**Input to OHCHR report on the rights of the child and inclusive social protection**

**from World Vision International**

Despite decades of progress, the world is currently witnessing an unprecedented increase in global poverty.

Children are disproportionately affected. Even before the pandemic struck, 1 in 5 children worldwide – 385 million girls and boys – were living in extreme poverty: less than US$1.90 a day.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The socio-economic impact of the pandemic has deeply hit children, particularly the most vulnerable: girls and boys in extreme poverty, including those living in fragile contexts, disaster-prone and conflicted-affected areas, as well those who are forcibly displaced and living in urban slums and informal settlements, including in fragile cities.

In response to the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, governments have introduced over 1,600 social protection measures in almost all the world’s countries and territories. Cash assistance - a critical intervention in supporting the world’s most vulnerable people - also grew by 240% during this time, reaching 1.1 billion people.[[2]](#footnote-2)

However, most of these support systems are temporary and there are critical gaps in coverage, adequacy and comprehensiveness of social protection interventions.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Up to 600 million children are not covered by any pandemic-related schemes.[[4]](#footnote-4) Governments, humanitarian actors and development partners must collaborate to close this gap.[[5]](#footnote-5)

By assessing the strengths and constraints of social protection programmes and sharing information through their operational networks, cooperation will enhance capacity, coverage, timeliness and inclusion, leaving no one behind[[6]](#footnote-6).

1. **The legal and policy framework concerning the rights of the child and inclusive social protection:**

National governments are responsible for ensuring their children’s right to social protection. Social protection is a right and an essential policy and programme tool for reducing poverty and vulnerability.

The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) of 1966 emphasize the right of every person to social security and to an adequate standard of living. The right to social protection is further recognised in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 26 and 27) and in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs 1, 3, 5, 9, 10).[[7]](#footnote-7)

More than 126 countries have already introduced or adapted social protection or labour policies to assist those in need.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Where governments are unable to fulfil these obligations, the international community has a duty to step in and support governments to strengthen and deliver social protection.

In advocating for social protection that is child-sensitive, gender-responsive, inclusive and accountable, World Vision leverages on its social accountability approach Citizen Voice and Action (CVA). CVA has proven to put affected communities at the center, promoting decision-making and rights-based approaches with constructive dialogue and effective improvement of access, scale, quality of support provided by duty-bearers at all levels in health care, education, social and child protection[[9]](#footnote-9).

1. **The main gaps and challenges facing children’s access to social protection and the impact of these on children’s rights:**

Children may be cut off from social protection for various reasons. Families who live in **hard-to-reach** places, including in urban slums or informal settlements, or who are **affected by conflict, violence, displacement or natural disasters**, increasing climate-shock vulnerability, the socio-economic and health, educational impact of pandemics like COVID-19. They are often missed by larger Government-led social protection as well as poverty reduction, and or cash transfer programs.

Girls and boys with **disabilities** are also more likely than their peers to be left behind, and **women and girls** face specific risks and discrimination which increases their likelihood of poverty and unpaid care burdens at different points in the lifecycle, affecting multiple aspects of their lives.

Gaps in coverage are particularly important in contexts of **migration and forced displacement**, conflicts and crises settings, and or where social protection systems are nascent. Complementary programmes, including via the direct delivery of cash and voucher programme modalities (CVP) can help the excluded groups such as undocumented migrants, refugees, unaccompanied children, women, the urban poor and others to meet their immediate needs. Such programmes can be designed in ways that facilitate the inclusion of the most vulnerable in social protection programmes and at the same time, support the strengthening of social protection system in the country.[[10]](#footnote-10)

1. **The elements of a child rights-based approach to inclusive social protection including good practices:**

Child-Sensitive Social Protection seeks to address children’s age- and gender and context-specific risks and vulnerabilities they may experience throughout their life cycle. The process maximises positive impacts and minimises adverse effects, by consistently consulting with children and their caregivers.

A child-sensitive social protection includes the following elements:

1. **Social assistance**: non-contributory cash, vouchers or in-kind transfers (e.g. school feeding, child grants, free education) that can reduce child poverty and vulnerability, as well as help ensure children’s access to basic social services.
2. **Social insurance**: contributory schemes providing compensatory support (e.g. Universal Health Care, unemployment insurance schemes) which support access to health care for children and their families.
3. **Social care services**: family support or alternative care for children, provided to those facing social risks, such as violence, abuse, exploitation and social exclusion.
4. **Labour market policies and regulations**: protecting families’ access to resources, promoting employment and supporting childcare roles (e.g. parental leave for childcare).[[11]](#footnote-11)
5. **Social Accountability:** Communities have the awareness, evidence and confidence to hold public sector service providers accountable for the quality and quantity of services delivered for children.

