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ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF
PROFESSOR EDWELL KASEKE
AND DR MATHIAS NYENTI

Marius Paul Olivier
Letlhokwa George Mpedi
& Evance Kalula

EDITORS

CHAPTER 11

The Role of Indigenous Social Protection in Safeguarding Children: Lessons from Africa

Ajwang' Warria & Victor Chikadzi

Abstract

Social protection is a fundamental social risk management strategy that supports social and human development and increases people's opportunities whilst reducing risks, shocks and vulnerabilities. It plays a fundamental role in strengthening the resilience of children, families and communities, and the achievement of greater equity and human rights. In as much as social protection is critical in cushioning children from poverty and its attendant effects in childhood, it is evident that many children are excluded from formal social protection coverage. Considering this, the chapter examines the application of indigenous social protection programmes to child protection. It proposes that social programmes be culturally sensitive to child protection issues and not be a mere *add on* to formal social protection programmes but have fundamental components that ensure sustainability, greater reach and maximum impact of the interventions. The chapter further argues for the undocumented benefits that address the vulnerabilities of children and the positive role of indigenous systems that are rarely measured or acknowledged. However, it should be noted that this study, based as it is on a desk review of relevant literature, is far from being comprehensive. Nonetheless, it provides a preliminary analysis demonstrating the clear connections and synergies between indigenous social protection measures and child protection concerns. Further, it provides recommendations on how their reach could be enhanced in tackling the multi-dimensionality of children's vulnerabilities. This is critical in realising the prospects of indigenous social protection as a crucial element of over-arching formal child protection systems in resource-constrained African contexts.

Keywords: Africa, children, child protection, indigenous social protection, social policy

11.1

Introduction

There have been progressive shifts in reducing childhood poverty and improving children's well-being, with social protection measures being the essential tool. However, this progress has happened unevenly across countries with some countries seeing a decrease and others an increase in poverty.¹ Addressing children's well-being is part of child protection and it includes providing assistance that is educative, supportive and timely from the start and adopting an integrated system of care and behaviours commonly accepted as contributing to culturally healthy child development.

Social protection has been addressed from a narrow perspective (e.g. social welfare assistance to vulnerable populations such as widows, orphans and people with disabilities) and broad perspectives (e.g. job creation and livelihood programmes and universal education). However, a common theme permeating both perspectives is that social protection can take on many different forms² as measures which target strengthening of individuals, households, or communities' resilience ... as seedbeds of social change³ with citizens as active agents and duty bearers.⁴ Social protection targets poverty, vulnerability, and exclusion with interventions focused on social assistance, social insurance, social services and social equity.⁵ Children must also be included in these initiatives in line with the 2006 United Nations (UN) Study on Violence, which argued for a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach to ensure children's right to protection.

Child protection and social protection overlap, yet issues of child protection are rarely incorporated into the design and development of social protection initiatives.⁶ In instances when they are included, they are not made explicit. This has given rise to attempts to situate children and child protection within formal social protection systems in Africa, with reports indicating that programmes in both social protection and child welfare remain significantly under-funded.⁷ Social exclusion is a global

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- 1 Gassmann, F. & Timar, E. 2018. *The Importance of Social Protection for Children in the Balkans*. Policy Brief: United Nations University, p. 1.
 - 2 Kaseke, E. 2010. "The role of social security in South Africa." *International Social Work*, 53:159.
 - 3 Sheahan, F. 2011. *A focus on child protection within social protection systems: Transforming Children's lives*. Stockholm: Save the Children, p. 17.
 - 4 Ulriksen, M.S. & Plagerson, S. 2014. "Social protection: Rethinking rights and duties." *World Development*, 64:760.
 - 5 UNICEF. 2009. *Promoting synergies between child protection and social protection: West and Central Africa, Dakar*. pp. 12-13.
 - 6 See Sheahan, 2011, p. 9.
 - 7 UNICEF & World Bank. 2016. *Ending extreme poverty: A focus on children*. Briefing Note. Available online: <https://uni.cf/3lfsx2A>

problem⁸ and it contributes to the exclusion of many people from formal social protection coverage.⁹ People in rural areas¹⁰ and children are also rarely covered by formal social protection systems.¹¹ Against this backdrop, this chapter underscores the many undocumented benefits that address the vulnerabilities of children and the positive role of indigenous social protection systems that are rarely measured or acknowledged. The chapter foregrounds social protection as a child rights issue as highlighted in the various human rights documents and as reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Target 1.3 on poverty reduction and SDG Target 16.2 and other violence-related targets (e.g. 3.8, 5.4, 10.4), and alignment with the African Union (AU) social policy framework.

