on areas with chronic malnourishment, high HIV prevalence, severe poverty, high food need.

Title of programme/project	Type of scheme	Objectives of programme	Implementing agency	Funding agency	Start date	End date	No. of direct beneficiaries	Consideration of HIV impact
Partnering for a livelihood response to HIV/AIDS	Mainstreaming HIV/AIDS programming in livelihood activities	To contribute towards the mitigation of the long-term effects of HIV/AIDS by using a livelihoods approach.	CARE through three CBOs	Global CORE initiative	2004	2006	24 youths and 423 affected families	Affected families and OVC
Supporting the vulnerable children who have been infected and affected by HIV/AIDS and prevent further spread		Extend life of parent-child relationship; build awareness and reduce stigma; prepare families for transition; ensure the child's future.	CARE	NORAD, USAID	2004	2007	12,000 children and youths	Orphans, vulnerable children and youths
Protecting and improving food and nutrition security of orphans and HIV/AIDS affected children		Strengthen capacity of local district and national institutions to plan and undertake more effective actions to improve food and nutrition security among orphans and children affected by HIV, and to provide support to their families and communities. Stakeholders improved household food security and nutrition of orphans, children and their families affected by HIV/AIDS in the short and long run. Programming models and methods for taking multisectoral actions.	Government through MoH, MoE, MoA, MoCS, WFP, FAO, UNICEF and NGOs	Germany Government	2004	2006	3,000 households	Orphans, HIV/AIDS affected and vulnerable children

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Part 2: An Observatory of Best Practices

The Context of the Study

The livelihoods perspective of social protection

A livelihood is a means and capability of earning a living. In order to live a decent life, people need food, income and some assets. Poor people find it hard to meet the needs of their daily lives, sometimes because they lack the means or lack capability of doing so. This sometimes leads to deprivation and/or destitution. In order to rescue people from or prevent them from deprivation and destitution, public and private institutions implement social protection interventions. Social protection is broadly defined as “all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalized; with the objectives of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups” (Norton, A., *et al*, 2001). An initiative therefore qualifies to be a livelihood-based social protection intervention if it provides the means of bringing the most vulnerable groups into the development process through protection, prevention and promotion to ensure their immediate and future livelihoods. Livelihood-based social support for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) should institute and implement interventions to reduce vulnerability of the OVC and their households through:

- Strengthening production, especially in small-scale agriculture such as:
 - » Improved means and access to productive resources – land, labour, farm inputs;
 - » Faster returns and easier-to-manage livestock – poultry, goats, rabbits;
 - » Small-scale irrigation for improved nutrition and incomes; and
 - » Diversified, sustainable and drought resilient farming systems.
- Enhancing marketing opportunities, especially in food and agriculture.
- Enhancing off-farm employment opportunities.
- Building infrastructure and assets.
- Improving basic services such as health and education, including those aimed at reducing HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.
- Reducing social marginalization and exclusion.
- Strengthening governance institutions and policy processes.

Objectives of the study

There is compelling evidence that the implementation of the country’s National Plan of Action for OVC (2006–2009) has led to significant improvements in funding and social support interventions for OVC. However, the focus has largely been on education and child protection without adequately addressing the livelihood needs of OVC and their households.

This study was therefore initiated to review and assess innovative agricultural and livelihood programmes from the perspective of the emerging social support agenda for OVC, and in the context of HIV and AIDS, with the aim of documenting lessons for replication and scaling up.

Specific objectives of the study were to identify, analyse and document:

- Factors (social, economical, institutional) that have led to the success of the interventions;
- Potential sustainability of activities and/or outcomes of such interventions;
- Elements of the project that could be replicated and scaled up;
- Cost of scaling up such interventions at district, region or country level;
- Key considerations that should be made in order to effectively scale up such interventions; and
- Potential benefits which may be realized by other communities and be replicated.

Identification and choice of best practices

Selection of case studies as best practices for livelihood-based social protection for OVC involved three key steps:

1. Project mapping. A database of agriculture and livelihood interventions that have been implemented in the country over the last couple of years was reviewed to identify projects with OVC as one of their main targets. Using a set of criteria, these were shortlisted and presented to the stakeholders for further review. The criteria for preliminary selection were:

- Directly target OVC and/or their households;
- Implemented for three years or more in order to give meaningful lessons;

- Demonstrate strong community participation and ownership; and
- Cost for implementation should be reasonable.

2. *Selection by district.* It was noticed that the projects contained in the database, from which the first short list of interventions was drawn, were mostly formal projects implemented by INGOs (international non-governmental organizations), government and multi-lateral organizations, and excluded those initiated by communities. Therefore, it was felt necessary to ask district social welfare officers (DSWOs) from selected districts to identify the most successful livelihood-based social protection intervention in their district that targeted OVC. These projects were to be chosen regardless of whether they were implemented by an international NGO, a local NGO, the public or community. The districts were chosen taking into consideration geographic representation and farming systems. Seven districts were chosen as follows:

- Karonga – northern lakeshore district, relatively dry.

- Mchinji – central west district, fertile plain endowed with favourable conditions for agriculture.
- Nkhotakota – central east lakeshore district with good rainfall for agriculture.
- Ntcheu – central south district with mixture of hills, escarpments and valleys.
- Ntchisi – central highland district, very diversified farming systems.
- Mangochi – eastern lakeshore fishing and tourist resort district.
- Chikwawa – Lower Shire River Valley, drought and flood-prone district.
- Other projects that were reviewed: Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS); Millennium Village Project (Zomba) and the cash transfer scheme (Mchinji).

3. *Preliminary site visits.* After DSWOs or others identified the programmes/projects, the sites were initially visited to collect basic data. A total of ten programmes/projects were reviewed. Data collected from these preliminary visits was compiled, processed

District	Title	Status	Method	Remarks
Karonga	Tawonga Community-based Organization	Community initiated & managed	Site visit	Selected
Nkhotakota	Chipelera Orphan Care & AIDS Support Organization	Community initiated & managed	Site visit	Selected for detailed study, but not for final analysis*
Ntcheu	Chitungu Community-based Organization	Community initiated & managed	Site visit	Selected
Chikwawa	Good News Children's Home	Community initiated & managed		Selected
Mchinji	Chimteka Children's Support Organization	Community initiated & managed	Site visit	Selected for detailed study, but not for final analysis*
Mchinji	Mchinji Social Cash Transfer Scheme	Government initiated & funded	Secondary data	Studied within Chimteka civil society organization
Zomba	Zomba Millennium Village Project	Multilateral organization implemented/funded	Secondary data	Used as lessons for the study
Ntchisi	Kansonga Accumulating Savings & Credit Association	Community initiated & managed	Site visit	Not selected
Mangochi	Mangochi Mitigation of Child Labour Project	Local NGO implemented	Secondary data	Not selected
	Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools	Multilateral organization implemented/funded	Secondary data	Recommended as supporting initiative

*Although the Nkhotakota and Mchinji projects were selected for detailed study, they were not selected for best practice analysis because they fell short of some key success factors.

and presented to a core group of stakeholders. Based on the recommendations from the field report, three projects were selected for detailed study. The table shows the programmes/projects that were reviewed and selected.

The three selected sites were impressive because, contrary to the common belief that the rural poor are passive recipients of development assistance, they stood up to the challenge and initiated and implemented interventions that could be truly described as home-grown and sustainable. With experience spanning from between five and 13 years, striving on their own with minimal external assistance, they have progressively increased livelihood support to OVC. From assistance to as few as 12 OVC at the initiation of these interventions, the numbers gradually rose to more than 100, and these are expected to rise even more in the coming years. Over the years, the CBOs have stayed focused on their main goals, that is, to improve the livelihoods of the OVC, and to assist the needy households with basic care and support. Their plans for the future are even more robust and more focused on self-reliance, which is a clear manifestation of development maturity. With such progress and success, it would be hard to challenge the sustainability of these efforts. These are indeed success stories from Malawi.

Approach and methods of data collection

In all three selected sites, the approach was that of an 'observatory', trying to see things as they are from an observer's point of view. The following basic tools were used to capture and record field data:

1. *'Tracing the journey of progress' approach.* In mixed groups of between five and six, the implementing community members were asked to trace their progress from their start to the present, and project into the future. Each group discussed and presented details of:

- Their motivation to start the project;
- The objectives and target groups;
- The processes, activities and services at all major stages of the intervention;
- The OVC situation at every major phase of the project, such as potential and actual number

assisted, benefits accrued and changes noticed as a result of the intervention;

- Major challenges met and how they were dealt with or circumvented; and
- Driving force behind the success.

Each sub-group then presented their discussion report to the plenary for open discussion and suggestions for improvement as well as collation of ideas. In Chikwawa, a group of 17 (12 boys and five girls) who graduated from the Good News Children's Home were invited to participate in the discussions. They formed three mixed sub-groups and discussed a slightly different set of questions which focused on their life before, during and after their experience at the children's home. They were also asked to suggest improvements to the centre in order for it to more effectively assist OVC.

2. *Focus group discussions.* These were held with community leaders to obtain details regarding costs and other information that would otherwise not be captured by the first tool.

3. *'Life story' approach.* Individual interviews were conducted with OVC and OVC household heads.

4. *Discussions.* These were held with government agents directly involved in the project, particularly DSWOs and their staff.

5. *Site tours of physical structures, livestock and crops.* These were conducted to witness and capture some achievements.

How the Projects Were Initiated and Implemented



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Each of the three projects started on a small scale and progressively expanded in size and scope. It took the efforts and passion of a few community members to overcome the negative impact of AIDS, particularly among OVC, and attract the attention of and mobilize communities to take positive action. Although circumstances varied between the projects, the outcomes were similar – each community listened and participated in the changes that took place.

Between the time that the projects were initiated to the period of the study (June 2009), projects sometimes faltered. However, it is clear from their stories that participants never gave up. This part of the study was therefore particularly intended to learn about:

- The successes of the projects and how successes came about;
- The challenges that were met and how they were dealt with;
- The factors which motivated project participants to move on when others would have given up;
- What project participants learnt from their experiences; and
- What plans project participants have for the future.

In Part 3, the implications of these issues have been analysed to inform possible scaling up of interventions. Detailed below is the observatory of the three case studies.



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Chitungu community-based organization, Ntcheu

Location of the site

This CBO is in Group Village Mastemale, Traditional Authority Kwataine, Ntcheu district. The CBO is located less than three kilometres from Ntcheu town. The area is on the hill slopes of the Kirk Range Mountains. It is generally endowed with good rains and good soils for farming. Since it is located on the outskirts of a town, the site has much better opportunities for off-farm economic choices and marketing of agricultural commodities than most rural areas in the country.

Establishment of the community-based organization (1997-2002)

The CBO was initiated by a few community members who felt concerned about increased destitution among OVC and people suffering from AIDS-related illnesses. In 1997, 20 community members responded to the call and formed two separate groups: a home-based care group (focused on care and support of chronically ill people), and an orphan care group (dedicated to the plight of OVC). The home-based care group mostly comprised women, while the orphan care group was mostly male.

In 2002, the two groups wrote separate proposals to the Malawi Association of Networks of AIDS Support Organizations (MANASO). The men's group proposal was for a minibus while the women's group asked for a maize mill. The maize mill proposal was successful while that for the minibus failed. This apparently affected membership of men to the orphan care group, as well as their participation in OVC activities. On the other hand, women became more determined to forge ahead, although they had not yet received the maize mill at this stage.

It was also in 2002 that the two groups merged to form the Chitungu Community-based Organization so that the issues of people living with HIV, the chronically ill, OVC, the elderly and the youth could be dealt with holistically. The CBO was also officially recognized by registering with the Chitungu district social welfare office, and it currently covers nine villages within the jurisdiction of Group Village Headman Mastemale.

The focus of the CBO during this phase was distribution of food, clothing and money to assist OVC and AIDS-affected households. Members recall this period as being one of having to struggle. They struggled to convince people to join them, and when they joined they did not stay long before quitting. Most left because they could not continue to volunteer. They estimate that out of about 40 members in 1999, only 15 continued volunteering in 2002. They also struggled to increase resources for their target groups. Activities at that time included doing piece work (*ganyu*), collecting door-to-door contributions, raising funds from the Big Walk, and support from well-wishers. These activities raised limited resources which could assist only 50 of the 130 targeted OVC.

Development of the community-based organization (2003-2007)

According to the leaders of the CBO, the period between 2003 and 2007 was when the group became more organized. There was recognition of the group's efforts both within and outside the community, and fast growth of the CBO with increased membership and more external assistance. While it was a period of increased success, there were also challenges and frustrations, and in some cases failures. Despite such problems, members were determined to move on, and they decided to expand sources of food and income for the OVC. Activities during this phase included:

- *Communal maize cultivation.* This was initiated to reduce dependence on community contributions of food. One woman commented during the plenary presentation: "Some people were making rude remarks when we went round asking for contributions. After all, food raised through this method was not enough to feed the large number of OVC and OVC households. We therefore decided to have communal gardens where we could produce our own food."
- *Maize mill project.* In 2003, MANASO provided material support worth K59,100 for the construction of the maize mill which had been pledged to the group. The group moulded and burnt bricks, and hauled sand and quarry stones for the project.
- *Dairy production project.* In 2006, the CBO received funding from MASAF (Malawi Social Action Fund) for the construction of a dairy cattle *khola* worth

K1,227,114. They received an additional amount of K791,000 for the purchase of five dairy cows. They bought the materials and constructed the structure, and also travelled to Bvumbwe in Thyolo (about 180 kilometres south) to buy the cows.

- *Other activities.* Between 2003 and 2006, with the help of Save Orphans Ministries, the CBO assisted OVC with educational materials worth K89,000. In 2004, the National AIDS Commission, through an umbrella organization (World Vision International) provided funds of K849,015 for various activities which included training sessions for CBO committees, education materials for OVC, ten bicycles, three ambulance bicycles, and home-based care kits. The Network of Organizations for Orphans and Vulnerable Children also assisted the CBO with various training sessions for their committees.

