



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI  
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES  
SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

**Policy Brief**  
NUMBER 3 MAY 2013

**THE ROLE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION IN CHILDREN'S SCHOOLING OUTCOMES\***

By Jane Kabubo-Mariara and Tabitha Kiriti-Ng'ang'a

**Context**

Child development has a strong implication for future human capital development and overall long-term development. Children also constitute the most vulnerable section of the population with regard to poverty and other forms of social exclusion, yet national policies often do not adequately cater for their needs. Orphaned children often fall into destitution due to lack of appropriate social protection interventions to cover them. It is imperative, therefore, to understand how targeted social protection programmes impact on orphaned and vulnerable children.

**The study**

A recent study investigated the role of social protection in children's schooling outcomes in Kenya, namely: enrolment, attendance, and grade attainment. A survey covering a sample of 968 households was conducted between October and December 2011 in two provinces in Kenya. The sample comprised of four groups representing beneficiaries of the orphans and vulnerable children's cash transfer programme (OVCT), beneficiaries of the old persons' cash transfer programme (OPCT), and the respective controls. The survey was supplemented by focus group discussions (FGDs) and expert opinion interviews.

---

\* This policy brief is based on Kabubo-Mariara J. and Kiriti-Ng'ang'a T. (2013) The Impact of Social Protection on the Welfare of Vulnerable Communities in East Africa: A Case Study from Kenya. Project report presented to IDRC, Nairobi, 2013.

## **Findings**

- (i) Cash transfers played an important role in children's school enrolment and attendance. Children from OVCT beneficiary households were more likely to be enrolled and less likely to be absent from school than their counterparts in the OVCT non-beneficiaries category. Similarly, the OPCT also had a significant effect on school attendance.
- (ii) Children from households benefiting from informal social protection were less likely to miss school than children from households that did not participate in informal social protection. Informal social protection was also associated with higher grade attainment by children, all other factors held constant.

## **Policy Recommendations**

- (i) It is important to enhance as well as broaden the coverage of cash transfers if social protection is to play a significant role in schooling outcomes of orphans and vulnerable children.
- (ii) Appropriate graduation and exit strategies for OVCT beneficiaries should be carefully designed to ensure that social assistance does not lead to dependency. Currently, no formal mechanism has been designed to integrate OVCs into programmes that will ensure sustainability as they approach 18 years. The government should consider designing early mechanisms of linking them to other interventions like youth employment programmes. This would allow such beneficiaries to be graduated gradually to create room for new beneficiaries.
- (iii) Measures should be put in place to ensure that children from vulnerable households receive the required education to reduce dependency on cash transfers and the risk of intergenerational transmission of poverty.
- (iv) Informal social protection empowers households to improve child schooling outcomes. It is therefore important to sensitize households on the importance of participation in informal social protection activities and mobilize them into formation of social groups and networks.