An understanding of indigenous social protection arrangements is required before their integration with formal measures¹² and as a way of enhancing coverage¹³ and benefits and developing economies of scale¹⁴ and towards the development of transformational social protection in Africa.¹⁵ Until recently, efforts have mostly analysed formal social protection measures and the analysis was based on specific outcomes. However, there is a drive to recognise indigenous measures of social protection,¹⁶ whilst arguing for the application of more inclusive approaches¹⁷ and an analysis of the synergy between informal and formal social protection

8 Kaseke, E. 2017. "Social insurance systems in South Africa and Zimbabwe: A comparative analysis." *Social Development Issues*, 39(1):42.

9 Kaseke, E. 1997. "Social security in eastern and southern Africa: Organisation, issues and concepts in modern and traditional arrangements." *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 12(2):39.

10 Allieu, A.M. 2019. *Implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all: gaps and challenges facing rural areas*. A presentation at the UN DESA Expert Group Meeting on Eradicating Rural Poverty to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Addis Ababa, 27 February 2019, p. 1.

11 Kamerman, S.B. & Gabel, S.G. 2006. *Social protection for children and families: A global overview*. Paper presented at the conference on Social protection initiatives for children, women and families: An analysis of recent experience. p. 5.

12 Olivier, M.P. et al. 2008. *Informal social security in southern Africa: Developing a framework for policy intervention*. Paper presentation at the International Conference on Social Security, Cape Town, 10-14 March 2008, p. 5.

13 Mpedi, L.G. 2008. "The role of religious values in extending social protection: A South African perspective." *Acta Theologica*, 1:105.

14 Olivier, M. et al. 2012. "Informality, employment and social protection: Some critical perspectives for/from developing countries." *Research Gate*, p. 2.

15 Triegaardt, J. 2009. "Accomplishments and challenges for partnerships in development in the transformation of social security in South Africa," p. 2.

16 Patel, L., Kaseke, E. & Midgley, J. 2012. "Indigenous welfare and community-welfare based social development: Lessons from African innovations." *Journal of Community Practice*, 20:13.

17 Noyoo, N. & Boon, E. (eds). 2018. *Indigenous social security systems in Southern and West Africa*. Stellenbosch: African Sun Media.

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systems.¹⁸ This was borne out of debates calling out African governments and their development partners for continuously advocating the predominant Eurocentric social protection initiatives in African contexts yet claiming to be highly sensitive to the aspirations of local people.^{19, 20} New ways of working with families and children are evolving and also becoming transformative – taking into account the diversity of structures and the richness of indigenous knowledge.²¹ Although there are universal arguments to move towards community and family-based care,²² ideas about indigenous child protection and development and indigenous social protection vary widely based on time and context.²³ Formal social protection systems should not replace the responsibilities of families and communities but enhance them. This chapter explores these issues through a review of the literature and contributes to debates on the role of indigenous social protection practices in the protection of children.

The chapter is organised as follows: the first section looks at poverty, social protection and child protection. Next, select indigenous social protection measures from different countries across Africa are presented with a focus on measures that have targeted children directly or those that impact them through different ways of transmission. The challenges are then presented and the implications for practice, research and social policy advocacy are highlighted.

The words traditional, informal, non-state, semi-formal, and non-formal practices are used to indicate indigenous systems but they all have their specific limitations.²⁴ Moreover, the use of the term ‘informal’ contributes to the further marginalisation and exclusion of non-formal social protection measures,²⁵ it reflects illegality²⁶ and incorrectly implies that these practices are only found in rural communities.²⁷ Therefore, the authors prefer and will make use of the word ‘indigenous’ more extensively in this chapter.