Maturity phase of the community-based organization (2008-2009)

Having struggled through the initial stages of development, the group went on to grow in maturity and scope of services. During this period, the focus was on sustainable strategies for assisting the OVC and OVC households. Chitungu CBO implemented a number of livelihood-related activities that included the following:

- *Expansion of the maize production project.* The CBO managed to purchase farm inputs for cultivating ten communal gardens (one in each village and one for the centre) with funding secured from Orphan Support Africa (OSA). They also received funding from the National AIDS Commission and bought farm inputs for OVC households to cultivate in their individual gardens.
- *Backyard gardening.* Africare, under the I-Life project, trained selected members of the CBO on backyard gardening. These in turn trained some OVC households who implemented these skills in their individual backyards or *dimba* (wetland gardens). Therefore the skills cascaded to many people, particularly OVC households in the area.
- *Pig production.* OSA also assisted the CBO with funds for the construction of nine pig pens (one in each village) and for purchasing 27 pigs (three in each village: one male and two female). The intention was to increase the stock so that some could



be given to individual OVC households.

- **Dairy production.** As highlighted above, funding for the dairy cattle project was secured from MASAF. Unfortunately, poor management resulted in the cows losing weight and falling sick. Cows could also not conceive when serviced using artificial insemination, so they were sold and some of the money realized was used to purchase 20 goats for the OVC pass-on scheme.
- **Goat pass-on scheme.** When the dairy cow project failed, the cows were sold and some money used to buy 20 goats which were given to 20 OVC (one goat each). Of these, 16 survived and have so far produced 17 kids (including a set of twins). At the time of the study, 16 of the 17 kids were already earmarked for second generation pass-on to 16 more OVC households.
- **Maize mill project.** The project had some challenges and though it was in 2003 that the maize mill was approved, it was not until June 2009 that it was finally in the hands of the community. The installation was almost complete and the maize mill was expected to start operating late in June or early July 2009.
- **Village savings and loans associations.** Africare, through the I-Life project, introduced village savings and loans associations (VSL) as one of the sustainable livelihood strategies for households caring for OVC and other ultra-poor people in the area. After undergoing training, the CBO formed a VSL sub-committee which formed a further three groups. Total membership in the three groups was 33 in 2008; a further group of 11 members had recently been formed in 2009. Participating households bought shares at K100 each. The money borrowed at nominal interest rates helped them to meet their basic necessities such as purchasing farm inputs, school uniforms for school-going children, household food, payment of school fees for their children, etc.

The benefits of the initiative

Chitungu CBO started small, assisting 50 out of 130 OVC in 2002, and gradually increased its assistance to nearly all the 565 OVC in the nine villages within the jurisdiction of Group Village Headman Mastemale. This progress can be described as superb. The

benefits to OVC were in various forms and amounts. Some of these are:

- **Improved food and nutrition security.** Nearly all 565 OVC and their households were assisted by the CBO with some food. Those attending CBCCs (community-based childcare centres) benefited from the feeding programme managed by the CBO. Food for the CBCC feeding programme was cultivated in communal village gardens, and other food was collected through door-to-door contributions. Some OVC households in dire need benefited from direct food assistance from the communal village gardens. Other OVC households received assistance to produce their own maize through being given fertilizers and seeds by the CBO. A total of 130 OVC households benefited from being trained in backyard gardening which enabled them to cultivate their own vegetables for consumption.
- **Provision of school fees and education materials.** Some OVC attending secondary school were assisted with school fees, while OVC attending primary school were given school uniforms, exercise books and writing materials. This improved enrolment and attendance of OVC in schools.
- **Accumulation of assets.** Through the goat pass-on scheme, 20 OVC had received a goat each although only 16 goats survived. One owner's goat produced twins so he has been able to pass on one goat and is left with a stock of two after a year. A further 16 OVC have since benefited from second-generation stock. As the goats multiply, the beneficiary households will be able to accumulate assets which could easily be converted into cash during periods of greatest need.
- **Increased income-earning opportunities.** OVC households that are members of the VSL associations increased income-earning opportunities through petty trading using money borrowed from the VSL group account. A widowed woman reported using her loan to buy maize, beans and other crop produce for resale at higher prices, earning a gross profit of about K2,000 per sale. Last year she managed to pay school fees and pocket money to her secondary school child, in addition to meeting her household's basic necessities. Some people reported borrowing money from the VSL to buy fertilizer which boosted their crop production tremendously.

Resources committed to the interventions

The CBO was initiated and managed by the community, and therefore it is hard to quantify the resources that have so far been committed towards the initiative. Some of the resources which could be quantified include the following:

- *Construction of structures.* Community members provided bricks, sand, water and labour while funding agents provided iron sheets, cement, planks/poles, nails and transportation for materials.
- *Purchase of capital equipment and stock.* Funding agents provided money for the purchase of the maize mill and livestock, while the community provided labour to transport them to the site.
- *Crop production.* The funding agents provided money to buy farm inputs (seeds and fertilizers) for CBO communal gardens as well as OVC households, while the community provided labour for producing the crops and in some cases contributed farm inputs for communal as well as OVC household gardens.
- *Livestock production.* Funding agents provided money for the purchase of livestock (cattle, pigs, goats), while the community provided labour and time for livestock management.
- *Community-based childcare centres.* CBO community volunteers provided labour to care for the children attending CBCCs.
- *Education support for OVC:* Funding agents and the CBO members provided educational materials to support OVC's education.

Challenges faced

1. Maize mill project. The proposal for a maize mill was approved and MANASO pledged to support the project in 2003. It gave K59,100 towards the cost of the building, but asked the community to provide the electricity connection. Unfortunately, the cost of installing a power transformer was far more than the community could afford. In order to deal with the problem, OSA was approached; they provided funding, and the sum of K678,000 was paid to ESCOM (Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi). However, the mill was unavailable for collection and it was not until two years later (June 2009) that the mill was finally collected. Even after it was collected, it was discovered that some parts such as the pulley and

starter were missing. The community reported that although they were frustrated by these setbacks, they were determined to work towards the future success of the project.

2. Dairy project. In 2006, the CBO submitted a proposal to MASAF through the district assembly (DA) requesting for a maize sheller/de-huller (to complement the maize mill pledged by MANASO). However instead of a sheller, they received money for a dairy project. They went ahead with the dairy project but were unable to effectively manage the cows. When the cows were on heat they were served by an artificial insemination technician, but they could not conceive. This setback, coupled with the fact that some cows had already lost weight and were getting sick, forced them to sell off the cows.

Driving force behind its success

Twelve years in operation is a substantial period of time. The group had some challenges that could have discouraged them, but they stood firm and made progress. This level of resilience is rare in development projects. It is therefore important to learn the secret behind the success of this community. From discussions it was apparent that they were able to attribute their resilience and success to the following key factors:

- *Support from the village heads.* The group village headman and his village headmen are part of the CBO to the extent that all major decisions undertaken by the CBO are made with the consent of the traditional leaders. They provide land for cultivation and all construction. Each village, led by the village headman, also contributes food and cash to assist children in the CBCCs. The CBO committee therefore only acts as a facilitating unit while most of the implementation is done by the villagers themselves.
- *Strong sense of purpose.* Members of this CBO work as volunteers. They are motivated by a strong passion to help their own relatives and children in need. Women, in particular, were singled out as having a strong desire to assist children because they know that tomorrow their own children could be orphaned and they would need the community's help.



- *Sense of achievement and ownership.* Although the maize mill project took years to establish, the community believed it would eventually be a huge success for the village. The women remarked: “We really needed the maize mill and we kept on waiting knowing that one day we will have our maize mill.” The sense of achievement was also strong when some of their proposals were approved and funding received. During this long process there was community ownership so that even in times of trouble, people knew they needed to solve the problems for themselves.
- *Strong CBO leadership.* At the time of the study, the CBO was dominated by women and the chairperson was also a woman. She had foresight and commanded respect from the group, even from the male folk. She also had the strong support of the group village headman and other committee members who remained focused on their goals.

Lessons learnt

The community highlighted a number of lessons which they had learnt from their twelve-year experience operating as a CBO. The following are some of these lessons that they would like others to learn from:

- It is possible to achieve more when you work as a team;
- Do not over depend on external assistance – help sometimes comes late or not according to your needs or requirements; and
- When you work with and through village headmen, the community feels committed to work.

Future plans

The CBO is looking to the future and does not want to waver in its purpose. They are determined to ensure that livelihoods of OVC and other vulnerable people in the area improve. Some of these plans are:

- *Rest house project.* With the foresight to realise that the spirit of volunteerism may one day wane, the CBO plans to raise money and construct a rest house at Ntcheu town where CBO volunteers will work as part-time housekeepers. They would also earn a wage which would motivate them to continue working as CBO volunteers.
- *Houses-for-rent project.* In order to sustain income to

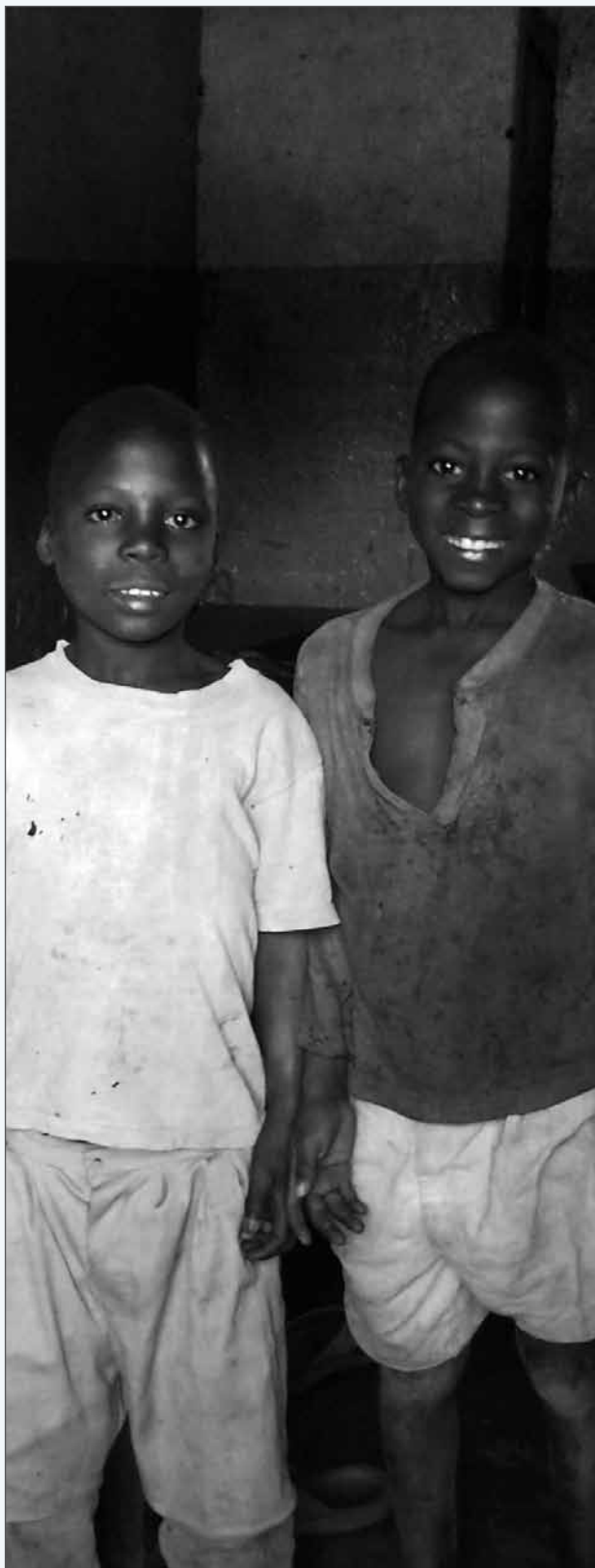
support OVC, the CBO plans to construct houses for rent in Ntcheu town as an income-generating activity for their OVC projects.

- *CBCC construction project.* The CBO intends to establish CBCC structures in each of the nine villages.

Suggestions for improvement

Chitungu CBO could follow the experience of Chimteka Children's Support Organization in Mchinji, which loaned out farm inputs to volunteers to produce their own crops. The volunteers repaid an agreed quantity to the CBO, part of which was used to feed children in the CBCCs and the surplus sold to raise income for the CBCCs and the CBO. This plan might also motivate people to volunteer their time and resources.

The CBO could also consider introducing skills training for teenage OVC. Skills training would include crafts (bricklaying, carpentry, tailoring, tin-smith, etc.) and agriculture (JFFLS) which would be valuable, as not all the children in the area may attain higher formal education qualifications.



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Good News Children's Home, Chikwawa

Location of the site

Good News Children's Home is located in Traditional Authority Ngowe, Chikwawa district, which is the responsibility of Group Village Headman Mwafunga. Its location is along the main road between Chikwawa and Nsanje, about 70 kilometres south of Chikwawa town on the southern border with Nsanje district. The centre has a catchment of five group village headmen with 36 villages, all in Traditional Authority Ngowe. The area is low lying, and it is characterized by hot and generally dry conditions with very erratic rainy seasons which cause intermittent droughts or floods. As a result, chronic food shortage is something that people have come to live with. Most people depend on cotton for their livelihoods. Sorghum and maize are the staples, but due to chronic annual droughts or floods that hit the area, the majority of people depend on water-lilies, or *nyika* as it is locally known, a wild tuber that is uprooted from the beds of crocodile-infested rivers connected to the Shire River. A few fortunate people cultivate the fertile marshes along the Shire River during winter which brings them more food than rain-fed cropping. The location is typically rural with very few off-farm economic opportunities, and this exacerbates poverty and vulnerability.

Establishment of the Good News Children's Home (1998-2002)

The story behind the establishment of the Good News Children's Home is slightly different to that of the other sites. Around 1998/99 an increasing number of hungry children, most of them OVC, went almost daily to a local church pastor's house to have lunch. Church members noticed and grew concerned; they met with community leaders to find sustainable solutions to help the children. In 1999 the pastor, Mr Stephen Zulu, together with some church members and community members in the surrounding villages, agreed to build a communal home for the OVC. Group Village Headman Mwafunga donated his own piece of land for the construction of the buildings. Because this was good news to the OVC in the community, the place was named 'Good News Children's Home'.



