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Chapter 9

Zimbabwe's Agrarian Child Welfare Regime: Evolution, Distinctive Characteristics and Implications for Future Policy

Isaac Chinyoka & Leila Patel

Abstract

Cash transfers for poor families with children vary depending on the welfare regime adopted in each country. In this chapter, we draw on in-depth interviews and desktop research to show that Zimbabwe has an agrarian child welfare regime with an enduring agro-based social protection system supporting peasantry-oriented land redistributions, farm inputs provision and donor-supported food aid during drought periods. Zimbabwe recently adopted a comprehensive social protection policy of which Prof Kaseke was a key advocate. Yet, current social transfers do not reflect the 'new generation' cash transfers adopted in most of its neighbouring countries. As Zimbabwe redesigns and implements its social protection policy to establish a more modern social protection system, we present three scenarios of policy options. First, continuing along the historical pathway of the agrarian society and its accompanying welfare regime. Second, following other countries in Southern Africa's focus on expanding targeted cash transfers for the reduction of child and family poverty. Third, the hybrid model that combines the agrarian child welfare regime with cash transfers. Despite limitations in financing and institutional capacity to deliver this model, the hybrid scenario is more suited to the local economic context as Zimbabwe remains an agrarian economy with strong familial (kinship) and communal systems of social provision. However, the latter systems are under pressure and are not able to meet the needs of children and families and we recommend complementary poverty-targeted cash transfers.

Keywords: Agrarian, cash transfer, social protection, welfare regime, Zimbabwe

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9.1

Introduction

Most African countries are semi-agrarian and provide a form of social protection to poor families with children. These countries started as familial with a social provision targeting the family rather than individuals or categories of children, and much later, the policy shifted to poverty targeting. In this chapter, we show that Zimbabwe is a case of an agrarian child welfare regime in that agro-based social protection policies have endured since independence. However, current social policies do not reflect the modern and 'new generation' cash transfers adopted in most of its neighbouring countries. This chapter was part of a larger comparative study[1] and a subsequent working paper[2] but for this book contribution, we focus on the Zimbabwe case.

Social provision for families in industrialised democracies is categorised according to welfare regimes. Welfare regime types in Southern Africa are, however, researched less thoroughly and understood less. Zimbabwe's child welfare regime does not fit easily into either Esping-Andersen's "three worlds of welfare capitalism",[3] nor typologies of child welfare regimes in the North.[4] It fits better in Seekings' typology of social provision in the global South. Seekings distinguishes between *agrarian* regimes that promote kinship support and strengthen "peasant agriculture through shaping access to land [...] products markets [...] and production systems" with a primary objective to reduce poverty, and *pauperist* regimes that target "deserving categories of very poor people through highly targeted non-contributory social assistance".[5]

In Zimbabwe, as in most of Africa until the late 20th century, states (at best) tried to build the capacity of families to produce more and be more self-reliant: "The families were and are the main sources of support for the African poor, as much for the young unemployed of modern cities as for the orphans of the past."[6] Until

1 Chinyoka, I. 2018. *How and why do states provide for children? Comparing social grants for families with children in Southern Africa*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Cape Town.

2 Chinyoka, I. 2017. *Poverty, changing political regimes, and social cash transfers in Zimbabwe, 1980-201*. Helsinki: No. 2017/88 UNU-WIDER Working Paper.

3 Esping-Andersen, G. 1990. *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

4 Bradshaw, J. 2002. "The Case for Family Benefits." *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34:590-596; Daly, M. & Clavero, S. 2002. *Contemporary Family Policy: A Comparative Review of Ireland, France, Germany, Sweden and the UK*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administratio.

5 Seekings, J. 2012. "Pathways to Redistribution: The Emerging Politics of Social Assistance across the Global South." *Journal für Entwicklungspolitik*, 28:14-34.