18 Devereux, S. & Getu, M. 2013. “The conceptualisation and status of informal and formal social protection in sub-Saharan Africa.” In: S. Devereux & M. Getu. *Informal and formal social protection systems in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa Addis Ababa.

19 Noyoo & Boom, 2018, p. 4.

20 Ouma, S. 1995. “The role of social protection in the socio-economic development of Uganda.” *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 10:6.

21 Welbourne, P. & Dixon, J. 2016. “Child protection and welfare: Cultures, policies and practices.” *European Journal of Social Work*, 19:828.

22 See Gassman & Timar, 2018, p. 5.

23 See Welbourne & Dixon, 2016, p. 828.

24 See Patel *et al*, 2012, p. 14.

25 See Noyoo & Boon, 2018, p. 3.

26 Dafuleya, G. 2018. “(Non)state and (in)formal social protection in Africa: Focusing on burial societies.” *International Social Work*, 6: 157.

27 Patel *et al*, 2012, p. 15.

11.2

Poverty, child protection and social protection

There is intrinsic value in children being free from poverty. However, this freedom is instrumental in that it permits them to enjoy their rights. Child poverty is as prevalent as adult poverty, though, in most countries, children's vulnerability is higher and experienced differently in comparison to adult poverty.²⁸ Children are often over-represented among the poor and they account for more than 50% of people living in extreme poverty.²⁹ An Eastern European study showed how poverty can be inherited with more than 90% deprivation in adulthood having links to childhood poverty.³⁰

Deprivation in children is moulded and influenced by four broad characteristics of childhood poverty and vulnerability namely: multidimensionality, life cycle changes, relational nature and voicelessness.³¹ Based on the multidimensionality of child poverty³² and children's vulnerabilities, a key challenge facing the development of child-sensitive social protection is how to strengthen child protection frameworks in the best manner. One way that is proposed in this chapter is to tap into indigenous mechanisms and support the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) notion that violence is preventable and that countries have a responsibility to reduce violations of children through preventative and protective measures. Failure to meet children's needs has multi-level costs and consequences³³ that deprive children of their capabilities.³⁴ Providing social protection for children and their families is a multi-faceted human development endeavour which contributes to children's security and rights. Childhood provides that unique window of opportunity to make long-lasting investments with the highest rates of return³⁵ and potential for creating active capable citizens.³⁶ Indeed, child-sensitive social protection can disrupt the intergenerational transmission of poverty and aid development.

²⁸ Kamerman & Gabel, 2006, p. 10.

²⁹ UNICEF & World Bank. 2016.

³⁰ Grundiza, S. & Vilaplana, C.L. 2013. "Is the likelihood of poverty inherited? Statistics in focus 27/2013.". Brussels.

³¹ See UNICEF, 2009, p. 12.

³² Bradshaw, J. 2002. "Child poverty and child outcomes." *Children and Society*, 16:132.

³³ Gassman & Timar, 2018, p. 2.

³⁴ Sen, A. 1999. *Development as freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

³⁵ Sanfilippo, M. et al. 2012. *The Impact of Social Protection on Children: A Review of the Literature*. Florence: Working Paper, p. 6.

³⁶ See Ulriksen & Plagerson, 2014, p. 762.

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Addressing childhood poverty looks at family incomes/poverty, access to services as well as broader components of child poverty such as discrimination, exclusion and participation, protection and equity – i.e. inter-linked and complex factors leading to child protection violations. Child protection violations, such as child exploitation and trafficking, child labour and forced child marriages have direct links with poverty.³⁷ However, for some, protection issues that children face, such as corporal punishment and some forms of abuse, the links are not immediate or direct, often making it challenging to find associations.³⁸ From this discussion, what is clear is that some children's vulnerabilities to violence are linked to poverty. Thus, integrated poverty reduction strategies are relevant in addressing childhood poverty as a multi-dimensional phenomenon.