Although it is a faith-based institution, Good News Children's Home takes in children regardless of their religion. The community also agreed to recruit only double or single OVC who were destitute, and only one OVC per household so that more households could benefit from the service. The centre was advised by the district social welfare office that once the children reach the age of 18 years, they must be graduated from the centre.

Members of the Good News Children's Home estimate that it took nearly four years to fully establish the centre. In contrast to the Chitungu CBO scenario, the idea of assisting the OVC was readily taken up by community leaders and members from all the affected villages. Mobilization of resources therefore started within the same year that the idea was introduced. Thousands of bricks were moulded, a place to build the OVC home provided, and some community members with special skills volunteered their services in their areas of specialization, e.g. bricklaying and carpentry.

Because of the enthusiasm of the community, it was not difficult for well-wishers from outside the community (particularly fellow church members) to contribute to the construction of the buildings. However, most of the money needed for the purchase of construction materials was raised by members of the community through village contributions and *ganyu*. It is even on record that Group Village Headman Mwafunga made a personal contribution of ten iron sheets towards the construction.

By the end of 2002, a two-room hostel block with an office and storeroom was completed. It is heartwarming to hear that even at this early stage of the process, people from surrounding villages were willing to contribute time, energy and resources towards the project.

The centre recruited its first OVC in 1999. Due to some constraints, only 12 OVC out of a target number of 1,800 were recruited and enrolled for residential care and support at the centre. A group of women volunteered to go from household to household asking for contributions of maize, beans and money for the OVC. This continued for the next three years or so. At this stage, the centre was operating without being registered with the district social welfare office; it was only registered in 2001.

Growth of the centre (2003-2007)

For the Good News Children's Home, the period between 2003 and 2007 was characterized by rapid growth through the construction of more structures and increased enrolment of OVC at the centre. The number of OVC accommodated at the centre rose from 12 to 107. Livelihoods-related activities during this phase were directly related to the care and support of the children resident at the centre. These activities included:

- **Maize production.** The institution decided to start producing its own food to feed the children as a consequence of negative remarks from some members of the community when volunteers went door-to-door asking for contributions. Community volunteers, with some help from people in other participating villages, cultivated about three hectares of farm land. Due to erratic rains, the rain-fed maize was supplemented by a winter crop of maize grown in rented fields in the rich alluvial marshes of the Shire River. In 2003/04, a total of 107 bags of 50 kilogrammes each were produced by the centre.
- **Bean production.** They also grew beans in the marshes which were fed to the OVC.
- **Cotton production.** Cotton was another crop that was grown to supplement income for buying necessities to assist the OVC.
- **Poultry production.** During this period, the institution bought 100 layer chickens; 92 survived and at peak were able to produce over 80 eggs a day. Some eggs were fed to OVC at the centre while others were sold locally. Unfortunately, due to the increased cost of feed, the project was discontinued and the chickens sold off. The money raised was used to purchase Black Australop (Mikolongwe) chickens.
- **Rabbit production.** Rabbits were chosen for their rapid multiplication. The centre bought 12 rabbits, but after some months they did not reproduce. The rabbits were then slaughtered and the meat fed to the children at the centre.
- **Vegetable production.** The centre started producing vegetables to feed the children and for sale to the public. At the peak of production, they were able to realize sales of as much as K1,000 per day. Initially, production was quite low, until 2007 when a passer-by from Zambia stopped at the centre.

Astounded by their achievement, he offered them a free one-day training session on how to produce vegetables organically using the trench method. Since then, the production has more than quadrupled through using organic fertilizers.

- *Goat production.* The centre started keeping its own goats in 2003 to feed the resident children. At the time of the study, it had a stock of 16. In 2008, the centre donated 27 goats as start-up packages to the boys and girls who had graduated from the centre.
- *Maize milling.* In 2005, the centre wrote a proposal to MASAF and were granted K1,666,664 for the construction of a maize mill building and for the purchase and installation of a maize mill. The community initially intended to buy a diesel-propelled maize mill; it subsequently decided on an electric-propelled mill on the advice of the women. Unfortunately, the centre did not know at the time they would need a transformer to connect the electricity, and this proved too expensive (K3,000,000) for them. The project was more or less abandoned during this phase.
- *Skills training.* Teenage boys and girls at the centre were regularly trained in vegetable production and vocational skills (tailoring and carpentry). A well-wisher donated a sewing machine and a carpentry tool kit which were being used for training.

Livelihood-based outreach activities for assisting OVC households during this period included the following:

- *Goat pass-on scheme for OVC households.* With funding from the National AIDS Commission, 30 goats were bought and given to 30 OVC households. However, due to chronic famine in the area, nearly 20 households sold off their stock in order to raise money to buy maize. Only one OVC household is on record as having kept its goat which has since multiplied to six.
- *Provision of food items and clothing.* Through donations from well-wishers, the centre distributed food items and clothing to OVC households in the area as part of its outreach activities.

Other activities during this period included:

- *Water and sanitation.* The construction of three shallow wells and the installation of handpumps

valued at about K40,000 was carried out by the community.

- *Construction of centre buildings.* The centre completed construction of some buildings (multi-purpose hall, sick bay, old kitchen, hostel and office block).
- *Construction of houses for OVC households.* The centre received funding from well-wishers and modern houses for two OVC households, headed by elderly people, were built.
- *Care and support.* The centre routinely provided medical, social and spiritual care to children resident at the centre.
- *Environmental protection.* In 2005/6, the roof of the hostel block was blown off by the wind. The centre decided to plant trees as a windshield, as well as for shade, etc. The trees have since grown and there has been no repeat of the 2005/6 problem.

Maturity phase of the centre (2008-2009)

During 2008 and 2009 (at the time of the study), the Good News Children's Home reported expansion of sustainable activities. The centre also registered an increase in activities and the number of OVC who reached 18 years and had to leave and re-integrate into their households. In 2008, 27 boys and girls who had reached 18 years graduated from the centre and rejoined their families in their respective homes.

During this phase, the centre became less dependent on outside help and tried as much as possible to generate funds on their own, with outsiders only supplementing their efforts. In most instances, activities during this phase were similar to those done in the establishment phase. There were some expansions or introductions of new projects, and the implementers became more proactive, productive and innovative in their approaches. These achievements demonstrate the centre's maturity in approach and purpose. Some of the livelihood-based activities done during this phase included the following:

- *Maize production.* The centre continued producing rain-fed and winter maize to feed the children resident at the centre. Maize production during this period decreased from 60 bags of 50 kilogrammes each (2007/08) to 21 bags (2008/09) due to severe drought.
- *Vegetable production.* The centre continued to produce vegetables although there was some drop in production in 2009 due to water problems.



- **Maize mill project.** The site for the maize mill was shifted to a new site which already had a public transformer nearly ten kilometres from the centre. The community built another structure at this site and all installations were complete. Most of the construction materials for the new maize-mill building were collected from within the community.
- **Goat breeding.** 27 goats were given as a 'starter-pack' to each of the 27 boys and girls who graduated from the centre.

Other activities included the following:

- **Care and support.** The centre continued to routinely provide medical, social and spiritual care to the resident children.
- **Installation of solar-lighting system.** Through funding from well-wishers and its own funding, the centre provided a solar-powered lighting system to all its main buildings.
- **Construction of houses for OVC households.** The centre acquired more funding for construction of houses for the elderly poor who were looking after OVC. Three houses were built during this phase.
- **Construction of centre buildings.** A new and more modern kitchen was built for the centre.
- **Water and sanitation.** A well-wisher donated a borehole and a solar-water pumping system valued at about K1,500,000. A commercial company drilled the borehole and installed the solar-pumping system and water piping. The centre also constructed

modern pit latrines for the home which improved sanitation.

The benefits of the initiative

About 18 boys and girls who graduated from the centre were invited to the discussions. They worked in three separate groups and reported their views during a flip-chart presentation to the plenary of village heads, centre management committee and some OVC household heads. The following is a summary of background information and the views of the 17 boys and girls:

Family background information of the centre's graduates who participated in the discussions

Number of female graduates (respondents)	5
Number of male graduates (respondents)	12
Number of double orphans	6
Number of single orphans	11
Average number of siblings per household	4
Average period at the centre (years)	4

The situation before joining Good News Children's Home

One of the boys ably summarized the situation on behalf of his group (see below). He said children are chosen to be taken to the centre because they are living in abject poverty due to the loss of one or both parents. Such children face a bleak future and are probably written off by society.



The Good News Children's Home dairy house



Guinea fowls at the Good News Children's Home

Changes experienced while at the Good News Children's Home

All three groups agreed that their lives changed as a result of joining the centre. Some of the notable changes experienced included:

- *Improved food and nutrition.* The change from eating once a day to three times a day was overwhelming for the children at Good News Children's Home. They felt that their nutritional status changed enormously.
- *Acquisition of skills.* As part of their life at the centre, the children learnt some basic skills in vegetable production, sanitation, carpentry and tailoring, and the management of poultry and other small livestock. Some of the girls who graduated from the centre indicated that they had started producing and selling vegetables to meet their livelihood needs. Some indicated they were caring for goats they had received on leaving the centre and hoped their stocks would improve their future livelihoods.
- *Improved health.* The graduates cited improved health as one of the major changes they experienced in their lives as a result of being enrolled at the Good News Children's Home. One moving story was about a six-month-old baby boy who had been taken into the centre after his mother died. At the time of the visit, the boy was seven years old and attending school. It was also significant that since the centre's opening in 1999, there had been no death of a child. This is a remarkable record considering that most children coming to the centre are emaciated and undernourished.
- *Improved spiritual and social life.* The boys and girls who participated in the discussions described how the routine spiritual and psycho-social counselling received at the centre had changed their spiritual and social lives drastically. Socially, their esteem had improved – they had learnt to trust themselves and respect others. Their knowledge of gender and human rights also improved, as had their world view.
- *Reduced poverty.* As described below, the boys and girls felt that their situation with regard to being poor had changed and that they were now considered to be people who had more value than before. At the centre, they had a good place to sleep, good clothes and shoes, money for toiletries and laundry, and other necessities.
- *Improved education.* The centre is used as a place for the children to live, but they attend different neighbouring primary and community secondary day schools. The centre pays secondary school fees and buys school uniforms and other necessities for both primary school and secondary school going children. About seven of the graduates who participated in the discussions reported having passed the Malawi School Certificate examinations with very good grades. Two scored 25 and 29 aggregate points respectively and had sat for university entrance examinations. They attributed their achievements to the good educational environment of the centre and also to the educational materials they received.



Children learning skills in vegetable production at the centre



Modern methods of farming taught to children at the centre



Life at Good News Children's Home: Story by one of the 2007 graduates

Before I came to the centre, I was living in abject poverty. I lost both parents some years ago and my grandmother took care of me and three of my siblings. Because of the poverty in the household she couldn't afford a mat for us to sleep on. Instead we slept on an old sack. I had one pair of short trousers which was so worn out that it exposed my buttocks. Two meals in a day is a luxury I never knew. We ate once a day and during most days not even a meal at all. Water-lilies were our main meal.

My arrival at Good News Children's Home changed my whole life. First I was filled with excitement and disbelief when I was told to choose a bed to sleep on. I asked myself, "Is it really me that will sleep on this bed? Is this not just a dream?" I felt so excited that I was in a dilemma whether to choose the upper or lower deck bed. As for the meals at the centre, I would describe them as simply superb. Eating three times in a day was initially really strange to me, but I came to realize that that's how life ought to be. So, here I was enjoying the abundance of the food, enjoying a good environment for education, good social, spiritual and health care, good accommodation and good meals. But when I thought of my siblings who were still at home with our old grandmother, struggling with life, it was hard to imagine how they were managing. I came to realize that I was one of the lucky few.

When we reached the age of 18 years, I and my colleagues were told that we could no longer be kept at the centre. I found it hard to accept, but I knew I had to leave in order to give a chance to others.

On the day of my arrival at home, I was scared that I was going to be received with the usual insults that used to 'rain' on me before I left to join Good News Children's Home. To my surprise, I was received like a king. As I arrived, pulling behind me a suitcase, the people of the village flocked to me and welcomed me with jubilation. However, the honeymoon was soon over as I had to face the realities of harsh life again – waking up early to go and farm, no three meals, no soap, etc. The difference, though, was that this time I had grown more in physical as well as spiritual strength. My determination was to complete my School Certificate and probably go to university or find a job that could help me find money to assist my family. I indeed passed my examinations last year – fortunately the examination fees were already paid for by the centre before I left. I passed so well that I was given a place at a private college in Blantyre. Unfortunately I am unable to raise college fees. All in all, I cherish my life at Good News Children's Home. To me this is home indeed!

Resources committed towards the interventions

The Good News Children's Home is a community-initiated and managed intervention dependent on local resources. Although various kinds of support are given by external sources, the centre mainly depends on itself. Some of the resources committed which could be quantified are:

- *Construction of structures.* Community members provided most of the materials (bricks, sand, cement, planks and water) including labour for building and carpentry work. Other people supported the centre with additional iron sheets and some bags of cement for the hostel and office block.

MASAF provided funds to pay for iron sheets, planks, cement, etc. to build the maize mill while the community provided bricks, sand, water and labour for bricklaying and carpentry work and hauling bricks, sand quarry chips and other materials.

- *Purchase of capital equipment and stock.* Funding agents provided money for the purchase of the maize mill and livestock, while the community constructed the housing structures and were responsible for the management of the stock.
- *Crop production.* The funding agents provided money to buy farm inputs (seeds and fertilizers) while the community cultivated the fields. In some cases,

the community contributed money to rent gardens for winter cropping and provided farm inputs from their own resources.