6 Iliffe, J. 1987. *The African Poor: A History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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recently, social assistance in Zimbabwe remained steeped in the tradition of the Poor Laws, targeted at the poorest of the poor.[7]

The child welfare regime in Zimbabwe consists of direct benefits, including school feeding programmes, and school and medical fee waivers. Indirect social transfers that target poor households with children include cash transfers through the Harmonized Social Cash Transfer (HSCT) and Public Assistance (PA) programmes. Non-cash components include food aid, particularly during drought years, and agricultural farm input support. Zimbabwe is a laggard in terms of cash transfers in Southern Africa, but previous studies[8] often overlooked the non-cash components of the regime considered in detail in this chapter. Non-cash transfers are an important part of the agrarian child welfare regime and expanding cash components is essential to improve social protection and welfare services for children and families in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe has been under some pressure to provide more fully for its children because it lacks a comprehensive social protection system, therein not providing adequate social protection for children and families. Consequently, levels of child poverty are high. More than half of all children (3.5 million) and almost all children (5 148 000) lived in poverty in 2010 and 2012, respectively.[9] In 2014, Zimbabwe had the largest absolute number of orphans.[10] The effects of structural factors (AIDS and drought) exacerbated by the government's economic mismanagement, and economic crisis since 2000 following controversial land reform,[11] created the need for policies that would mitigate the effects of poverty. A high HIV/AIDS-related death rate weakened family support and increased the number of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) requiring state support. At the height of the 2000-2008 economic crisis, "national HIV prevalence exceeded 30%, making Zimbabwe one of Africa's hardest-hit countries".[12]

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7 Kaseke, E. 2011. "The Poor Laws, Colonialism and Social Welfare: Social Assistance in Zimbabwe." In: J. Midgley & D. Piachaud (eds.). *Colonialism and Welfare: Social Policy and the British Imperial Legacy*. Northampton: Edward Elgar.

8 Mtetwa, E. & Muchacha, M. 2013. "Towards a National Social Protection Policy: Knowledge and Lessons from Comparative Analysis of the Design and Implementation of Public Assistance and Harmonised Social Cash Transfer in Zimbabwe." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 11:18-24; Seidenfeld, D. *et al.* 2016. "Zimbabwe: Using Evidence to Overcome Political and Economic Challenges to Starting a National Unconditional Cash Transfer Program." In: B. Davis e*t al.* (eds.). *From Evidence to Action: The Story of Cash Transfers and Impact Evaluation in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

9 ZIMSTATS. 2012. *Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey 2010-2011*. Harare: Zimbabwe Statistics Agency.

10 Kavak, H.Z. 2014. *Report on World's Orphans*. Istanbul: Humanitarian and Social Researches Centre.

11 Kaseke, E. 2015. "National Social protection Floors and income security for older persons: prospects for Zimbabwe." *Social Development Issues*, 37:25-37.

12 Bratton, M. 2014. *Power Politics in Zimbabwe*. Colorado: Lynne Rienner.

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Drawing on in-depth interviews and desktop research, we show that social policy in Zimbabwe has evolved over three key moments of change and choices: the post-independence period of ruling ZANU-PF political security followed by the period of power-sharing during the Government of National Unity (GNU) from 2009-2013. The final period is the return to power of ZANU-PF post-2013, which marks the adoption of the country's first comprehensive social protection policy of which Prof Kaseke was a key advocate. We argue that Zimbabwe only experimented with cash transfers during the GNU and maintained a distinctively agrarian child welfare regime with low coverage, supporting peasantry-oriented land redistributions, farm inputs provision and donor-supported food aid during drought periods in the other phases. The current child welfare regime does not reflect ZANU-PF's earlier socialist ideology. Instead, it reflects the governing party's patronage politics and ambivalence to cash transfers despite international influence from transnational actors and strong electoral competition from the political opposition since the 2000s.