11.3

Select indigenous social protection measures that protect children

Indigenous community-based welfare practices, also referred to as *African innovations*, have promoted social well-being in Africa.³⁹ These practices are based on underlying principles that include cooperation, social support networks of trust⁴⁰ and agreed norms of obligation and reciprocity.⁴¹ African cultural values from a social security perspective motivate the individual's participation in informal strategies and as a way for people to fulfil their cultural responsibilities.⁴² However, the informal arrangements are not merely an expression of African cultural values, but, serve as substitutes for the formal arrangements⁴³ and are firmly embedded in customary law and social institutions.⁴⁴ The protection measures transcend informal forms of helping between family members and neighbours and include institutionalised, culturally mandated practices, such as livestock sharing, communal food storage, cooperative harvesting and citizenship contributions (e.g. care work). The two types identified in most studies are, firstly, private household-based or kinship-based, and, secondly, member-organisation based, non-kinship-based or community

37 Warria, A. 2017. "Forced child marriages as a form of child trafficking." *Children and Youth Services Review*, 79:275.

38 See Sheahan, 2011, p. 19.

39 See Patel *et al.*, 2012, 16.

40 Mutuku, S. & Kaseke, E. 2014. "The role of stokvels in improving people's lives: The case in Orange Farm, South Africa." *Social Work*, 50:511-512.

41 See Patel *et al.*, 2012, p. 16.

42 See Mpedi, 2008, p. 113.

43 See Olivier *et al.*, 2012, p. 5.

44 Stavropoulou, M. *et al.* 2017. "Harnessing informal institutions to strengthen social protection for the rural poor." *Global Food Security*, 12:73.

support networks (accessed through neighbours or traditional leaders).⁴⁵ Some examples of these supportive practices directed at the family or individual child will be presented next.

Isolabantwana (eye of the child) is a recent community-based child protection programme established in South Africa to protect children round the clock, especially those at risk of abuse and neglect. It mainly relies on community volunteers and is based on the principle of *Ubuntu* (individual's humanity expressed through a relationship with others). This programme is linked to other initiatives, networks and services in the community, such as the police and schools. The protection of children is viewed as a community responsibility, augmented with the notion that "all of us" are answerable – i.e. eye of the child.⁴⁶

Burial societies such as *diswaeti* in Botswana were established for the basic purpose of helping the family fund the funeral costs in the event of a family member dying. Families insured themselves against these costs and the hardships stemming from the death by eliciting the support provided to the deceased family members through *diswaeti*. Through this, it is evident that collective action enhanced the development of indigenous social security services and contributed towards inclusion. For example, the social protection function is still pertinent because of orphaned children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS-related deaths of caregivers.⁴⁷

Stokvels are self-help initiatives focussing on savings and investments in South Africa. They are also known as *susu* in West Africa, *chamaa* in East Africa and *tontines* in French-speaking African countries. They are a key poverty-alleviating strategy practised as a rotating savings and credit association, where members contribute a fixed amount based on an agreed time. They promote investments as they facilitate capital accumulation and are currently used to supplement incomes from social grants. Current studies show that such mutual aid contributions can be an exit strategy for recipients of child support grants⁴⁸ and as a poverty reduction strategy⁴⁹ – they can break the cycle of poverty⁵⁰ and in turn break the inter-generational cycle of poverty for children.

⁴⁵ See Mpedi, 2008, p. 107.

⁴⁶ Thompson, L.J. & Wadley, D. 2019. "Integrating indigenous approaches and relationship-based ethics for culturally safe interventions: Child protection in Solomon Islands". *International Social Work*, 994 at 1006.

⁴⁷ See Patel *et al.*, 2012, p. 16.

⁴⁸ See Mutuku & Kaseke, 2014, p. 514.

⁴⁹ Dube, N. & Kaseke, E. 2019. "Strengthening informal social security to provide meaningful social protection: The case of *stokvels* in SOWETO." *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 33:157.

⁵⁰ Chikadzi, V. & Lusenga, T. 2013. "*Stokvels* as livelihood strategy for women living in urban townships: Lessons from South Africa." *The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher*, 25:352.