- *Construction of houses for some OVC households.* The Good News Children's Home received funding for this activity, but the community provided bricks, sand and labour for their construction.
- *Education support for OVC.* Most of the money for educational support for the children was raised by the community itself, with a few exceptions.

Challenges faced

Inappropriate technology. After the proposal for the maize mill was approved and money received from MASAF, the women decided they would prefer an electric mill to a diesel-propelled maize one. With the knowledge that patronage of a diesel mill would be poor, the plan was changed: an electric motor was bought and the building wired. After these preparations were completed, ESCOM quoted K3,000,000 for the power transformer which was necessary to operate the electric mill.

This was a serious setback since the community had insufficient funds. When they approached MASAF for additional funds through the DA, they were unsuccessful, and the project stalled. After three years, a new plan to construct another building at a centre with a public transformer was implemented. This work was completed in 2008 at the site of the transformer, ten kilometres from the centre. The maize mill started operating in April 2009, but the original building at the centre was only used as a skills training centre. The community learned a hard lesson: consider all relevant factors when developing a proposal. They also feel some of the mistakes could have been avoided if they had adequately involved the women who are the main users of the maize mill service. They also believe they should have found out in more detail what was required to install a maize mill.

Inadequate expertise. The centre is in a dry area where water availability is generally a problem. With the increased number of children (more than 100) it became urgent to have a more reliable source of water at the centre. The committee decided to hire someone to dig a shallow well, and they bought and installed a handpump. Unfortunately, during the rainy season,

the well collapsed and it could no longer be used.

Using their newly acquired skills, they decided to dig a new one on their own: they succeeded and installed the handpump. They also dug a second well close to the vegetable garden to use for watering the vegetables. An improvement plan was made to pump water into an underground tank and bring it to an elevated tank using a treadle pump, and then take the water down by gravity. When all the preparations were made, they discovered it was impossible to lift the water from the underground tank using a treadle pump. It was suggested that water could be raised to the elevated tank by hand. Several people lined up and managed to fill the tank but when they watered the field, the water gushed out uncontrollably and flooded the fields and swept away the plants. Exhausted and frustrated, they abandoned the project and they resorted to watering using buckets.

A well-wisher, on learning about the centre, offered to assist with a solar-pumping system. He engaged a commercial driller to drill a borehole, fitted a solar pump and installed the watertank. The whole centre enjoyed tap water, but only for a brief period, as the pump broke down hardly a year later.

The community was not involved in any of the installation processes and therefore could not figure out what to fix and how to fix it. The centre felt that by sharing their stories, other communities might learn from their mistakes. They pointed out a few important lessons they had learnt from their experiences. From the shallow-well project in which the committee participated in the digging, they learnt how to install the pump and use the same process on a second well. They also developed confidence and were able to sustain the service without depending on support from external sources. However, in the case of the solar-pump project, in which the committee was a passive recipient, they became helplessly dependent on the service provider. The committee also learned to seek technical advice on some of the activities such as water pumping in order to avoid costly mistakes.

The centre had inadequate technical knowledge in rabbit rearing. The twelve rabbits bought by the centre were slaughtered and consumed after they appeared unable to reproduce. At the time, somebody suggested that the rabbits were old, but they later



learnt that the housing structure was inappropriate for rabbits to reproduce: the rabbits had been kept in a cement-floor building, but rabbits dig holes where they bear and keep their young ones. From this experience, they also learnt the importance of seeking technical advice.

Marketing constraints. While the poultry project was a success in terms of survival rate and egg production, it could not be sustained because it was not possible to sell locally the daily collection of 60 to 70 eggs, and there were too few to make it worthwhile to deliver and sell them elsewhere. As a result, the cost of feed could not be met. The solution was to sell off the chickens and buy semi-commercial ones which would require less intensive management.

Scepticism about the motive of the centre. Although the children's home is community initiated and managed, there were times during its establishment when some members of the community were sceptical about the real motives of the centre. It must be understood that due to chronic food insecurity and poverty in the area, child trafficking is rampant. Consequently, any institutions dealing with children are seriously questioned by the community. These concerns were minimized by regularly inviting households to the centre for get-togethers and meetings, and by releasing the children during some days of their stay to attend important family social functions in their own homes.

No material incentives for volunteers. The centre expressed concern that while volunteers have faithfully cared for the children (even contributing cash of K1,000 per month), they do so at the expense of their own households and families. In order to sustain their motivation, the committee has planned some fundraising projects, the proceeds of which will be exclusively used to compensate volunteers for their time.

Lack of transport. The centre lacks transport to take children to clinics or hospital, particularly when they fall sick at night. A volunteer has to walk long distances with an ill child on his/her back to seek medical attention. The centre had not yet worked out a solution to this problem.

Main driving force behind its success

The idea for the children's home was originally conceived in 1998 and it has operated for over ten years. During this period, the centre has met many more challenges than those highlighted above, and yet survived and progressed with determination. Behind its success are a number of key factors, which include the following:

- *Support from traditional leaders.* The group village headmen and all their village headmen were in the forefront and have continued their support over the ten or so years. They provided land for all constructions and farming. They contributed financial and other resources, and supported the centre in all its various needs.
- *Strong sense of purpose.* From the beginning, the institution was built with a strong sense of purpose and passion – to help the OVC. Backed by spiritual belief, the centre has remained focused on saving lives and building a future for children in dire need.
- *Sense of achievement and ownership.* The centre coordinator highlighted how several visitors to the centre acknowledge the good work that is being done: their comments have encouraged everyone at the centre to work harder and improve their efforts. After having been awarded a few grants, the centre coordinator believed they were no longer afraid to knock on the door of any government office at the DA, or indeed at any office they felt could help them. They see external institutions and individuals as partners, but also that the whole process should be driven and managed by the community itself.
- *Strong leadership.* The centre has a board of directors, a centre coordinator and volunteers. The coordinator is well qualified and seems to adequately use the established structures for major decisions.
- *Spiritual values.* The centre is built around Christian values. In whatever they do, they start with prayers.

Lessons learnt

The community highlighted a number of lessons which they had learnt from their twelve years experience operating as a residential children's home. The following are some of these lessons which they would like others to learn from:

- Involve others and learn from them, but not depend on them;
- Seek advice and consult widely (internally and externally) before making costly mistakes; and
- When you encounter a problem, endure, pray about it and seek alternative solutions.

Future plans

The management and staff of Good News Children's Home had foresight and made plans to develop and grow. Some of the plans are:

- *Bakery project.* This will be an income-generating activity, the revenues of which will be exclusively used to compensate volunteers for their time.
- *Rural polytechnic.* The centre plans to establish a rural polytechnic so that children who graduate can be engaged in skills training to improve their livelihoods.
- *Installation of mains electricity.* The centre still had plans for the maize mill project at the centre but had to find a way of bringing ESCOM power to the centre.
- *Entertainment for the centre's children.* The centre plans to acquire a television set and DVD player for the children's entertainment.
- *Mechanisation of farming.* The community currently cultivates the centre's farm but only a small piece of land is cultivated. The plan is to increase this land and use mechanical equipment to increase production.
- *Building maintenance:* Since construction, no major maintenance of the buildings has been undertaken. There are plans to carry out maintenance work on all the main buildings.

Suggestions for improvement

Good News Children's Home could follow the example of Chimteka Children's Support Organization in Mchinji, which loans out farm inputs to volunteers who produce their own crops and repay the institution an agreed quantity, part of which is then used to feed the centre's children; the surplus is sold to raise income for the centre. This system could also motivate people to volunteer their time and resources. The centre could also try to integrate village savings and loans clubs in order to supplement income-generating activity.



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Tawonga CBO, Karonga

Location of the site

Tawonga CBO is located in Traditional Authority Mwilang'ombe which is the responsibility of Group Village Headman Mwakashunguti. The CBO is in a remote area called Thawilo, which is 60 kilometres south of Karonga town on the outskirts of Nyika Game Reserve. The area is characterized by undulating terrain with sandy soils. The rainfall is erratic, usually causing droughts. Although Karonga district is well known for growing rice and cotton, this particular area mostly depends on maize and some tobacco. The region becomes unreachable by car during the rainy season.

Establishment of the community-based organization (2001-2005)

Until 2004, Tawonga CBO was part of Chimwemwe CBO. Chimwemwe CBO started in 2001, and by 2004 it covered 27 villages. Its operations became too large for one CBO to effectively manage. Frequent conflicts erupted among village heads, and fewer and fewer OVC came to benefit from the CBO. Therefore Chimwemwe CBO was advised to let go some of the villages it was responsible for, hence the establishment of Tawonga CBO. Tawonga registered as a CBO in 2004.

The aim of Tawonga CBO was to reduce the impact of HIV-related problems among increasing numbers of OVC and people suffering from AIDS-related chronic illnesses. It covers ten villages under Group Village Headman Mwakashunguti. At its inception, the CBO registered 185 orphans (75 male and 110 female) in the ten villages. Livelihood activities at the time of establishment included:

- Production of soybeans for feeding children in the CBCCs which the CBO had established in each of the ten villages;
- Assistance to OVC households with inputs to grow vegetables, tomatoes and maize for food and income; and
- Food assistance in the form of flour to needy households of orphans, the chronically ill and the elderly.

Although some of these resources were provided

through external support, the CBO raised most of them through *ganyu*, cultivation of communal gardens, door-to-door contributions of food items, and direct contributions of food items by the volunteer members. They also provided bricks, sand and labour for construction of CBCCs. It is significant that village members participated in CBO activities (cultivation of communal gardens, construction of CBCCs, etc).

Development of the community-based organization (2006-2007)

Upon advice from the district social welfare office, the selection of orphans only was redefined to include other vulnerable children. The number of OVC registered during this period therefore increased to 402 from the ten villages.

During the period 2006–2007, many activities were carried out and more OVC households were assisted. The CBO also received funding from MASAF, which helped to increase reach to OVC with more livelihood interventions. Livelihood interventions implemented during this period included:

- *Pig production.* The CBO wrote a proposal to MASAF and was granted K1,027,000 for the construction of a pig pen and the purchasing of pigs. They bought six pigs which, during this period, produced 15 piglets. The 15 piglets were issued to 15 OVC who were each expected to pass on one offspring piglet to another OVC in the future.
- *Goat production.* Two hundred goats were issued to OVC and vulnerable households in all the villages. Each recipient was expected to pass on one offspring to the next OVC.

Other relevant activities

- *Construction of CBCCs for OVC and other children in all ten villages.*
- *Construction of a nursery school.*
- *Capacity building:* Various training and skills building activities, including CBO management, VSL management, leadership, financial management, a Children's Corner, HIV and AIDS training, home based care, etc.
- *Provision of educational materials:* The CBO bought school uniforms for 40 pupils, as well as recreational materials and nursery school kits for CBCCs.

Maturity of the community-based organization (2008-2009)

The four years of operation as an independent CBO from 2004 to 2007 gave Tawonga CBO enough knowledge and experience so that its activities and services demonstrated more maturity and independence. Some of the success stories during this period include:

- *Poultry production.* Thirty-three OVC households were given 66 guinea fowl (two each) in a pass-on scheme. When the guinea fowl started laying eggs, the recipient OVC passed on ten eggs to the next OVC.
- *Fruit production.* Sixty-seven OVC households were each issued with five grafted fruit trees. This initiative was meant to improve household nutrition.
- *Communal maize gardens.* Each of the ten villages set aside an area for a village garden to assist OVC and their households. During this period, they grew mostly maize to feed children in the CBCCs.
- *Groundnut production.* OVC and vulnerable households were given seed to produce groundnuts for food and income.
- *Maize seed and fertilizers.* OVC households were also given seed and fertilizers to produce maize for consumption and sale.
- *Introduction of village savings and loans associations.* This initiative was first introduced by World Vision International. The CBO formed a VSL sub-committee comprising mostly households caring for OVC. At the time of the study, there were three functional groups with a total membership of 75 (25 per group). At the end of 2008, the three groups had saved K536,039 which they shared and bought farm inputs and other household necessities.
- *School fees and uniforms.* With funding from World Vision International, the CBO paid secondary school fees for 12 needy students. From its resources, the CBO bought school uniforms for 42 needy primary school pupils.

During this period, the following changes were noticed among OVC and their households:

- More OVC were enrolled in schools and regularly attended classes;
- Food and nutrition security improved owing to farm inputs given to OVC households, money saved



through the VSL clubs which was used to buy food and farm inputs, and improved meal frequency through the CBCC feeding programme;

- Through the Children's Corner programme, the social life of OVC improved;
- Openness in dealing with issues surrounding HIV and AIDS; and
- Livestock numbers in the area, particularly among OVC households, increased.

The benefits of the initiatives

- *Increased education opportunity.* More OVC, who would otherwise have dropped out of school due to lack of fees or other necessities, were given the opportunity to continue with or complete school.
- *Improved food and nutrition security.* Through increased access to farm inputs, food production among OVC households had improved and OVC livelihoods had improved. Direct access to food through CBCC feeding programmes, as well as donations of food to needy households, helped increase the food and nutrition situation for OVC.
- *Accumulation of assets.* Through interventions such as the goat, pig and guinea fowl schemes, some OVC hoped for increased income opportunities in the future. Although the fruit-tree intervention will yield long-term results, the trees will nevertheless be an important asset to the future livelihoods of OVC.
- *Improved self-esteem.* Through intensive sensitization about child rights, psycho-social support, and issues of gender and HIV and AIDS, the esteem of the OVC had improved.

Resources committed to the interventions

- *Pig production project.* K1,027,000 of the MASAF grant was used to purchase six pigs and on the construction of the pig pen. The community contributed bricks, sand, quarry chips, water and labour. OVC households which had benefited from the donation of piglets constructed their own pig pens with support from the CBO.
- *Guinea fowl production project.* K100,000 of the NAC grant was spent on the construction of a housing structure for guinea fowl, and a smaller amount on purchasing 25 guinea fowl. The community provided labour, bricks, sand and other local materials.