We present three scenarios of policy options for Zimbabwe as it redesigns and implements its social protection policy. First, continuing along the historical pathway of the agrarian society and its accompanying welfare regime. The second scenario is following other countries in Southern Africa's focus on expanding targeted cash transfers for the reduction of child and family poverty. The third scenario is the hybrid model of social protection that combines the agrarian welfare regime with cash transfers. We conclude that the hybrid scenario is more suited to the local economic context as Zimbabwe remains an agrarian economy with strong familial (kinship) and communal systems of social provision. However, the latter systems are under pressure and are not able to meet the needs of children and families and complementary poverty-targeted cash transfers are recommended. To achieve this, evidence-based interventions and innovations need to be tested and scaled-up. However, questions such as how cash transfers will be financed need to be considered including the building of institutional capacity to deliver the schemes effectively. This is a significant challenge that will need to be addressed if a more modern social protection system is to evolve in Zimbabwe.

Next, we provide a brief background on the National Social Protection Policy Framework for Zimbabwe (NSPPFZ). We then trace the child welfare's evolution between 1980 and 2019, focusing on three key moments of policy change and choice. Following our analysis of how reforms were affected during this period, we present the regime's distinctive features shaped by reforms discussed in the previous section. We conclude the chapter with implications for future policy directions in Zimbabwe.

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9.2

Evolution of the child welfare regime in Zimbabwe, 1980-2019

The major weaknesses of Zimbabwe's social protection system, until 2015, were fragmentation and duplication. To mitigate this, the country adopted the NSPPFZ in 2016. The policy, overseen by the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (MPSLSW), aims at "reducing extreme poverty through empowering and building resilience in poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged households".[13] This aim is buttressed by specific goals ranging from supporting the poor in developing skills that would enable them to become employable and self-reliant, enhancing equitable access to basic social services to improving the provision of social welfare assistance to the poor and vulnerable.

The NSPPFZ is designed within the framework of the current economic blueprint – the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET). Similar to the blueprint, the NSPPFZ recognises the country's commitment to poverty eradication and the provision of social protection as a basic human right. Key elements of the NSPPFZ include access to basic services, social transfers, social support and care and harmonisation and coordination to improve effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

State provision for poor families with children has gone through three key moments of change and choice between 1980 and 2016. The reforms happened as the ruling ZANU-PF's political security waxed and waned. The first phase is between 1980 and 2008. Between 1980 and the late 1990s, the ruling ZANU-PF was politically secure – with no strong opposition – the government continued to provide for the indigent based on Poor Laws, particularly through PA, land redistribution and food aid.

Without electoral competition, the ZANU-PF governments felt no need to expand social programmes. At independence, the ZANU-PF government had inherited an old-age pension scheme similar to South Africa's, but limited to white citizens, and a means-tested and parsimonious PA system along the lines of colonial Poor Laws. Before independence, PA had been limited to the aged, blind, and sick.[14] The new Zimbabwean government chose to abolish the pensions, rather than extend them to all Zimbabwean citizens. Continuing concerns over indigent families caring for children, however, meant that the PA survived; it was even expanded to cover all destitute citizens and their dependents, where destitution was "due to

13 Government of Zimbabwe. 2016. *National Social Protection Policy Framework for Zimbabwe*. Government of Zimbabwe.

14 Kaseke, E. 1988. "Social Security in Zimbabwe." *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 3:5-9.

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old age, unemployment, sickness, disability, death or desertion of a breadwinner".[15] However, it was limited to destitute individuals "who are unable to get assistance from their families".[16] Child-headed households were also targeted by PA since they were considered destitute families. Children benefit indirectly from PA as "dependants of indigent persons".[17]

Land reforms, albeit its challenges discussed later, constitute a key aspect in poverty eradication during this first phase. At independence, a white minority continued to exploit 'varsity' land – individual farms averaging 2 000 hectares – for large-scale commercial farming, at the expense of the peasantry. Between 1980 and 1999, "Zimbabwe pursued a market-based land reform programme" that did not result in the large-scale transfer of previously white-owned land to peasants.[18] Since 2000, "ZANU-PF has redistributed previously white-owned land to small-farm families largely of rural origin and black commercial farmers".[19] Through land reform, ZANU-PF emphasised social protection through agriculture, promoting family provision. Section 15(a) of the Constitution provides that it is the duty of people (families) "to grow and store adequate food".[20] The 2000s land reforms that earned former President Mugabe popularity within Zimbabwe and internationally [21] broadened "access to land and promot[ed] peasant productivity".[22] It also improved the beneficiaries' living standards.[23] Low agricultural productivity, however, has compelled ZANU-PF governments to rely heavily on food aid, largely from the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), with less consideration for direct cash transfers for poor families with children.