**Some examples of good practices:**

* **Cambodia:** System strengthening for child sensitive social protection outcomes though **social accountability**. The Implementation of the Social Accountability Framework (ISAF) for the most vulnerable (IDPoor), in collaboration with the Governement of Cambodia. World Vision Cambodia, World Bank, UNICEF, AusAID, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, resulted in improving effectiveness of national social protection cash transfers to address health and nutrition challenges of pregnant women and children under the age of two, strengthening enrolment and opportunities for scholarships for most vulnerable youth.[[12]](#footnote-12)
* In **the Dominican Republic**, where there are high rates of migration in urban contexts, World Vision partners with local protection boards – a government mechanism established to protect the rights of children – to ensure migrant children are not excluded from the education system. This includes 2,153 children who do not have formal, usually mandatory documentation (e.g., birth certificates), but can still go to school. Such efforts are vital to avoid tension and strengthen community relationships by ensuring that all social groups have access to development opportunities.[[13]](#footnote-13)
* As part of the COVID-19 response in urban areas, World Vision **Eswatini** used conditional cash transfers to encourage participants (including youth) to design and implement projects to clean the local environment, construct new foot bridges and rehabilitate gravel roads to improve access and flows of people and goods to urban communities.[[14]](#footnote-14)
* In World Vision **Nepal**, the urban programme team provides technical expertise to support local authorities to achieve child-friendly and labour free status for their communities. For three consecutive years, the World Vision team played a leading role in the creation of child and family profiles for seasonal workers who migrate to work in the brick industry. Data and records from this initiative directly improved local governance and service provision, for example in relation to police responses to child protection incidents.[[15]](#footnote-15)

1. **Measures and recommendations to ensure the effective implementation of universal social protection for children, including through international cooperation:**

* **Ensure social protection systems target children** living in or at risk of poverty, by urgently scaling up child-sensitive social protection measures (such as food, cash and voucher assistance). This will enable poor families meet basic income needs to ensure children’s protection, education and immediate health, food, nutrition needs are covered and negative coping strategies (e.g. school drop-outs, child labour) are mitigated against early on.
* **Prioritise life-saving interventions for children** under five years of age, pregnant and lactating women. Where school closures limit children’s access to school meals, look at delivering food to homes, reducing children’s exposure to different forms of violence, exploitation, and abuse and the likelihood that they will drop out of school post-crisis.
* **Provide access to quality social protection services for children living in or at risk of poverty,** including health, education, water, sanitation, and child protection services. These services should be free at the point of use for all vulnerable families and children.
* **Involve children in collecting and generating data and research** to assess progress on the SDGs. A growing body of evidence suggests that child-led research provides promising opportunities to engage children and young people in shaping policies and practices, ultimately creating changes that lead to better lives for them[[16]](#footnote-16).
* Make decisive policies to transform short-term social assistance, in particular cash assistance, towards **longer term, community empowering, sustainable social protection** floors. WVI strongly advocates for the establishment of a [Global Fund for Social Protection](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Poverty/global-fund-social-protection/WorldVision.pdf) to ensure exacerbated vulnerabilities, and socio-economic and political volatility does not further increase risk to life and wellbeing of most vulnerable children and families.
* **Protect and expand spending, as well as cost-efficiency on social protection,** to fulfil commitment of ‘leaving no one behind’, and ensure that inclusive social protection programming “does no harm”, including data protection, data sharing, aiming at deduplication of programmes, targeted population with social registry interoperability.
* Invest in **robust, adaptive and shock-responsive social protection** mechanisms, that also include **Anticipatory Action** components **[[17]](#footnote-17)** especially in humanitarian and fragile contexts, that are also affected by climate risks. Considering implications of rapid urbanization on social cohesion, facilitating engagement with local, municipal, and city authorities, for improved service delivery to benefit the up to 500 Mio most vulnerable children in urban settings and address basic needs of 593 Mio children affected by multi-dimensional poverty[[18]](#footnote-18) .
* **Strengthen social accountability mechanisms to improve the effective delivery of child-sensitive social protection.** Ensure the views of the most vulnerable girls and boys, as well as their caregivers, are included through participatory social accountability mechanisms, facilitated through systematic and effective local CSO and Government engagement.
* Design **child-sensitive and gender- responsive social protection** interventions, which can be effective in economically equipping women, reducing gender-based violence, addressing key drivers of child marriage and improving the wellbeing of girls and boys.
* **Ensure strategic alignment,** integration and coordination between child protection, formal and informal social protection, health and education policies and systems for achieving better outcomes for children’s wellbeing.
* Facilitate expansion of (host) Government and other stakeholder’s contributions towards cohesiveness and preparedness of basic social protection measures that include **“people-on-the move”** - as over 37 Mio of those are children, representing the most vulnerable group among refugees, Internally Displaced (IDPs) and migrants[[19]](#footnote-19)
* Improve access to equitable, quality, and ethically provided urban public services, safe spaces, and a healthy, stable built environment where children and youth can live, learn, develop, and thrive.
* Set up participatory monitoring of social protection interventions by beneficiaries, NGOs and CSOs and regularly engage government and key stakeholders to provide feedback and recommendations on improving social protection delivery to the most vulnerable

