



Gender Assessment of selected social protection and child protection interventions and systems in Kenya

Final report

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REPUBLIC OF KENYA

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AND SOCIAL PROTECTION
STATE DEPARTMENT FOR
SOCIAL PROTECTION



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This report has benefitted significantly from a validation workshop on the 15th and 16th August 2024 in Nairobi, with the active participation of many stakeholders from the Government of Kenya, county Governments of Garissa and Turkana, and development partners. This final version incorporates comments and suggestions made during this workshop. It has also benefitted significantly from engagement from several stakeholders around the KSEIP II launch, with comments collated and systematised by Lauren Whitehead, UNICEF Social Protection and Gender lead.

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The study team interviewed and obtained assistance from many informants in Nairobi, Garissa, and Turkana from communities, the Government of Kenya, the County Governments of Garissa and Turkana, the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the ILO, the FCDO, Sida, the Government of the Netherlands and UNICEF. All errors remain those of the authors'.

Executive summary

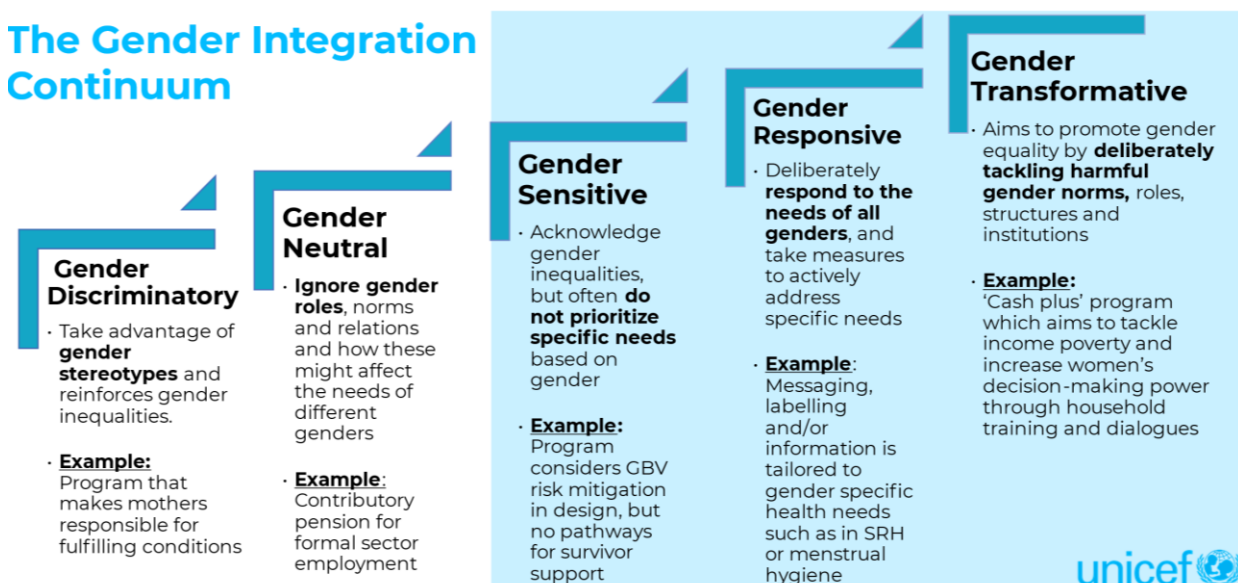
Purpose

This assignment's purpose is to conduct a gender assessment of selected social protection interventions and systems in Kenya, including the social protection and child protection workforce and case management systems, including two in depth case studies in Garissa and Turkana, (Terms of Reference, page 4).¹ As set out in the agreed inception report (page 1), the selected interventions are the cash transfers under the National Safety Net Programme: the Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CT-OVC), the Older Persons Cash Transfer (OPCT), the Persons with Severe Disability Cash Transfer (PwSD-CT), and the Hunger Safety Nets Programme (HSNP). We also study Nutritional Improvement through Cash and Health Education (NICHE). In Turkana and Garissa, the study maps social protection interventions in those counties more broadly, covering social assistance, social insurance, and labour and jobs, as well as the social services workforce. The study assesses gender in these interventions and child protection and social protection systems using UNICEF's gender-responsive age-sensitive social protection (GRASSP) framework that includes a Gender Integration Continuum (GIC) that runs from gender discriminatory to gender transformative. The study offers a range of recommendations designed to move both specific interventions and the wider systems towards greater gender-transformativeness.

Methodology

We use the GRASSP conceptual framework developed by UNICEF Innocenti to assess gender. Specifically, we use the GIC, 'a diagnostic tool to distinguish different degrees of integration of gender considerations across the social protection delivery cycle [which] helps assess the extent to which social protection systems and programmes are designed and delivered in a way that explicitly addresses gender inequality,' (UNICEF Innocenti 2020: 5).