Between 2000 and 2008, after the rise of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) opposition party in 1999, ZANU-PF became insecure and sought to consolidate its political power. ZANU-PF strengthened its land reform programme in 2000 and responded to the deepening economic crisis, largely due to its economic mismanagement, by introducing the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) for OVCs in 2001. The government also responded to recurrent droughts by partnering with United Nations (UN) agencies and donors to provide expansive

15 Kanyenze, G. & Kondo, T. 2011. *Beyond the Enclave: Towards a Pro-poor and Inclusive Development Strategy for Zimbabwe*. Harare: Weaver Press.

16 Kaseke, 1988, p. 7.

17 Kaseke, E. 2003. "Social Exclusion and Social Security: The Case of Zimbabwe." *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 18:33-48.

18 Moyo, S. 2013. "Land Reform and Redistribution in Zimbabwe Since 1980." In: S. Moyo & W. Chambati (eds.). *Land and Agrarian Reform in Zimbabwe. Beyond White-settler Capitalism*. Oxford: African Book Collective.

19 See Bratton, 2014, p. 76.

20 Government of Zimbabwe.2013. *Constitution of Zimbabwe*. Harare: Government of Zimbabwe.

21 Mamdani, M. 2008. "Lessons of Zimbabwe." *London Review of Books*, 30:17-21.

22 Moyo, 2013, p. 30.

23 Hanlon, J. 2013. *Zimbabwe Takes Back Its Land*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

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food-aid programmes, as well as promoting temporary public works programmes as part of drought relief in 2002 (and subsequent drought years). Hitherto, as Munemo explains: "Mugabe's adoption of drought relief programmes reflected his political strength or weakness, shifting as his standing changed."[24] When Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party "faced insecure political environment [...] they responded to droughts by adopting food aid programmes for adults"; when they were more secure, "drought-relief programmes for adults shifted away from free food aid to cost-effective programmes that avoided dependency and limited waste, such as food for work".[25] Since the 2001/02 drought, ZANU-PF has sought to consolidate its waning political power by offering relief programmes, including Community Feeding, Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF), the School Feeding Programme (SFP), and public works programmes in rural areas.

During the period leading to the 2009 election, Zimbabwe's economic crisis worsened, state capacity to provide for the poor weakened, and poverty escalated. To foster self-reliance, ZANU-PF introduced a presidential farm input scheme for subsistence farmers in 2008, particularly in rural areas. The presidential Agricultural Input Pack Support Programme supported the agrarian welfare regime. The programme revitalised agriculture following the collapse of financial schemes for farmers since the land reform programme in the 2000s. The programme had wide coverage, second only to food aid. It promoted self-reliance and discouraged donor and government dependency. Mugabe said that the programme "empower[s] our farmers for greater crop production". Thus, ZANU-PF preferred food aid and land reform to direct cash, favouring programmes that largely benefit the rural population, from whom ZANU-PF mainly draws its support.[26] Indeed, food aid intensified ZANU-PF's patronage. During the 2000-2008 economic crisis, for example, "Agricultural inputs and maize intended for food relief were sold by [ZANU-PF] party functionaries or were awarded to card-carrying acolytes of ZANU-PF, while these supplies were withheld from persons suspected of opposition sympathies".[27]

The second phase, between 2009 and mid-2013, during the GNU between ZANU-PF and MDC formations, Zimbabwe introduced its highly poverty-targeted cash transfer programme, the HSCT, in 2010-2011, largely influenced by donors. The HSCT, which targeted poor households, not children per se, was introduced in 2010/2011 – later than most of Zimbabwe's neighbours in Southern Africa had introduced similar programmes – amidst strong pressure from international donors

24 Munemo, N. 2012. *Domestic Politics and Drought Relief in Africa: Explaining Choices*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Boulder.