**Main publications, background:**

* Pathway to Link Humanitarian Cash to Social Protection through Social Accountability <https://www.wvi.org/publications/report/social-accountability/pathway-link-humanitarian-cash-social-protection-through>
* Social Protection & Child Protection: Working together to protect children from the impact of COVID-19 and beyond  <https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/social_protection_and_child_protection.pdf>
* COVID-19: A chance to empower citizens through social protection  <https://www.wvi.org/stories/coronavirus-health-crisis/covid-19-chance-empower-citizens-through-social-protection>
* COVID-19 & Urgent Need for Child-Sensitive Social Protection  [https://www.wvi.org/publications/policy-briefing/covid-19-urgent-need-child-sensitive-social-protection](https://www.wvi.org/publications/policy-briefing/covid-19-urgent-need-child-sensitive-social-protection )
* WV Position Paper: <https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/WV%20Position%20Paper%20for%20WUF11.pdf>
* Children with disability: Promising Practice  <https://www.worldvision.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Promising-Practices-for-children-with-disabilities.pdf>
* Hungry and Unprotected Children: The forgotten Refugees, <https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/WRD_report_2022%20final%20reduced.pdf>

**Specific case studies, country situations:**

* Honduras Case Study: Deepening Preparedness in Social Protection Programs Using Cash and Voucher Assistance for Future Emergency Assistance, <https://www.calpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CaLP-CVA-H-Final.pdf>
* Assessment of the Social Protection System in Yerevan: <https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/Executive%20summary_Yerevan_25022020_Eng.pdf>
* Learning Report: Social Accountability for Social Protection on ISAF for IDPoor Cambodia, <https://www.wvi.org/publications/report/cambodia/learning-report-social-accountability-social-protection-isaf-idpoor>
* Case Study: <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/cash-and-voucher-programmes-restoring-hope> - Ven Esperanza Cash for Refugees, Migrants in Urban Contexts, Colombia

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2. World Bank, 2021. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/developmenttalk/game-changer-social-protection-six-reflections-covid-19-and-future-cash-transfers> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2020. <https://alliancecpha.org/en/system/tdf/library/attachments/social_protection_and_child_protection_v2.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=41479> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Agenda for Humanity, “Learnings on Linking Humanitarian Cash & Social Protection”, 2021. <https://socialprotection.org/system/files/GB%20Case%20Study%20Systhesis_0.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The Grand Bargain Sub-group on Linking Humanitarian Cash and Social Protection, 2020. <https://www.calpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Grand-Bargain-Sub-GroupHumanitarian-Cash-and-Social-Protection-and-COVID-19-response.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. World Vision, 2022 <https://www.wvi.org/publications/report/social-accountability/pathway-link-humanitarian-cash-social-protection-through> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. World Vision, 2021. COVID-19: A chance to empower citizens through social protection, <https://www.wvi.org/stories/coronavirus-health-crisis/covid-19-chance-empower-citizens-through-social-protection>  [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. World Vision, 2022, Pathway to Link Humanitarian Cash to Social Protection through Social Accountability <https://www.wvi.org/publications/report/social-accountability/pathway-link-humanitarian-cash-social-protection-through> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. World Vision, 2021, SOCIAL PROTECTION & CHILD PROTECTION: Working together to protect children from the impact of COVID-19 and beyond. <https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/social_protection_and_child_protection.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Global Coalition to End Child Poverty, “Briefing Paper: Child Sensitive Social Protection”, 2017. <http://www.endchildhoodpoverty.org/publications-feed/2017/11/1/9v61mcxy3mw336oilgamomko1p12it> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. World Vision, 2022. Learning Report: Social Accountability for Social Protection on ISAF for IDPoor <https://www.wvi.org/publications/report/cambodia/social-accountability-social-protection-learning-report-world-vision-0> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. World Vision, 2022. Urban Programming Capacity Overview, <https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/Urban%20Capacity%20Overview%20v17%20High%20Res_small.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
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15. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. World Vision International, 2019. *Child-led Research: From participating in research to leading it* <https://www.wvi.org/stories/child-participation/child-led-research-participating-research-leading-it> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Example of training organised in Asia on anticipatory action <https://www.anticipation-hub.org/news/training-in-inclusive-gender-responsible-anticipatory-action-for-asean-member-states-a-call-for-collaborators> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. World Vision, 2023. Quadruple Threat: How Urban Fragility, Climate Change, Gender Inequality and Social Exclusion are driving children deeper into extreme vulnerability <https://www.wvi.org/publications/report/urban-work/quadruple-threat> [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. World Vision International (2022): Hungry and Unprotected Children: The forgotten Refugees, <https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/WRD_report_2022%20final%20reduced.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-19)