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Zunde raMambo or *isiphala seNkosi* (chief's granary) in Zimbabwe or *masotla* (tribal fields) in Botswana are similar traditional concepts that remain a key feature in many villages and were developed to address food insecurity amongst the most vulnerable in rural communities. Thus, it is a traditional form of social protection that can cushion children against food insecurity or shortages. This practice encouraged *simunye* (group solidarity), and each family volunteered a member to work in the fields. Beneficiaries included children, especially orphans and those identified by the community as being vulnerable. The revival of this practice has been crucial in the advent of the HIV/AIDS pandemic which led to child-headed households and the government's inability to support them. It continues to be a beneficial and reliable form of social protection as forums are used to address child protection issues, and some of the proceeds from the *Zunde raMambo* initiative support the education of orphaned children in the communities. This collectivist concern produces positive individual outcomes for children.⁵¹ The collective wisdom can be utilised to enhance current interventions⁵² as providing for destitute families was and still is interpreted in African cultures as a sign of *Ubuntu*, *batho* and *harambee* – i.e. promoting the spirit of togetherness and sharing.⁵³

In Ghana, the practice of *fome* meant that children belonged to two families – their nuclear family and their extended patrilineal families. The role of the family was socialisation, production and social control of its members and to act as support systems in balancing work and family tasks. In Zimbabwe, the indigenous practice of *sarapavana* (guardianship) meant that upon parents' death, children were not left to look after themselves but a kin-guardian was appointed by the family and (s)he was instrumental in offering both material and social support to them. A similar practice *ter* (culturally sanctioned 're-marriage') existed among the Luo in Kenya where the head of the house (usually male) took over guardianship of children and married the wife of the deceased to ensure that the inherited property stayed in the family.

In traditional communities across Africa, children were not simply passive consumers. They were seen as a source of wealth and they contributed to the family's socio-economic welfare by performing age-appropriate tasks around the house and in the community, such as looking after livestock, tiling the land and looking after younger siblings. Children also served as a form of social security/old-age insurance for their parents as evidenced by large families in the past.⁵⁴ It should, however, be noted that traditional cultural practices can also threaten the well-being of children.⁵⁵ For example, cultural values view children as personal and collective

⁵¹ See Thompson & Wadley, 2019, p. 1004.

⁵² See Patel *et al.*, 2012, p. 28.

⁵³ See Dube & Kaseke, 2019, p. 161.

⁵⁴ See Mpedi, 2008, p. 115.

⁵⁵ See Welbourne & Dixon, 2016, p. 835.

property and this may influence specific practices that create vulnerabilities and harm children, such as forced early marriages and family murders in attempts to sustain family honour.⁵⁶

Contributions received for indigenous social protection consisted of contributions in kind – i.e. service rendered or support given.⁵⁷ In Ethiopia, among the pastoral groups, the traditional practice of *dabare* ensures that better-off community members loan milking cattle to poorer households with children. Among the Maasai in Kenya, the extended family members replaced livestock lost due to environmental disasters thus providing means for the family to navigate the shock.⁵⁸ Similar practices, for example, *kuronzera* in Zimbabwe and *mafisa* (lending cattle) in Botswana, exist where poor families are loaned cattle for farming and milking purposes. This practice helps to provide a livelihood for vulnerable families, which in turn ensures that children within such families are protected from the numerous vulnerabilities that are caused by poverty and deprivation. In the farming communities across Africa, the poorer families were given a portion of the community land and allowed to use it for their own crop production, which helped them negotiate risks. However, the counterargument, which is beyond the scope of this chapter, is that the assistance received is short-term, provides limited benefits, and maybe degrading, potentially stigmatising and increase the asymmetry of power that already exists.⁵⁹

Across many traditional African societies, children were also encouraged to respond to sporadic incidents of violence through story-telling and grandparents were a source of wisdom and a moral beacon.⁶⁰ For example, the interactions between children and grandparents through story-telling were encouraged as a way to foster and reinforce children's sense of belonging and connectedness. The positive trusting relationships that developed and the pro-social skills learnt enhanced resilience and development. In Tanzania, a Psychosocial Support Programme was established for grandparents and grandchildren in 2005 as part of the *KwaWazee* pension provision programme where children and grandparents voluntarily meet twice a month to talk about everyday issues.