25 *Ibid.*

26 Britz, A. & Tshuma, J. 2013. "Heroes Fall, Oppressors Rise: Democratic Decay and Authoritarianism in Zimbabwe." In: N. De Jager & P. Du Toit (eds.). *Friend or Foe? Dominant Party Systems in Southern Africa: Insights from the Developing World*. New York: UN University Press.

27 See Bratton, 2014, p. 86.

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and agencies. The HSCT modestly expanded the coverage of social cash transfers, increased the value families received, and partially shifted Zimbabwe's child social protection mechanisms from non-cash to cash transfers. The HSCT provided benefits of between USD 10 and USD 25 per month, depending on the household size. In districts where PA still existed, this transformed into a more programmatic cash transfer intervention by transferring the monthly allowance paid under PA into the HSCT. The HSCT targeted 10% of households in each district, an enormous increase over PA. However, many extremely poor households were still excluded.[28]

In the post-GNU phase, from mid-2013 to 2019, although ZANU-PF did not abolish the HSCT after winning the 2013 election, it reverted to emphasising its agrarian components. The new ZANU-PF government reverted to its ambivalence towards cash transfers, significantly downscaling the HSCT in preference to Command Agriculture, providing inputs to support smallholder farmers, most of whom had benefited from the land redistribution programme. Command Agriculture complemented the existing presidential input scheme. These reforms sustained the agrarian regime, largely offering non-cash benefits (food aid during drought and farm inputs), and modestly increased the coverage of social cash transfers (most of which continued to have no statutory basis). Since mid-2013, donor pressure has been ineffective in urging the scaling-up of direct cash transfers in the face of conservatism, tight budget constraints, and the prioritisation of other programmes, as well as a preoccupation with political issues. Consequently, HSCT has been significantly downscaled. Notably, in collaboration with donors and social protection advocates including Prof Kaseke, the post-GNU government adopted the NSPPFZ in 2016.[29]

9.3

Distinctive features of the child welfare regime

Zimbabwe, in contrast with most countries in Southern Africa, adopted a distinctive agrarian social protection system promoted through farming. The government distributes land and free farm inputs to peasant farmers to enhance family capacity to provide for their members, including children. Ideologically, ZANU-PF's agrarian approach to social protection largely explains the familial provision of primarily non-cash transfers in the form of food aid and agricultural inputs and the low

28 Chinyoka, I. & Seekings, J. 2016. *Social Policy Reform under the Government of National Unity in Zimbabwe, 2009-2013*. Cape Town: Centre for Social Science Research.

29 Ministry of Public Service, Labor and Social Welfare (MPSLSW). 2016. *National Social Protection Policy Framework for Zimbabwe*. Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare.

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coverage of cash transfers to poor households with children. The limited coverage is not unique to the child welfare regime but is similar to the general welfare regime.[30]

The child welfare regime is distinctive in that, like welfare in general in the country, it is highly targeted at the poorest families with children, classically agrarian; focused notionally on land reform, an idealised understanding of agrarian society and emergency relief in times of drought, not on the 'modern' generation of cash transfers. The ruling ZANU-PF governments preferred in-kind social transfers to direct cash, particularly agricultural inputs and food aid, which allowed it to reward its voters and sanction opposition supporters.

Zimbabwe's child welfare regime is in the general agrarian regime; hence, social transfers are familial – largely targeting the family. The government focus on peasants and family and kin is central to social provision. As in Botswana, where there are familial safety nets,[31] poor families with children in Zimbabwe receive family-based cash and in-kind benefits. However, Zimbabwe is familial in a wider sense than Botswana. Botswana also targets families, in contrast to South Africa and Namibia, which provide grants for individual caregivers (often causing discord within families as patriarchal relations are undermined). Botswana also provides for families if a child is orphaned (as, in effect, do South Africa and Namibia). Zimbabwe does not even do this, or at least not directly. The presumption in Zimbabwe is that the extended family, in an agrarian society, will take care of children, even orphaned children.