- *Construction of CBCCs.* The community raised its own resources to construct ten CBCCs in the villages (estimated at K75,000 each) and a nursery school. Materials used included bricks, cement, iron sheets, sand and poles.
- *Goat production project.* Households that benefited from the goat scheme constructed their own goat *kholas*. These are usually simple structures made of poles.

Motivators for success

The Karonga district social welfare officer stated that Tawonga CBO was doing much better than Chimwemwe CBO. The following factors could be behind the success of Tawonga CBO:

- *Strong leadership.* The CBO's chairperson is a young man with passion and drive to mobilize the community. He has the strong support of the group village headman and the village headmen. In the past, he even tried to step down from the chairmanship position, but the traditional leaders objected. He was fined a goat for trying to sabotage a successful village project, and he withdrew his resignation.
- *Decentralized structure of CBO management.* Each village has been empowered to replicate CBO activities in their own village, with only some activities being done centrally. This has created positive competition among villages and ensured that each village directly benefits from CBO activities.
- *Spirit of volunteerism.* Volunteerism and working together seem to be embedded in the social life of people of the area. The spirit of volunteerism may also be strong because the CBO has operated on its own for only four years and the people have already witnessed so much change.
- *Cooperation with village headmen.* All major CBO activities are done with or through the group village headman and village headmen, which has encouraged villagers to participate in CBO communal activities.
- *Strong sense of purpose.* There was a strong desire to address the problem of orphanhood and destitution among children in the area.

Challenges faced

- *Inadequate CBCC and nursery school teachers.* With increased enrolment of children, it was becoming

more difficult for the few teachers to cope with the workload.

- *Lack of CBO management skills.* Most of the committee members had not undergone training on CBO management and as a result some of the issues were being inadequately dealt with through trial and error.

Lessons learnt

The members of the CBO felt they had learnt many lessons from the experience, which included:

- When you show commitment to help yourself, others will be willing to assist; and
- When the process is transparent and the participating villages understand the benefits of the project, they are willing to commit their resources and time.

Future plans

- *Maize mill.* The village savings and loans clubs plan to buy a maize mill at the end of 2009 using this year's savings. Since they saved more than K500,000 in the previous year, this goal is likely to be achieved.
- *Expand OVC services.* The CBO plans to grow tobacco in the 2009/10 season in order to expand services rendered to OVC.
- *Increase feeds for the pigs.* Currently, the CBO buys maize bran from the community to feed the pigs. The future plan is to let villages contribute pig feed since the households in these villages benefit from the products.
- *Vocational skills centre.* There is already a skills vocational centre about ten kilometres from the area which was built by a local NGO, Lusubilo. Now there are plans to establish a similar centre in the Karonga area where young boys and girls can learn various skills.



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Summary of Key Issues



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Livelihood activities implemented

In all three case studies, OVC and their households were directly or indirectly assisted through implementation of activities that enhanced food and nutrition security, improved OVC education, increased income and income-earning opportunities, and helped with the basic necessities of life (clothing, accommodation, health care). Activities implemented included:

- Cultivation of food and cash crops such as maize, soybeans, vegetables, cotton and beans;
- Rearing of livestock such as goats, guinea fowl, pigs, rabbits, chickens and dairy cattle; and
- Income-generating activities such as maize mill, *ganyu*, savings and loans and a 'Big Walk' fundraiser.

They provided education support through:

- Construction of CBCCs;
- Provision of school fees, uniforms educational materials; and
- Construction of a nursery school.

They also provided health care and psycho-social support through:

- Provision of basic drugs and taking children to hospital; and
- Training and counselling.

Benefits of initiatives

1. General improvement in the lives of OVC and those of their households

Children, whose lives have been without hope, now have a brighter future and are accepted as valuable members of society. Decent accommodation, healthy meals, adequate clothing, achievement at school, and some assets for their future wealth – these are more than OVC could have hoped for. Elderly grandmothers living in dilapidated houses were housed in decent iron-sheet roofed houses of their own at the Good News Children's Home: their life had certainly changed for the better.

2. Improved food and nutrition security

The community produced food to feed OVC and/or their households. In the case of the Good News

Children's Home, children were fed on a daily basis, even when most households in the community faced critical food shortages. It was reported that the ringing of meal bells was stopped because they attracted many non-resident children from surrounding villages who would gate-crash and take part in mealtimes. OVC households who benefited from the initiatives reported improved meal frequency and reduced periods of hunger. It was also reported that more children attended school who would otherwise have dropped out due to hunger.

3. Improved education

Increased enrolment of OVC in schools and consistent attendance of classes was attributed to the interventions that the community made through the initiatives outlined above. The former residents of Good News Children's Home were testimony to this: they talked about their high scores at Malawi School Certificate of Education level.

4. Lives have been saved

OVC have a higher chance of contracting diseases and dying due to inadequate care. Through the CBCC feeding programmes, it was reported that the health of the children had improved, and some achievements in these case studies have been outstanding. For example, there has been no child death for the past ten years at Good News Children's Home which sometimes houses more than 100 children.

5. Asset building

Most OVC and their households benefited from goats, pigs and guinea fowl. These are likely to continue to help them meet part of their livelihood needs in the future.

The driving force for success

Strength of purpose

The passion to help the helpless, needy OVC and their households seems to be the main driving force behind most of the success in the three community initiatives. In the words of one Ntcheu woman: "We just feel committed to assist these children so that they can lead a better life. After all, they are our children."

Ownership and responsibility

These projects were initiated, managed and owned by the community. For example, the Good Hope Children's Home community had the following to say with regard to the two boreholes that they dug and installed and the one that was dug and installed by a benefactor: "When any of *our* two boreholes breaks down, it doesn't take a day without being fixed because we dug the well and fixed the pump ourselves. We know how to do it and we do it ourselves. The borehole which was fitted with the solar pump was dug and the system (including the tower for the water tank, piping) installed for us. Since it broke down, we have been unable to do anything about it because we don't know where to start from." (Focus Group Discussion, Chikwawa).

Similarly, in Ntcheu (Chitungu CBO) the community saw that when some projects were decentralized to villages, and later individual OVC households, there was more commitment from the participating villages. As a result, each of the nine participating villages cultivated its own village garden and constructed its own pig pen to assist OVC in their village, with the CBO committee only monitoring implementation.

In the same way, Similarly, the Tawonga CBO approach to decentralizing CBCCs and pig and guinea fowl production to the villages, and later to individual OVC households, yielded better results.

Spiritual/social bonding

From its foundation, spiritual life has been the cornerstone of the Good News Children's Home in Chikwawa district. Before members start their daily chores, they meet and share the word of God. Even children at the centre pray and receive spiritual counselling a couple of times a day. In all three case studies, there were indications of a strong social bond among the members. Asked why they volunteered to assist the OVC or their households without expecting to be paid, the women in most of these sites said the following about their commitment: "I know that one day when I die, someone will have to take care of my children. So why shouldn't I do it for others while I am alive?" They also thought that, socially, women had stronger emotional feelings about the plight of children than men.

Leadership and Organization

Leadership, both on the part of those who were managing the initiatives on a day-to-day basis and traditional leadership, was at the centre of success in implementing these projects.

Challenges and failures encountered

Implementation of these projects was certainly challenging. At times, communities faced tough hurdles and even failures. However, when they felt discouraged, they gathered strength to face the challenges and move on. While some of the hurdles they faced were internal, others were external, and some were beyond their control. The following summarizes these challenges:

1. Institutional factors

Delays in the release of support promised to the CBO, such as funds from MANASO for the maize mill project in Ntcheu, may have affected the morale of the community members. While this particular case cannot be generalized to MANASO as an institution, an employee of MANASO should take responsibility for the unreasonable difficulties the CBO had to endure to get the maize mill. Similarly, the case of Chitungu CBO being given a dairy cow project instead of their requested maize de-huller implies that an official, who was supposed to be providing a service to the institution, perhaps ignored the community's needs and requirements, or did not explain in good time why an alternative decision had been taken. As a result, the CBO was not ready for the cows and therefore faced the challenges of feeding and managing the animals.

2. Technological factors

Technology is one of the keys to success, but unfortunately it also comes with its own challenges. The Good News Children's Home maize mill project was one such technology that brought with it various challenges. Firstly, the wrong technology was proposed and funded (a diesel instead of electric-propelled engine), and secondly the exorbitant cost of the related technology (K3,000,000 for a transformer) meant the community could not afford it. Solar-pumping technology also put the centre in a

hopeless situation when the pump broke down. Solar pumping is known to be more sustainable and appropriate to a rural environment, but it requires trained people to fix it. Technology also let down the dairy cow project in Chitungu CBO in Ntcheu when the cows were unable to conceive after being artificially inseminated. Such challenges can make implementing communities feel desperate.

3. Socio-cultural (scepticism, insinuation and ridicule)

As in most development projects, the tendency of some members of the community wanting to discredit a successful initiative was common across the three case studies. Volunteers constantly faced ridicule, negative remarks, unpleasant insinuations and even scepticism for their motives, but they were never deterred from achieving their goals.

4. Inadequate resources

In the three case studies, the communities were unable to adequately reach all the intended OVC households in their areas, mainly due to resource constraints.

Lessons learnt from the experiences

Participants learnt a great deal from their experiences, and in particular two things:

- *Ownership and responsibility.* When they took ownership and responsibility for a project, and even endured personal sacrifice for an initiative, others were willing to assist.
- *Transparency and accountability.* When leadership practised transparency and accountability, members of the community felt more confident and committed to devote their time and resources.

Suggestions for improvement

The suggestions below are made with the understanding that the achievements cited in the case studies were probably the best that could have been made within the constraints of resources and expertise. It is also acknowledged that some of these suggestions may be transferred to other communities, depending on existing situations.

1. Integration of village savings and loans clubs within CBOs

Tawonga CBO managed to effectively integrate VSL clubs within the CBO set-up to the extent that the targeted OVC households with labour capacity seemed to reduce dependency on the CBO for income or material support. Such integration was less prominent in Chitungu CBO. Intensification of VSL clubs among OVC households and volunteers in all these CBOs is therefore suggested. Where possible, the social cash transfer scheme implemented in Mchinji and other districts could be linked to CBO and VSL initiatives.

2. Skills building for teenage OVC

Skills building for OVC was identified by all the projects under review as being vital for future livelihoods development of the OVC. However, skills building was not being given priority either because of resource limitations or lack of expertise and knowledge. Institutions like the Good News Children's Home offer much better opportunities for children to attend skills-building sessions during afternoons after normal school and/or weekends off. Such skills could be in agriculture through a modified form of JFFLS in which children could learn about crop and livestock production, or craft skills such as carpentry, brickwork and tailoring. This would enhance their livelihood opportunities once they have graduated from centres. Similarly, CBOs could also use CBCC structures to teach teenage OVC such skills.

3. Assistance to volunteers that care for OVC

Most of the work in the three projects was being done by volunteers. It seems that these volunteers offer their services at enormous cost to themselves; for example, they risk food insecurity in their own homes or experience marriage problems. Currently, they volunteer because they feel morally, spiritually or socially obliged, but they might not be so willing in the future. Resources permitting, the projects could annually loan volunteers some farm inputs to produce their own maize, beans or soybeans. Volunteers could then repay the institutions an agreed amount or contribute to the centre's food bank. Such a programme would benefit both volunteers and centres, since food security and self-sufficiency would be

ensured. This is only one possible way of motivating the volunteers as well as increasing food and incomes for OVC care and support.

4. Cooperating with all government extension agents

Apart from social welfare officers, linkage with other community-based government extension agents was unclear. It must be emphasized that government extension agents are important to providing technical and policy advice. There are various reasons for the weak relationship between government extension agents and the CBOs or childcare centres, but it is suggested that strong relationships be established in order to avoid costly mistakes in the future. Although it is the responsibility of communities to link up and seek advice and services from various government agents, it is also the responsibility of the latter to cultivate interest by visiting such initiatives and providing necessary advice.

5. Responding to the community's needs

The case in which Chitungu CBO requested a maize sheller and instead was given five dairy cows which they eventually failed to manage is a classic case of disregarding people's needs. As Group Village Headman Masitimale said: "If you bring something, we will never say no", but if a community's needs are not addressed, they will feel neither committed nor responsible for a project in the long term. The Chitungu CBO case is perhaps an isolated one, but nonetheless it serves as an important lesson for service providers, who need to listen and respond to the needs of communities. If a community's needs cannot be met, members should be informed and alternatives suggested and discussed.





Part 3: Potential for Scaling Up the Best Practices

Introduction

The problem of orphans and vulnerable children is a daunting challenge to development and requires concerted efforts. It is recognized that the social and economic challenges that OVC face, and the implications of these challenges for development, vary across contexts and over time. Based on this understanding, the social support responses should be tailored to locally relevant priorities, preferably identified by the affected communities rather than outsiders.

Since the emergence of AIDS, local communities have responded to the problems of OVC in various ways. There is no doubt that some of the responses have been very effective in mitigating the negative impacts and improving the livelihoods of the OVC and their households. However, these small scale or 'boutique'-type interventions, coupled with little or no information documented or shared about them, means they have remained small and their impact at national level has been minimal.

To effect broader change, it is imperative for all key players to make a concerted effort to create awareness of the positive impacts of such successful interventions, with the hope of scaling them up at district, national or regional levels. It is against this background that the United Nations and Partners

Alliance on livelihood-based social protection for OVC decided to undertake this study to document success stories of livelihood-based social protection for OVC.

This study had four key components related to livelihood-based social protection for OVC:

- Analysis of the country situation;
- Observation of case studies documenting success stories;
- Analysis of the case studies for their potential for scaling up; and
- Field guide for initiating and implementing community driven interventions.

This part of the report focuses on the third aspect, i.e. analysis of the case studies for scaling up. Therefore, this report:

- Briefly outlines the context of the case studies;
- Analyses the performance of the case studies to justify their inclusion as success stories;
- Discusses the models of childcare used in the case studies;
- Analyses the potential for scaling up;
- Identifies key issues for improvement;
- Makes recommendations for scaling up; and
- Discusses feasibility for scaling up.