Indigenous and semi-informal social protection systems continue to be relevant because of the lack of access to formal systems and as a consequence of socio-

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 827.

⁵⁷ Olivier, M., Kalula, E. & Van Rensburg, L. 2012. "Social protection, poverty alleviation and social security in the SADC region: The need for developing a co-ordinated social security paradigm." Paper presented at the 3rd African Regional Congress of the International Industrial Relations Association (IIRA), 6-8 March 2002.

⁵⁸ Mchomvu, A., Tungaraza, F. & Maghimbi, S. 2002. "Social security systems in Tanzania." *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 17:12.

⁵⁹ See Ulriksen & Plagerson, 2014, pp. 757-762.

⁶⁰ See Mpedi, 2008, 118.

economic hardships.⁶¹ To maximise the potential for social protection measures to protect children, formal programmes could include ‘transformative’ elements such as indigenous measures to redress power inequalities and strengthen communities’ capacity to protect themselves. Not linking formal social protection mechanisms to the indigenous ones, represents a missed opportunity to protect children by identifying and preventing threats to child safety. Indeed, mobilisation of innovative indigenous community structures can protect children, can act as safety nets and complement the government’s formal initiatives.

11.4

Threats to indigenous social protection

Indigenous social protection measures continue to exist in rural, semi-urban and urban areas, yet within the broader framework of domestic social protection systems, these measures are still in the embryonic phase.⁶² Lack of organisational capacity, funding and other resources related to harmonisation and coordination mechanisms, as well as limited support from government exacerbate the already limited acknowledgement of these practices. Approaches to addressing child and social protection issues are highly fragmented, with high dependence on international donors for funding and implementing services. This signals limited government buy-in, making the current indigenous and semi-formal service delivery system unsustainable. Despite this, recognition should be given to the fact that, in some areas, the local structures and protection measures may be the only ones available or accessible to that community and its vulnerable members (including children) and there is, therefore, a need to transform the current formal system to incorporate existing informal social protection into the existing formal framework.

In championing gender equity and promoting indigenous practices across different communities, we should be cognisant of the unintended consequences of these practices. A negative impact could be the exploitation of women and children, as there is a heavy dependence on women’s reproductive work, such as in caring for children, as well as the sick and elderly.⁶³ Women’s labour is often equated to unpaid labour due to the limited concept of work, thus subsequently marginalising women in poor communities and traditional economies. It is crucial to get the gender balance right and include men and boys in social protection programmes by not marginalising them further and by supporting them to engage with childcare obligations and subsequently reduce stereotyping within families.

⁶¹ See Triegaardt, 2009, p. 7.

⁶² See Olivier *et al.*, n.p.

⁶³ See Triegaardt, 2009, p. 7.

Traditional coping mechanisms are over-extended and do not cope efficiently with increasing needs.⁶⁴ They are affected by threats and risks like economic shocks, poverty⁶⁵ and migration.⁶⁶ The impact is also evident in the urban areas where there is individualism and less care and respect for cultural values⁶⁷ and an erosion of the social security role of the extended family. Migration from rural to urban areas may also interrupt support structures as individuals and families adopt new lifestyles. The increasing numbers of child-headed households across Africa is an indicator that kinship-based support systems are stressed with the extended family no longer being able to fulfil its traditional caring role for vulnerable children. A recent study has shown that transnational migrants re-enact supportive strategies previously used in their countries of origin to meet their needs in resettlement countries.⁶⁸

Caution should be taken when advocating conditional social protection programmes, for example, immunisation or formal school attendance or delayed marriage as they can exacerbate the already stretched systems and cause the breakdown of cultural values.⁶⁹ Prior to introducing such measures, the question that ought to be asked is: *Can the increase in demand be met with or matched by increased investments in child protection in poverty-stricken areas?* Practitioners should keep in mind that advocating such programmes might not be appropriate in contexts where these services are limited and/or are of poor quality. Imposing such programmes may not be feasible and relevant, as this can cause administrative burdens⁷⁰ and raise the risk of perverse consequences, for example, an increase in children's vulnerabilities rather than a decrease. A good example is in South Africa, where cash payments for foster care mean that children are better resourced if parents give them up to the alternative care system.⁷¹

11.5

Implications for policy, practice and research

Social protection is a human right and socio-economic necessity, and thus social protection systems, whether formal or indigenous, should be understood

⁶⁴ See Patel *et al.*, 2012, p. 26.