While it is the post-agrarian societies that provide most or all of the models for cash transfer programmes, Zimbabwe (together with Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique) is different in that the agrarian society has survived: these are (outside of drought years) non-arid environments, with strong peasant sectors, in stark contrast to South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, and Namibia. Moyo describes Zimbabwe as "a largely agrarian society".[32] In Zimbabwe, agriculture provides livelihoods to 80% of the population, accounts for 23% of formal employment, and contributes about 18% to GDP and approximately 33% of foreign earnings.[33]

30 Mushunje, M. & Kaseke, E. 2018. "Indigenous Social Security Systems in Zimbabwe: Strengths, Challenges and prospects." In N. Noyoo & E. Boon (eds.). *Indigenous Social Security Systems in Southern and West Africa*. Stellenbosch: African Sun Media.

31 Chinyoka I 2019. *Familial Child Welfare Regimes: The case of Botswana*. WP430. University of Cape Town.

32 Moyo, S. 2011b. "Three Decades of Agrarian Reform in Zimbabwe." *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38:493-531; Moyo, S. 2011b. "Changing Agrarian Relations after Redistributive Land Reform in Zimbabwe." *Journal of Peasant Studie*, 38:939-66.

33 Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Climate and Rural Resettlement. Available online: https://bit.ly/3d0GAGg

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In addition, Zimbabwe's Constitution revealingly imposes a duty on citizens to produce for themselves, while imposing vague obligations on the state to provide for the destitute. Whereas South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia were essentially post-agrarian societies, Zimbabwe retained a plausible agrarian option. This meant that the models provided by its regional neighbours were deemed less appropriate, and even the models advocated by international agencies were considered less important than programmes to support peasant agriculture.

Another key feature is that social cash transfer coverage – the number of children reached by the transfers – in Zimbabwe is low: transfers reach at most 24% of all children – on average, any given programme covers only 6% of all children. Even Zimbabwe's flagship cash transfer programme, the HSCT, reached less than 1% of children (in 25 598 households) in August 2016, down from about 2% (in 55 509 households) in February 2016. However, donor-supported in-kind benefits through food aid for poor children have been benefiting more children, reaching about half of all children in 2008 – an increase from 26% in 2006, emphasising the ruling ZANU-PF party's efforts to combat child poverty through the agrarian route. The Agricultural Input Pack Support Programme has the highest coverage of the in-kind benefits programmes at 24% of all children. The absence of social pensions, including old-age and disability grants in Zimbabwe, while programmes that in neighbouring South Africa provide massive indirect support for children, contributes significantly to the low coverage of social cash transfers. An economic and fiscal crisis has constrained the scope for expensive interventions, but ZANU-PF's ambivalence towards cash transfer programmes represents political choices informed by the nature of Zimbabwean society and politics.

9.4

Implications for future social policy direction

Zimbabwe introduced cash transfers later than most other countries in Southern Africa because its poverty-reduction strategy is largely agrarian. However, worsening child poverty, AIDS, drought, and economic mismanagement have all compromised poverty reduction. Agricultural support (land and farm inputs), ZANU-PF's preferred form of social protection has been discretionary, clientelistic, and exclusionary. Hence, some families with children fail to access government support. Despite the government's (and non-state actors') drought relief programmes for the most drought-stricken households, cash transfers still have low coverage of poor households with children.

For Zimbabwe to meet the Sustainable Development Goal on poverty, the country should consider adopting social protection mechanisms sensitive to its agricultural society. The current limited fiscal space does not allow the introduction of child

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grants adopted by richer countries like Namibia and South Africa. However, with reduced ambivalence to cash transfers, expanding cash transfers, particularly the HSCT, allows the ruling party to strengthen its favoured agricultural interventions (including land reform and farm input subsidy programmes).

In summary, Zimbabwe's child welfare regime evolved over three phases. In these phases, the regime continued to be distinctively agro-based, primarily targeting the poorest families with low coverage. The absence of social pensions including old-age and disability grants in Zimbabwe contributes significantly to the low coverage of social cash transfers. Expansion of cash transfers would strengthen a hybrid child welfare regime compatible with the Zimbabwean society.

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