Brief Review of the Case Studies



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From the outset, it has to be emphasized that in contrast to some studies that have reviewed best practices implemented as projects (externally initiated), the cases selected for this study were all community initiated and managed. For this reason, unless otherwise specified, the word ‘project’ in this report has been used in the context of community driven initiatives and not in the conventional sense of externally initiated and led rural development projects.

Identification of the case studies and methodology for data collection

Identification and selection of micro-level rural development initiatives as best practice cases will always be a contentious issue due to problems of availability of information and sometimes due to decisions influenced by vested interests. While this study may not be immune to these kinds of human biases, by using district social welfare officers who are the government officers mandated to oversee all issues related to OVC in districts, and through involvement of different stakeholders in the selection process, it is hoped that selection bias was minimized. It should also be noted that although these are called ‘best practices’ or ‘success stories’, it does not in any way suggest that they are the best in the country. What this simply means is that based on the set criteria and within the resource limitations of the study, the selected projects offered useful lessons for initiation and implementation of a successful project within the parameters of livelihood support for OVC. On the same note, while appreciating the growing importance of peri-urban OVC situations, the study did not purposely sample such settings and therefore this should be recognized as one of the limitations of the study.

Based on these assertions and facts, three case studies were selected from an initial shortlist of ten which were identified through district social welfare offices in seven districts across all the three regions of the country. The three case studies (Chitungu community-based organization in Ntcheu District, Good News Children’s Home in Chikwawa district, and Tawonga community-based organization in Karonga district) were finally chosen for analysis after two rounds of site visits. During the final visit,



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participatory rural appraisal tools were used to solicit views of the implementing communities. At each site, mixed groups of women and men, and separate groups of direct beneficiaries (OVC or OVC household heads) were formed. Each group responded to a set of questions. Small group discussions were followed by plenary presentations where groups cross-checked each other and added or corrected some facts. Since in most cases each of the small groups responded to the same set of questions, it was easy to verify consistency of facts and how well information was shared among the members of the community. Focus group discussions with community leaders were conducted after the general group exercises. Selected beneficiaries narrated their life stories in one-on-one discussions with the researchers.

Characteristics of the selected sites

Geographic location

Each of the three selected sites is located in different regions of the country. Tawonga CBO is located in the northern lakeshore district of Karonga, which is characterized by short rainfall seasons and persistent dry spells. The site is in a rural setting with minimal off-farm economic opportunities.

Chitungu CBO is located in the central highland district of Ntcheu which is characterized by good rainfall and relatively fertile soils. The site is close to

the town of Ntcheu and offers some opportunities for off-farm employment.

Good News Children's Home (GNCH) is in the southern end of the country in the lower Shire River Valley. The location is hot and dry with constant droughts and floods, and is in a typical rural setting where off-farm economic incentives are minimal.

Objectives and target clientele

These projects were initiated with the common aim of minimizing orphanhood and the problems faced by OVC in their communities. In some projects other vulnerable groups such as the elderly, people living with HIV, chronically ill people and disabled people were also targeted with specific interventions. For the purposes of this study, the focus was on OVC and OVC households.

Period of existence

Each of the three CBOs studied has been in existence for between eight and 12 years. During these years, the initiatives have all progressively grown both in the number of OVC assisted and in the number of interventions implemented.

At the time of the study, Tawonga CBO was covering ten villages under one group village headman (GVH); Chitungu CBO was operating in nine villages under one GVH; and GNCH had a catchment of 36 villages in five GVH. In 2008/09, the total numbers

of OVC in the catchment areas of Tawonga, Chitungu and GNCH were estimated at 402, 525 and 2,000 respectively.

Strategies

The three case studies have a great deal in common. Firstly, they were all born out of the need to solve the problems that affected many households in their communities, i.e. AIDS-related illnesses and deaths, and increased numbers of destitute children, particularly orphans. Secondly, they were initiated by a few members of their communities who promoted the idea and mobilized other members to join them. Thirdly, the respective communities owned and managed both the processes and the outcomes. However, there were slight differences in the approach. The approach of Chitungu and Tawonga CBOs was that of providing assistance to households while the rest of the process of care and support to OVC or the chronically ill remained the responsibility of the respective households. In the process of scaling up their interventions, both CBOs added the day childcare and village savings and loans (VSL) components. On the other hand, GNCH used the residential childcare approach where they provided all the care and support the children needed away from their households. The two different approaches can be attributed to the differing objectives of the projects.

In the light of these case studies, it can therefore be concluded that for a community initiated and managed group to stay together for a long period of time, it needs the following:

- There should be people in the community who feel passionate about the plight of the OVC and the need to do something about the problem.
- These community initiators should sensitize and mobilize others so that the problem is felt and owned by the wider community.

While these are fundamental to all community-driven development initiatives, the observation in this particular case was outstanding, considering that with the emergence of HIV and AIDS there has been a proliferation of externally initiated interventions, some of which have diminished communities' desire to seek local solutions to HIV and AIDS-related problems.



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Performance of the Case Studies: Critical Success Factors



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This part of the analysis reviews the performance of the three case studies in order to authenticate their credibility as successful models of livelihood support for OVC. The analysis therefore tries to tackle two basic questions: “Why should these be called success stories?” and “What factors qualify them to be best practices?” In this regard, three factors – sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency – deemed critical for the success of any community driven intervention, were considered in the analysis.

Sustainability

In development work, sustainability of interventions is most desired as a way of ensuring long-lasting and consistent improvement in people’s lives. By definition, a study of sustainability seeks to determine the extent to which the results of an intervention have had or are likely to have lasting effects after the time of the initial intervention. This definition is mainly from the perspective of an externally initiated intervention. In the case of community-initiated and managed interventions like the case studies under review, sustainability is determined by the extent to which the community-initiated project was able to yield consistent results over a long period of time. Within this context, the analysis in this study considered a number of aspects from both the input and output sides.

The input side (sustainability of activities and processes)

Progressive expansion of activities and coverage

All the three case study projects operated and provided services to OVC for eight years or more. Tawonga CBO functioned as part of Chimwemwe CBO from between 2001 and 2004, and has stood on its own since then. GNCH was initiated in 1998 and recruited twelve children for residential care and support in 1999, gradually increasing the numbers until it reached 107 children in 2008. Chitungu started in 1997 and has progressively expanded its services to OVC ever since.

All three projects grew from engaging in a small number of activities and providing services to a few OVC and OVC households. They gradually expanded

the range of activities and services, reaching out to a large number of OVC and OVC households.

GNCH in Chikwawa district started with personal contributions of money, food and labour to construct the children's home and initially provide residential care and support to 12 children. The centre grew through engagement in a wide range of livelihood activities that helped them to raise income and collect food for residential care of around 100 children in 2008/9. Activities expanded from providing assistance through food contributions and *ganyu* (piece work) during the establishment phase of the centre, to the current situation in which it produces its own maize and vegetables and some meat products to feed the children. The centre also managed to diversify its income-earning opportunities to include a maize mill: this will ensure sufficient generation of money to buy farm inputs and meet the basic needs of the centre. GNCH eventually managed to build permanent structures for the residence of the children, which will likely take them some years into the future without major re-investment.

Tawonga CBO in Karonga district also recorded growth in terms of activities for assisting OVC. At the time of establishment, Tawonga depended on raising money through *ganyu* and contributions of money and food from the committee members and the community in order to assist OVC and OVC households. It has since grown and enhanced the ability of some target households to be self-sufficient in food and income. Through provision of farm inputs, guinea fowl, goats and pigs, the project has enhanced livelihood opportunities for the beneficiary households. Its growth has also been recorded in the expansion programme of the VSL scheme where beneficiary households have recorded success in saving and accumulating incomes for their households' day-to-day needs.

Chitungu CBO has a similar story. When it was established in 1997, it could only provide some help to 50 OVC with money raised (about K3,800) through a fund-raising walk known as the 'Big Walk', and *ganyu* (about K500). By 2009 they were able to reach out to 561 OVC with different kinds of support. At the time of the study, the CBO had just received a grant of 27 pigs from Orphan Support Africa, three for each of the nine village piggeries meant for breeding purposes and distribution to OVC in a pass-on scheme in

the respective villages. In 2007, 20 OVC households each received a goat. Although four of the 20 goats died, the 16 that survived had all reproduced in the first half of 2009, giving 17 kids in total. So far, 16 more OVC are expected to benefit from the scheme through second-generation offspring. The CBO also completed installation of a maize mill which, if well managed, will reduce dependence on outside help in funding community-based childcare centres (CBCC) activities and service provision to OVC households.

Overall, this is an incredible record of success considering that most development initiatives rarely exist beyond five years after initial intervention. Therefore, the three case studies could, in terms of their periods of operation, be said to have surpassed expectation.

The output side (sustainability of outcomes and benefits)

Predictable access to food and nutrition by OVC throughout the year

The children of GNCH reported having tasty and nutritious meals three times a day during their stay at the centre. This meal schedule continued even during lean periods of the year and in the years of acute food shortage in the area. In the CBCCs, children received meals every day irrespective of the time of the year. Through such interventions, children were encouraged to stay in the childcare centres because they knew they would eat something or even better food than they would normally eat at home.

Predictable access to education for OVC

Through support they received from the projects, the education of some OVC had improved. Those in residential care centre (GNCH) were assured education support as long as they were in the centre. Through the CBOs, some OVC received education support in the form of school and examination fee grants.

Sustainable means of earning incomes for OVC and OVC households

Some beneficiaries acquired capacity to fend for themselves. The following highlight some of such opportunities that were provided through the three projects:

- In Tawonga CBO, in 2008, 75 OVC households participating in a VSL scheme managed to save and share K536,039, and in 2009 they were planning to buy and install a maize mill in the village.
- OVC and OVC households that received guinea fowl (Tawonga CBO) had the potential to raise not less than ten guinea fowl a year. From egg sales alone, they would be capable of earning an estimated amount of K100,000 per year from about 2,000 eggs, considering that each hen lays between 250 and 300 eggs per year. Guinea fowl eggs are usually sold at a higher price (between K50 and K60 each) than chicken eggs (between about K25 and K30 each).
- Some of the OVC who graduated from GNCH between 2006 and 2008 were implementing skills had learnt during their stay at the centre, and were growing and selling vegetables to raise money to meet their livelihood needs.

Factors that contributed to the sustainability of activities and services

Ability to deal with conflicts and challenges

During these many years of existence and service delivery, members of these community-managed projects acquired vital experience through resolving internal conflicts and dealing with challenges they faced; but more important was their resilience to challenging circumstances. If it were not for their coherence and resilience, the challenges highlighted below could easily have destroyed their zeal, and affected progress.

Maize mill project

The maize mill project for Chitungu CBO was both a challenge and a success. It was a challenge because the project took six years between inception and implementation. In 2003, they bid for and received a grant for a maize mill from MANASO. They received an initial sum of K59,100 for the construction of the maize mill house. Upon completion of the building, MANASO asked the CBO to install electricity before the maize mill could be supplied. It turned out that electricity installation was too costly for the community. The project was temporarily suspended until Orphan Support Africa (OSA) was approached for

support. OSA provided more than K600,000 for the power transformer, as well as other funds for wiring. However, when this work was complete in 2007, MANASO was unable to supply the maize mill. It took the insistence of the CBO committee during several follow-up trips to MANASO head office in Blantyre (sometimes accompanied by officers from the district social welfare office), for the maize mill to be delivered. Even then, some vital parts such as the starter and belts were missing from the maize mill, so the community had to use other funds to purchase the missing parts. If it had not been for their insistence and decision to seek alternative funding, the project could have failed. According to the community, they felt frustrated about the way MANASO handled the project, yet were also determined to have the mill installed and running because they believed it was theirs since MANASO had formally committed itself to providing it in the first place.

Similarly, the maize mill project for GNCH's was both a challenge and a success. The challenge for GNCH's maize mill was slightly different to that of Chitungu CBO though. In 2005, they submitted a proposal to Chitungu CBO MASAF for a maize mill propelled by a diesel engine and received K1,666,664. However, when funding came and the mill house was built, the women objected to the idea of a diesel engine maize mill because they believed it made the flour smell smoky. An alternative plan was to install an electric motor maize mill. When everything was purchased and wiring completed, ESCOM (Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi) demanded K3,000,000 for the power transformer which the centre had not included in their proposal. MASAF was unable to provide additional funds and the project stalled for three years while the CBO decided how to get around the problem. It was only in 2008 that they decided to build another structure at a location where there was an existing transformer, ten kilometres away from the centre. Work was completed and the maize mill started operating in January 2009. When other groups might have given up, this CBO managed to find a solution.

Dairy cow project

In 2006, Chitungu CBO submitted a proposal to MASAF for a maize de-huller or sheller; instead they

received funding for five dairy cows. Housing structures were built and the cows were bought. Since they did not have an exotic bull to mate with the cows, they engaged an artificial insemination technician to service the cows. Unfortunately, the artificial insemination was unsuccessful even after several attempts. This, coupled with the fact that the CBO was not ready for the cows in terms of feeding and general management, led to the CBO requesting to sell the cows. Money realized was used to buy goats which were given to 20 OVC. The CBO obviously showed signs of frustration at being inadequately supported technically and at not having their initial request granted, yet when the cow project failed they found a meaningful alternative.

These are only some of the issues that demonstrate the resilience of the projects and members' ability to solve or circumvent major challenges. The spirit of resilience and the courage to face challenges and seek alternative solutions has contributed to the long survival of the projects. Significantly, these projects all demonstrated signs of progress far into the future.