⁶⁵ See UNICEF, 2009, p. 27.

⁶⁶ See Mpedi, 2008, p. 119.

⁶⁷ Nhede, N.T. 2014. "Prospects, challenges and constraints of social security: The public administration quagmire for selected African countries." *African Journal of Public Affairs*, 7:116.

⁶⁸ Chereni, A. 2019. "Risk, vulnerability and Zimbabwean migrants' post-arrival adaptation in Johannesburg: Reflections on relational aspects on informal social protection." *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 33:53.

⁶⁹ Sherr, L. & Mueller, J. 2009. "Advocacy brief for research institutes, universities and donors. Social welfare integration and cash transfers: A child-sensitive approach." *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*, 4:86-90.

⁷⁰ See Nhede, 2014, p. 119.

⁷¹ Hanlon *et al.* 2010. *Just give Money to the Poor: The Development Revolution from the South*. Kumarian Press.

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as instruments for social transformation and inclusive development which significantly contribute towards the creation of socially just societies. From a social work perspective, promoting self-determination through democratic participation and strengthening voices in the wider society (i.e. not undermining people and communities in their organic means of assistance) is crucial in practice. Practitioners should build on the efforts of the community to provide social protection on a self-help basis and attempt to strengthen the existing efforts. This is because they are a source of social protection for some populations. In addition, they are a crucial complementary form of social protection leading to indigenous, semi-formal and informal mechanisms evolving into formal schemes.⁷² As not all indigenous schemes are amenable to integration and might not evolve into formal schemes, a multi-pillar system of social protection can be introduced for when support is needed⁷³ and as a complementary or tailor-made measure to enhance coverage and benefits.⁷⁴ For example, social insurance should be linked to people and not to employment.⁷⁵

The provision of social protection is often subject to controversial political debates, operationalisation and implementation, and remains parallel to formal systems.⁷⁶ The role of the family and community as non-state actors cannot be denied especially in African contexts. Indeed, the provision of social security is not merely a task of the government,⁷⁷ as it is clear that many African governments do not have sufficient resources to reach everyone in need.⁷⁸ Therefore, indigenous social protection arrangements are critical for the well-being of millions of impoverished people, including children. In addition, the development and implementation of social protection systems, formal, semi-formal or indigenous, is not a process cast in stone but one that should be responsive to new population groups and emerging risks. It is what Prof Kaseke is well known for – the Africanisation of social protection, which entails ongoing responsive interventions to needs and challenges relevant to the African context.⁷⁹

Building bridges between social protection and child protection is crucial and it can lead to financial savings and offer increased care and protection mechanisms for children.⁸⁰ This also calls for the coordination of government structures engaged with social protection and child protection. However, while there are child protection benefits emanating from indigenous social protection mechanisms and

⁷² See Kaseke, 2010, p. 166.

⁷³ See Kaseke, 2017, p. 50.

⁷⁴ See Dafuleya, 2018, p. 166.

⁷⁵ See Allieu, 2019, p. 9.

⁷⁶ See Noyoo & Boon, 2018, p. 219.

⁷⁷ See Olivier *et al.*, n.p.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Mpedi, L. 2019. "Towards the Africanisation of social protection in Southern Africa." *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 33:81.

