Discourse and Public Policy  
Example: Social Protection Statement by UNICEF

Social Protection Statement by UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Management Team Background

While policies to promote broad-based economic growth are fundamental to overall social development, the benefits of growth do not automatically reach the poorest and most marginalized families; direct interventions are still required to reach the socially and economically excluded. Consequently, creating and strengthening social protection systems is an important priority for governments, donors, United Nations (UN) agencies, and Nongovernmental Organization (NGO) partners in Eastern and Southern Africa (ESAR). Child welfare and protection concerns are often at the heart of these social protection efforts, requiring UNICEF to inform policy, practice, and advocacy in this area. Long considered a privilege of developed countries, social protection is now recognized for the role it can play in addressing poverty and vulnerability in developing countries. Among some development partners, social protection is considered part of the essential package of basic social services that the state ought to provide to its citizens.

The Livingstone Accord (March 2006) represents a major political landmark for social protection in the region. Thirteen countries in ESAR, under the auspices of the African Union (AU), have committed themselves to developing national social protection strategies, and integrating them into national development plans. Preparation for a Pan-Africa “Livingstone II” have just begun. The AU will be developing a social protection position paper over the next 12 months.

A conceptual framework for social protection

(Detail omitted.)

A comprehensive social protection system should include four broad sets of interventions:

1) Protective programs. . .offer relief
2) Preventive programs. . .avert deprivation. . .or mitigate
3) Promotive programs enhance assets. . .
4) Transformative interventions . . .address power imbalances . . .

Rationale for UNICEF engagement in social protection

. . . . Critical are articles of the international covenants to which ESAR countries are signatories (Detail omitted.)

• Child protection and social protection
  – UNICEF defines child protection as “preventing and responding to violence, exploitation, and abuse. . .” (Detail omitted.)

• Child sensitive social protection
  – Social protection should address both income poverty and social vulnerability, but we recognize that for children in particular, social vulnerability is especially important . . . (Detail omitted.)
The major building blocks of child and gender sensitive social protection

Beyond the core principles articulated above, UNICEF identifies five key social protection interventions. (Detail omitted.)

- An agenda for action
- (Detail omitted.) UNICEF commits itself to working with governments and development partners to advance... social protection systems within the twenty countries in Eastern and Southern Africa. Specific work will be grouped into four cross cutting areas... A full matrix of milestones and country-level baselines are presented in the Social Protection Strategy document. (Detail omitted.)

Conclusion

Social protection has not been a significant part of the international policy dialogue in Africa in the last 30 years... Nevertheless, given the political commitment already demonstrated at Livingstone by thirteen ESAR countries,... it is not overly optimistic to believe that significant results... can be achieved in the next 2-5 years.

(This position paper is abstracted from a larger social protection policy paper written by the UNICEF’s Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office entitled “Social Protection in Eastern and Southern Africa: A Framework and Strategy for UNICEF.” The larger paper can be found at http://www.aidsportal.org/Article_Details.aspx?ID=9029.)