Development of internal capacity for management of projects and activities

Capacity to technically, financially and administratively manage projects and their activities is crucial for their survival. Enhanced capacity of communities to manage their projects is a fair indication of sustainability. The three projects demonstrated internal capacity to carry out and sustain some activities on their own without much dependence on outside help. The following are some of the achievements that were noted as evidence of this capacity:

1. Technical capacity

- *Pig production.* Exotic pigs are usually a problem to manage, particularly among smallholder farmers, but Tawonga CBO managed its pig production project so well that from four sows obtained in 2007, they distributed 15 piglets to OVC in 2008, and were expecting to distribute more in 2009.
- *Vegetable production.* GNCH successfully managed to incorporate modern methods of vegetable gardening such as the trench method (which uses organic manure) and the sack method (planting vegetables in sacks which can easily be transported

or planted in a backyard in limited space). With these skills, they were able to produce more than enough vegetables to feed the children and for sale locally. It was encouraging to note that increasing numbers of people were coming to the centre to learn about the new technology. The technology was also taught to the boys and girls at the centre.

- *Construction.* In all the three projects, structures were built using local artisans. This not only made construction cheaper but also increased opportunity for local solutions to local problems. The construction projects included bricklaying, carpentry, shallow-well construction and wiring of buildings.

2. Financial capacity

- *Sourcing funds for projects.* In all the three case studies, the communities demonstrated skills and experience in developing and selling proposals for their development interventions. As a result, donors were willing to fund some of the activities to complement the communities' efforts. All three projects received grants from some government programmes such as MASAF and NAC. In addition, Chitungu CBO secured funding from OSA, Africare (I-Life programme) and MANASO. Tawonga CBO received additional support from World Vision, while GNCH received additional grants from well-wishers for a borehole, installation of a solar-water pumping system and a solar lighting system.
- *Financial accountability.* The fact that these projects received funds a number of times from different donors is a fair indication that communities were able to account for money they received. In all three cases, communities could provide evidence of how donor money was spent and managed. These skills might also have helped to sustain the performance of the projects.

3. Administrative capacity

GNCH has an established structure comprising a board of directors (represented by the traditional authority of the area, all the group village headmen, the founding member of the centre, and representatives of village headmen, OVC households and the centre coordinator). The centre coordinator is supported by a stores person and volunteers. This kind of structure ensures accountability and transparency

which are important ingredients for sustainability. The two CBOs (Tawonga and Chitungu) have standard structures, as suggested by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in their guidelines for the establishment and management of a CBO. More importantly, the two CBOs have decentralised part of the responsibility to individual villages through village committees. All three projects were formally registered with their respective district social welfare offices which makes it easier for the district assembly to provide advice and support and to intervene where they see a problem.

Self-dependence

One reason why most rural development projects fail to sustain themselves beyond donor intervention is their unwillingness to use internal support as a means for self-reliance in the long term. However, what makes these three case studies unique is that they depended less on outside help and more on their own resources. They used more local resources and only received external assistance to supplement their effort.

The people involved in GNCH proved their determination by using their own money to construct a permanent building (brick-walled, cemented floor and iron-sheet roofing) comprising two dormitory rooms (boys and girls), a multi-purpose hall and an office/storeroom. They also constructed a kitchen and sick bay (for isolation of sick children who reside on campus) without any major support from outside. They used the community's resources to provide potable water to the centre through three shallow wells which were dug and had water pumps installed. They also contributed money to buy farm inputs and labour to cultivate the centre's gardens. This achievement is incredible considering that this part of the country is perpetually affected by droughts and floods, and poverty is rampant.

Similarly, in two of the CBOs, people provided labour for cultivation of communal gardens and for the construction of CBCCs and other structures.

The community members, in most cases, contributed money to buy farm inputs for the communal gardens. In all three cases, outsiders were willing to contribute towards the activities after seeing how much had already been done by the communities on their own.

Strategies for sustainability

The three projects implemented strategies that enhanced the sustainability of interventions. Some of the strategies deployed were effective in building sustainable growth of the projects as well as progressive care and support for the OVC and their households. Some of the strategies for sustainability were:

- **Food self-reliance.** Projects progressed from reliance on donations and door-to-door contributions to production of their own food to feed OVC. This reduced dependency and uncertainty, and enhanced self-reliance and sustainability in providing food assistance to OVC and OVC households. They had been forced to change their strategies because of the ridicule they had suffered at the hands of some community members when they went door-to-door begging for donations of food or cash. Donations also tended to be erratic since they depended on general availability of food in the community.
- **Decentralised management.** Two CBOs (Chitungu and Tawonga) were in the process of decentralizing activities to village level by progressively increasing the number of village and beneficiary OVC and/or household interventions and reducing communal interventions. At establishment, the CBOs had one communal garden, but they later decided to have village communal gardens in addition to supporting individual OVC households with farm inputs to produce on their own. Similarly, individual piggeries were set up in each of the nine participating villages of Chitungu CBO, and individual OVC or OVC households in each participating village of Tawonga CBO managed their own piggeries. This reduced workloads and brought the decision-making process closer to the target clientele.
- **Education and training support.** By instituting and supporting education and training development, the projects increased future livelihood-earning opportunities and self-reliance of OVC. With support and better education and learning environments provided through projects, some children obtained very good school certificate grades which increased their chance of enrolment into tertiary education institutions. Others learnt some skills, such as vegetable production, which were already helping them in their day-to-day lives.

- *Asset protection and building.* The livestock pass-on schemes (goats, pigs and guinea fowl) and direct donation to the OVC is a livelihood strategy that will boost the OVC's assets and improve their status in their communities.
- *Environmental protection.* Trees were planted to protect buildings against strong winds, and GNCH was also able to contribute to the long-term protection of the environment and the provision of wood resources for current and future use.
- *Investment in long-term projects for earning income.* A durable means of earning income through maize mill projects and VSL schemes might in future reduce the need for outside financial assistance to provide care and support to OVC.

Overall, the survival, growth and sustainability of the projects and interventions were greatly enhanced through the implementation of such sustainability enhancing strategies.

Sense of ownership

Another important element of sustainability is community ownership of the process and outcomes. Most development projects fail because of the beneficiary communities' inability to own their process and/or outcomes.

The strength of these three projects in this regard is that they were initiated, managed and owned by their respective communities.

The strong sense of ownership was not only demonstrated through their words, such as "We did this... we tried this... we sought help from...", but also through hard evidence of their commitment to what they were doing. The village communities concerned contributed money, food and labour – not because of fear of coercion or in anticipation of some reward, but because they felt that they were helping their own children and relatives. They thought it was their responsibility to do something about the problem since it was their community's problem.

In summary, the three case studies demonstrated that community initiated and managed OVC livelihood projects have potential for sustainability and growth, and that for this to occur there is a need to:

- Develop capacity for resolving internal conflicts and have the resilience to stand up to challenges;

- Develop internal capacity for effective technical, financial and administrative management of projects and activities;
- Develop and implement strategies that enhance the spirit of self-reliance and sustainability;
- Devolve powers and responsibilities to the lowest level possible, such as village committees; and
- Own the process of providing care and support to OVC and the outcome of improved livelihoods of OVC as an important issue of the village and not individual OVC per se.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness assesses the extent to which objectives or intentions were achieved and intended targets were reached. In this case, it is noted that demonstrable evidence of changes that took place among the target clientele is important if the case studies under review are to be recommended for scaling up. It should, however, be acknowledged that attribution of such successes to a particular project or intervention is usually difficult.

The following are the highlights of beneficiaries' sentiments regarding some of the changes they experienced in their lives as a result of the projects under review:

Food and nutrition security

Improved food security was the immediate issue that OVC and OVC households highlighted in all the sites. For children in childcare centres (day or residential), food was provided on a daily basis, and the children or their guardians had enough reason to praise the efforts of the projects.

Households that received farm inputs reported increased yields and production which led to more food for their households.

Increased production in communal gardens also meant that the quantity per household and the number of beneficiary households increased. The increase in maize production from year to year was reported in all, except GNCH whose crop production for 2008/9 was lower than in 2007/8 due to a prolonged drought. However, they had plans for expanding winter cropping to compensate for reduced rain-fed crop production.

Increased income and income earning opportunities

The 75 OVC households participating in Tawonga CBO village savings and loan scheme reported saving more money than before, and diversifying income sources through money borrowed from the village bank.

With the money, some were able to pay secondary school fees for their children, and others bought farm inputs (fertilizers and seeds) which helped increase production and therefore income. Some others were engaged in petty trading, which helped them to earn and save more money. Similarly, the 33 households that were members of Chitungu CBO village savings and loans scheme reported that with money borrowed from the village bank, they had diversified their income-earning opportunities by engaging in produce trading, producing and selling confectionery and other trades rather than completely depending on farming. They also reported using money borrowed from the village bank to educate their children and invest in farming.

Tawonga CBO households that received guinea fowl from the CBO were earning additional income by selling guinea fowl eggs which, at almost twice the value of a chicken egg, earned good income.

Improved self-esteem

Through support they received from the projects, the children who previously had no hope for the future had their self-image improved and were planning to do more useful things in life.

For example, the Chitungu CBO chairperson rescued a young orphan girl from her ruthless grandmother after some community members brought the girl's plight to her attention. The girl's grandmother used to shut her out and even make her spend nights outdoors without food. The CBO chairperson requested the grandmother to let her look after the child. She agreed, and since 2006 the girl has been living in the CBO chairperson's household. When asked about her story, the girl was very grateful to her foster parents and said she would try her best to complete her education and join the nursing profession. While this may just be a dream, the girl's plans for the future serve as important indicators of improved self-confidence.

All 27 girls and boys who graduated from GNCH said they were treated like 'kings' when they returned home since they had acquired a better education and wore better clothes than most of their peers.

Attainment of better education

Some OVC who received education support (secondary school fees) passed the Malawi School Certificate of Education exams. Five of the 27 boys and girls who graduated from GNCH scored between 25 and 36 aggregate points. These qualified them to sit for public university entrance examinations.

Chitungu CBO assisted with the secondary school fees of three youths who wrote the Malawi School Certificate exams. Two had passed and were awarded certificates. Of these, one had found employment and the other had joined a technical college. The third youth was also seeking employment.

Similarly, some boys and girls who had financial assistance with secondary school fees from Tawonga CBO passed their Malawi School Certificates with good grades. Some of them had enrolled at a rural trade school in the area.

Increased assets

Tawonga CBO gave out pigs to 15 OVC households. With good management, each one of them has the potential to earn, conservatively, an income of K100,000 in the first year and much more in subsequent years. Fortunately, the market for pigs is abundant as these households are close to the Kayelekera Uranium Mine workers' camp where the demand for pigs is high.

Twenty-seven boys and girls who graduated from GNCH were each given a goat. If they resist selling these goats prematurely, they could multiply to between eight and ten goats within the next two years which would have value of between K40,000 and K50,000 at current market prices. The 16 OVC households that received goats from Chitungu CBO are likely to receive similar benefits.

Attainment of skills for earning livelihoods

Graduates of GNCH acquired skills in modern methods of vegetable production. Some learnt carpentry while others were taught tailoring. These skills might help them to earn better livings in the future.

Members of VSL schemes generally acknowledged that their knowledge of village banking learnt through the CBO was vital and would improve their lives. As a result of this effort, some were planning to buy a maize mill and install it in the village.

Lives saved

Since GNCH enrolled its first children in 1999, no deaths of children had occurred. This is an extraordinary record considering that the centre admits children who are usually malnourished, and sometimes even very young. For example, several years ago a six-month-old baby was taken to the centre following the death of his mother. At the time of the study, the orphaned boy was seven years old, healthy and going to school.

Better accommodation

Children enrolled at GNCH receive good accommodation and meals which have improved their livelihood

situation. Similarly, by assisting with building materials for houses for seven elderly people looking after OVC, the centre has enhanced the livelihood situations of the households concerned.

On the basis of effectiveness, it can be said that the three case studies succeeded in dealing with the fundamental issues impacting on OVC's livelihoods and therefore set a good example for others.

Efficiency

In this study report, efficiency has been considered mostly from the cost effectiveness perspective and not cost benefit analysis. A cost effectiveness analysis attempts to establish the relationship between the cost of providing the service (input side) and the benefits accrued (outputs and outcomes).

Table 1 highlights some of the outputs realized from interventions implemented by the projects. It specifies quantitative benefits or numbers of

Table 1. Some of the livelihood activities implemented by the three case study projects

Intervention	GNCH	Tawonga	Chitungu
Total number of OVC in the area	1800	402	561
Livelihoods interventions			
Number of pigs	0	6	27
Number of OVC that received pigs	0	15	0
Number of goats raised communally	26	0	20
Number of OVC that received goats	27	0	20
Number of rabbits	12	0	0
Number of chickens	100	0	0
Number of guinea fowl raised communally	0	25	0
Number of OVC that received guinea fowl	0	75	0
Maize (50 kg bags) produced in 2008/9	162	100	81
Vegetables (kg) produced in 2008/9	0	0	80
Beans (kg)	?	?	?
Soybeans (kg)	?	?	?
Households that received farm inputs (2008/9)	0	40	?
General OVC care and support			
OVC received food regularly (2008/9)	107	185	50
OVC received education/scholastic support (2008/9)	107	185	50
OVC received clothes, blankets, shoes, etc. (2008/9)	107	167	261
OVC accommodated by the project (2007/8)	107	0	0
Households assisted with modern houses (2007-8)	7	0	0

Table 2. The annual cost of feeding a child at GNCH

Food item	Qty/child/yr	Unit cost	Cost/child/yr
Maize	112 kg	K40/kg	K4,480
Vegetables	29.2 kg	K70/kg	K2,044
Meat	29.2 kg	K500/kg	K14,600
Beans	29.2 kg	K200/kg	K5,840
Others (sugar, salt, tea, cooking oil, etc.)			K5,000
Total annual food cost			K31,964 (US\$228.31)

OVC or OVC households that benefited from the intervention.