⁸⁰ Sanfilippo *et al.*, 2012, p. 31-32.

it is clear from the arguments presented that they can supplement formal measures, they should not be glamorised⁸¹ and romanticised⁸² but strengthened. They should also not be taken as an endorsement of the state's relinquishment of its duty-bearer responsibilities.⁸³

Strengthening the duty-bearers' understanding of the benefits of building and strengthening indigenous mechanisms and incorporating children's engagement in the design and development of protection programming is crucial. This leads to a win-win situation as a result of the holistic, inclusive, participatory, sustainable and coordinated ways of protecting children and ensuring the continuity of cultural values in all settings. This process should be done alongside influential stakeholders, such as traditional community leaders and community-based groups,⁸⁴ and should also be informed by the perspectives and experiences of that community's children (and those of their caregivers and parents). The community-based organisations can offer seamless entry-points and they are well situated on the ground⁸⁵ to act as watchdogs for specific violations that may require deliberate socio-cultural intervention. Indeed, local partners should be supported to engage with policy development and planning so that indigenous social protection measures for safeguarding children are made a vital component of all development agendas.

Strengthening child protection within social protection programming calls for the creation of a solid evidence base with diverse models of delivering social protection. In addition, further research on the relationship between child protection and social protection should be pursued. This would caution us from assuming that indigenous social protection can work in all child protection contexts. Thus, the strengthening of the research base calls for the evaluation of what works (and what does not) with the hope of scaling up based on evidence-based and successful pathways and practices. Future studies should also look at how vulnerable children such as migrant children who are not living in conventional households can be accessed and protected. Furthermore, there is a need for the development of indicators such as birth registration, which can be integrated into existing formal social protection monitoring and evaluation systems.

The sharing of experiences in different contexts is important for practitioners and policymakers. However, they should not infer that programmes that are successful in one region would work well in another. There may well be comparable conditions

⁸¹ See Mpedi, 2008, p. 119.

⁸² Kaseke, E. 2008. "Social security provisioning in Southern Africa: Developing a framework for the integration of informal social security into the formal systems." *Zeitschrift für ausländisches und internationales Arbeits- und Sozialrecht*, 22(1-2):71.

⁸³ See Mpedi, 2008, p. 120.

⁸⁴ See UNICEF, 2009, p. 45.

⁸⁵ Bawole, J.N. 2018. "NGOs and social protection in Ghana." In: N. Noyoo & E. Boon. *Indigenous social security systems*. Stellenbosch: African Sun Media, p. 179.

and characteristics,⁸⁶ so this possibility does exist, but it must not be taken for granted. As part of advocacy and programming, mapping and detailing existing indigenous social protection mechanisms should happen in each country, even prior to considering how they could be scaled up and/or strengthened. This calls for practitioners to be selective about indigenous protection components that may indeed be transferrable and the role that local stakeholders can play in informing further development, replication and implementation of such initiatives. The role of community-based participation in child protection should be considered and evidence generated on whether potential social protection mechanisms could crowd out children's care and protection⁸⁷ and negatively impact on their best interests.⁸⁸ Furthermore, the training of social workers on sustainable social development and child protection is required for this to work with inclusive and responsive social protection systems.

11.6

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the nexus between social protection and child protection is being increasingly acknowledged as being beneficial to the protection of children in the wake of societies confronting change.⁸⁹ It is also crucial in times when successive crises are experienced and as part of interventions that aim to cushion individuals in moments of crisis and to provide sustainable possibilities to move out of chronic poverty. This chapter adds to the limited yet growing body of knowledge on the nexus between indigenous social protection and child protection. It also addresses the indigenisation of social work practice in Africa as a whole and considers societal structures and practices that ensure development and child protection. Some readers may criticise the arguments presented in this chapter as superficial and lacking depth. We humbly acknowledge that further work on the nexus between indigenous social protection and child protection is indeed needed. This chapter challenges us as practitioners to acknowledge the rich insights gained from engaging with indigenous ways of assistance provision and debate how these *bits of knowledge* can be incorporated into social work, social policy and social protection interventions.

⁸⁶ Mpedi, 2019, p. 93.

⁸⁷ See Triegaardt, n.d., p. 10.

⁸⁸ See Sheahan, 2010, p. 42.

⁸⁹ See Thompson & Wadley, 2019, p. 994.

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