The figures demonstrate commitment of projects to the reduction of problems faced by OVC by assisting them and their households with basic livelihood support. It should be noted that the study was unable to quantify all the support the projects provided to their target clientele over the years due to lack of information; it managed to document only the key ones. It was also difficult to qualify the support received by the clientele (OVC and their households) due to the sporadic nature of the support; but in the case of GNCH, where food support was given daily and some information was available, an attempt was made to compute the annual cost of feeding a child resident at the centre, as detailed in Table 2. The computation is based on a ration of *nsima* and the following combinations of food as stipulated in the GNCH weekly menu:

- Meat three times a week
- Vegetables six times a week
- Beans/peas three times a week
- Fish twice a week

When GNCH had 107 resident children, the community spent an estimated K3,420,148 per annum on feeding the children. This is a substantial figure, and if community members had been asked to make cash contributions they would probably not have managed. However, since they produced most of the food items on their own, the actual cash contribution was minimal. Considering the benefits to the children, the sum of US\$228.31 (K31,964) per child per year or US\$19 per child per month is reasonable. Fixed assets

such as buildings, water and sanitation facilities have been omitted from the computation due to the difficulty of distributing the cost over time against wide-ranging numbers of beneficiary children.

From this analysis, the only criticism regarding the efficiency of the three case studies is that since most of the care and support was provided by the community, it eliminated the administrative costs usually associated with implementation of projects. Local sourcing of most of the food and other materials might also have reduced transport costs involved with the provision of care and support to OVC.

Models of Childcare Used in the Three Case Studies



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Discussions in the subsequent sections are based on the models of childcare that were used in the case studies under review. The case studies identify three models of childcare. For the purposes of this study report, these are named and described as follows:

Community assisted household childcare

Under this model, the community project assisted households with basic necessities as and when needs arose, within the available resources. The community also tried to enhance the households' opportunities for self-reliance. The OVC were therefore directly or indirectly assisted through their respective households, and all the decisions and responsibilities for care and support remained with the households. The study makes it clear that this approach enables the community project to reach out to a large number of OVC within a relatively short period of time. There was limited need for extensive physical structures such as buildings, and therefore more resources were channelled to the target groups. However, the support offered to individual OVC and households was sporadic and indeterminate.

Tawonga and Chitungu CBOs were formed around the community-assisted household childcare (CAHC) model. GNCH implemented elements of this model, although not as systematically as did the other two CBOs.

Community-managed childcare

Under this model, two types of childcare were practised:

- Community-managed day childcare (CMDC) in the form of community-based childcare centres (CBCC) – mainly for children under five.
- Community-managed residential childcare (CMRC) in the form of children's homes for children up to 18 years.

While the CMDC or CBCC approach is well established and practised in many communities across the country, CMRC is unique. Within the community-managed childcare (CMC) model, the projects provided care for children at a central location. Under

the CMDC model, children received some form of education and were given daytime meals, but residential care remained the responsibility of their households. In the case of CMRC, the children were brought to the centre and given all the care and support they needed which included accommodation, meals, basic medicines or referrals to clinics/hospitals, and educational, social and spiritual support.

The CMC model provided consistent and predictable support to OVC. The community felt obliged to provide for the children, even under difficult circumstances. When assistance was provided centrally, it ensured that the children directly benefited from the assistance and it minimized household distribution biases as is usually the case with CAHC models. The residential model also ensured provision of other aspects of care such as improved accommodation and education environment, regular meals, and medical care, which may all sometimes be problematic in the CAHC model. However, the CMC model tended to be more costly or difficult to implement due to the building and volunteer requirements necessary to provide the service on a daily basis. In the case of residential childcare, there seemed to be less contact between the children and their household members, which could in some cases cause problems with re-integration when the children graduate from the centre. Fortunately, in this particular case, no problems of re-integration were

reported by the boys and girls when they returned to their homes and villages.

GNCH falls within the CMRC model, while Chitungu and Tawonga CBOs each had a component of the CMDC or CBCC model.

The discussion on the three models of community childcare only attempts to highlight some of the issues: detailed analysis of these issues is beyond the scope of this study. For this reason, it is sufficient to state that the CAHC and the CMDC models have been widely promoted across the country, but not using the nomenclature used in this report. According to the policy of government, institutionalized childcare (in form of orphanages) should be the last resort. In the case of this study, CMRC was included as a best practice initiative due to the community's unique commitment to providing such a service at their own cost. If initiated and carefully implemented by many communities, CMRC may be an option that could change the landscape of OVC care, and probably even reduce the related problems of street children. Although it would be difficult to comment with authority on concerns about child safety, security and protection from abuse as expressed by some observers, since the study did not include this level of investigation, it is believed that such issues may be ably handled by the communities as they have so far been at GNCH.



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Analysis of Potential for Scaling Up



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This report highlights that the most successful interventions have remained small and at micro level due to lack of documentation and sharing of lessons and experiences. By the same token, a number of livelihood interventions for OVC implemented across the country have failed to survive beyond three years due to various reasons.

The documentation and analysis from this study therefore attempts to provide some key lessons drawn from the three case studies that could be used to improve existing community-led interventions, or for successful initiation and implementation of new livelihood support interventions for OVC.

Lessons for scaling up

Scaling up is generally described as the process of expanding the impact of a successful effort beyond a single or limited number of communities to the regional, national or even multinational level. By extending the benefits of an initiative to more people, the chances of maximizing resources and investment made in developing the approach are increased. It may also increase support for policy change and resource allocation.

In the preceding section, evidence for the outstanding performance of the three case studies was provided as argument for replication by other communities. There are a number of lessons that could be drawn from this experience.

In summary, the analysis has so far demonstrated that if other communities needed to initiate and implement sustainable and effective projects for supporting livelihoods of OVC, the following factors would be critical and should be carefully considered:

- The need to develop commitment and skills for solving internal conflicts and challenges.
- The need to develop internal capacity to manage technical, financial and administrative issues which will enable them to effectively mobilize and manage internal and external resources.
- Inculcation of a spirit of ownership and self-reliance which will help to sustain provision of support to the target clientele at reasonable cost.
- The need to put in place strategies for sustainable provision of services and benefits to target clientele and, on the other hand, to minimize strategies that

create dependency on external assistance.

- The need to work with and through local leadership in order to garner support from the community.
- The need for technical support from government, NGO and donor agencies in order for CBOs to avoid costly mistakes.
- The need for leadership to be transparent and accountable to the members and the community in order to gain confidence locally and among external support agencies.

These were some of the factors behind the sustainability of the three projects under review. If diligently followed and implemented, the guiding points will assist the implementing communities to realize the following potential benefits that the projects managed to achieve:

- Predictable access to food and nutrition by OVC throughout the year.
- Predictable access to educational support and a conducive environment for OVC to improve their level of education.
- Increased income and income-earning opportunities for OVC and OVC households.
- Increased asset base for future livelihood needs of OVC.
- OVC's acquisition of vital skills for securing future livelihoods and self-reliance.
- A sense of achievement and motivation by implementers to sustain the initiatives.

What to scale up

Effective scaling up of a successful practice can be done if NGOs, government agencies, community-based groups, and bilateral and multilateral agencies are able to take up the recommended practice. This may be in the form of adaptation to fit varying programme contexts or needs. Rarely will successful small-scale interventions be replicated without modification. For this reason, the analysis in this report focused on elements of these interventions that could be taken to scale.

Since the CAHC and CMDC models are already widely promoted in all the districts through CBO structures and have usually been undertaken as a package, the main recommendation is to scale up the

methodology and the strategies documented from the case studies. This might entail reviewing and revising the guidelines for initiating and managing CBOs in order to incorporate livelihood aspects. For the CMRC model, its promotion as an alternative model of childcare which communities that feel the need could undertake is recommended. Orientation of the communities to the model so that those showing real need and interest could be assisted to initiate their own is also recommended. In all the three models, implementation of specific activities will be dependent on need and situation.

Scaling up can be done in a number of ways:

Association: Expanding programme size and coverage through common efforts and alliances among a network of organizations such as the UN and Partners Alliance.

Grafting: Adding a new programme to an existing programme.

Diffusion: Others learning from the approach through access to materials and case studies and replicating the approach.

Planned expansion: A steady process of expanding the number of sites for a particular programme model once it has been pilot-tested and refined.

Explosion: Sudden implementation of a large-scale programme intervention, without any cultivation of policy support or gradual organizational development prior to implementation.

Key Issues for Improvement

Based on these case studies, the following are key issues for improvement:

Integrated approach. The technical view of OVC intervention, which is also reflected at community level, is more compartmentalized according to the areas of need or interest (health, agriculture, education, etc.) and rarely viewed from the perspective of an integrated package. For example, CBCC houses could have been effectively utilized for afternoon skills training for primary school age or teenage school dropouts rather than only being used for morning kindergarten sessions. Similarly, children graduating from GNCH could have been engaged in a day-release skills training programme at the centre to enhance their livelihood opportunities, and the products of the training could have been used for the centre. Integration of such programmes would not only assist youths in acquiring vital livelihood skills, but would also benefit the CBCCs or the children's homes through skills training by-products such as vegetables, livestock products, basic furniture and school uniforms that would be given to or bought by the communities for CBCC, OVC or HBC programmes. Similarly, if care and support were viewed more broadly, the communities would be encouraged to intensify local production and the processing of soybeans, fruits and vegetables, livestock products and other items for use in the CBCC, OVC, HBC or school feeding programmes.

Technical support. In the three case studies, it was observed that at times implementing communities made costly technical mistakes: for example, keeping rabbits in a cement-floored house which made it difficult for the rabbits to breed; or not installing the right technology for irrigation as was the case at GNCH; or failing to manage dairy animals as was the case with Chitungu CBO. There are probably many more such examples among CBOs across the country. Although technical errors are, to some extent, inevitable and probably good for institutional growth, it raises questions regarding technical support that various sectors are supposed to provide in such community interventions. It is therefore important for the district assemblies to assess technical support offered to community initiatives and urge the relevant

technical departments to take an interest and assist the communities where necessary.

Role of NGOs, government and other agencies. CBOs or CMC initiatives, NGOs, government and other agencies have an important role in facilitating service provision to OVC. In these three case studies, agencies assisted by funding specific interventions while ensuring that the communities retained ownership of both the process of service provision and the outcomes. This kind of relationship should be enhanced in all community-initiated projects.

Volunteerism. It was clear from the study that the success of CMC depends on volunteers' commitment to provide resources and time. While volunteerism is the main strength of success, it may also be its weakest link. Community initiatives often fail because of volunteer fatigue. For example, in many of the CBOs visited outside this study, it was noticed that CBCCs usually close sessions between December and January or February because of inadequate food and due to volunteers having to spend time in their own gardens. Children, particularly OVC, are in desperate need of food support, which means such closures tend to disadvantage the children. For this reason, in-kind motivation of volunteers may be crucial for sustainability of CBCC or any other OVC activities. One of the CBOs in Mchinji has not only managed to maintain the motivation of volunteers but also enhanced food production for the CBCC programme by giving farm inputs to volunteers to produce the crop and then repay an agreed amount to the CBO. Another in-kind incentive for volunteers is to engage the volunteers in income generating activities and/or involve them in VSL.

Recommendations

The following are some specific recommendations on scaling up livelihood-based social protection for OVC:

1. *The Ministry of Gender, Children and Community Development, in collaboration with the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, should seriously consider strengthening the livelihoods component as the VSL National Plan of Action for OVC is being reviewed and once the social support policy has been approved and implementation programmes are being made, by among other things:*
 - Considering designing functional linkages between OVC interventions and agricultural extension services for efficient use of the input subsidy programme in order to increase their self-reliance and sustainability of benefits.
 - Integrating relevant and market-oriented skills building more systematically into OVC programming, especially for older OVC.
2. *NGOs, government and donor agencies supporting CBOs or any such community initiatives should provide loan incentives (farm inputs or cash) to volunteers for production investment which could be repaid to the CBO in the form of food items or other materials for use in CBCC, OVC, HBC or school feeding programmes.*
3. *The Ministry of Gender, Children and Community Development should develop a detailed plan of action and time scale for implementing lessons learnt from the study. For example:*
 - Development of a livelihood-based social protection guide.
 - Development of a livelihood-based social protection training manual.
 - Orientation training for district social welfare officers and district training teams.
 - Systematic review of the existing interventions in order to strength the livelihoods component.
 - Identification and training of community initiators/facilitators.
4. *Communities and NGOs currently implementing or planning to initiate OVC livelihoods support programmes should incorporate VSL schemes. Where feasible, incorporate the social cash transfer scheme*

within the context of VSL to assist the OVC households that cannot afford to raise money for savings.

5. *NGOs, government and donor agencies should enhance and continue to facilitate training, technical support and provision of resources to community initiated and managed childcare projects in order to support effective management.*
6. *New and existing programmes should consider implementing OVC programmes as a holistic childcare package integrating protection (from deprivation and destitution), prevention (from sliding back into deprivation and destitution) and promotion of livelihoods for self-reliance.*

Feasibility of Scaling Up and Policy Implications



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Potential policy and financial support

The Malawi Government fully recognizes the need to uplift the livelihoods of OVC through various policies, strategies and legal instruments. The 2003 National Policy on Orphans and other Vulnerable Children, the overarching goal of which is “to facilitate support for care, protection, and development of OVC in a coordinated manner in order to provide them with an environment in which they realize their full rights and potentials”, attests to this commitment. The National Plan of Action for OVC 2005-2009 has improved funding opportunities and enhanced responsive action for OVC interventions by government and its partners. The plan commits the Government of Malawi to taking practical steps that would ensure that the rights of all OVC are fully met. One practical step is to implement strategies that protect, enhance and sustain the livelihoods opportunities and capabilities of the OVC. This implies that as the National Plan of Action is being reviewed and the Social Support Policy about to be approved for implementation, strategies for sustainable livelihoods for OVC should be seriously considered and given priority. Lessons from the study show that communities can only do so much on their own: without strong support for agricultural production, income generation and education from government and other agencies, such assistance to OVC will usually be indeterminate and unsustainable.

This, therefore, justifies the need to consider opportunities for scaling up lessons from case studies with appeal for.

Technical feasibility

Technically, the scaling-up approach recommended in this study is feasible considering that it proposes using existing mechanisms and structures. District social welfare officers are fully conversant with the approaches, and nearly every district has a strong team of technical experts in areas such as agriculture, education, community services and health. An understanding and appreciation of the lessons drawn from the study are vital.