Figure 1: Gender Integration Continuum (UNICEF)



¹ These case studies are written up in separate reports.

Following the GRASSP framework, we assess gender integration in these systems and interventions at five levels: i) gender inequality, poverty, and vulnerabilities in the population, ii) the legal and policy framework, including financing, iii) implementation and governance, including social services workforce, information and data systems, iv) the design of the NSNP (including eligibility, payment delivery, messaging, and linkages to other sectors) and the child protection system, and iv) gender outcomes and impacts.

The study's methodology involved a desk review of international literature and policy and programme documents and data, and collection of qualitative data from key informant interviews with officials, experts and community members through focus group discussions in Garissa and Turkana. Data from these sources were triangulated and analysed using the GRASSP framework and particularly the GIC. The primary data collection sample size was small and geographically limited, so we have interpreted these findings with caution.

Key stakeholders, including UNICEF and government officials, were consistently involved through meetings, feedback sessions, and collaborative reviews, including a validation workshop on the 15th and 16th August. The study team reported to a Government of Kenya-led Technical Working Group on gender who gave helpful comments on the inception report and an earlier version of this final report. During data collection, ethical considerations were paramount, with a focus on inclusivity, participant safety, and confidentiality. The methodology and approach followed the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines and those of UNICEF regarding research ethics and data protection. Ethical approval in Kenya was through the Daystar/NACOSTI.

Findings

Gender inequality, poverty and vulnerability

Gender equality for children has improved in Kenya in recent years. Kenya has a very young population, with 41.8% of the population projected to be under the age of 17 in 2024 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Just over 50% of the total and of children are female. Poverty rates do not vary significantly by gender in Kenya for children or adults, although female-headed households are more likely than male to be monetarily poor. Even if poverty rates are similar, poverty, geography and climate can intensify vulnerabilities faced by girls. Child health outcomes have been steadily improving. However, according to the WHO, Kenya still has one of the highest rates of maternal deaths globally. Child health and nutrition markers in the 2022 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) do not differ substantially between boys and girls. Education outcomes are reasonably equal across men and women and have been improving, although differences across regions remain. Enrolment rates in early childhood, primary, and secondary education have increased. Child protection outcomes overall are also reasonably equal between boys and girls, although a large number of Kenyan children are vulnerable and lack full protection from abuse.

However, girls – and especially adolescent girls – face specific child protection issues. For instance, child marriage and teenage pregnancy create specific problems for adolescent girls, of which there are 5.87m aged 10-19 in Kenya.² Child and teenage pregnancies are interlinked with child marriage, perpetuating a cycle of heightened vulnerability. Child neglect was also repeatedly flagged by respondents. Disability also increases vulnerability across the life cycle and along gender lines. Gender-based violence persists as a significant issue throughout the life cycle, particularly during adolescence and adulthood.

Moreover, in adulthood, recent surveys suggest persistent inequalities in relationships between men and women in Kenya, although progress is being made. For instance, according to the 2022 DHS, 55% of married women make decisions alone on how to use their own cash earnings, and 40% make decisions with their husband. In comparison, 50% make decisions about their own cash earnings with

² KNBS, UNICEF, UNFPA (2024), Situation of Adolescents in Kenya 2024.

their wives, while 43% make those decisions alone (DHS, 2022). However, 71% of women earn less than their husbands (Ibid). Meanwhile, 55% of women and 46% of men are married, with women marrying younger. Kenyan women on average spend 5 times longer on unpaid care than Kenyan men (KCHS, 2021). 21.6% of female youth (aged 14-24) are not in education, employment or training, in comparison to 15.1% of men of the same age group

Gender in social protection and child protection systems

Following GRASSP, we assess legal and policy frameworks including financing; implementation and governance arrangements (including the workforce and information systems), and programme design (targeting, payments, etc.).

Legal and policy frameworks

Overall, Kenya's social protection legal framework and child protection legal and policy frameworks are gender sensitive (i.e. they acknowledge gender inequalities but do not always prioritise gender needs), **and the social protection policy framework is gender-responsive** (i.e. it deliberately responds to the needs of men and women). Kenya has a comprehensive rights framework for social protection and child protection, grounded in the constitution and enacted in legislation, especially the Children's Act 2022. The 2024 Social Protection Bill is not yet passed. The recent adoption of the Kenya Social Protection Policy (2023) in theory constructs a gender-responsive and aspirationally transformative framework for social protection, with 'Gender equality and women's empowerment' a guiding principle, some discussion of women's unique vulnerabilities, although no programmes directly targeted to women. Child protection policy frameworks are generally gender-sensitive, acknowledging gender inequalities but not always prioritising them in intervention design. County level legal and policy frameworks, where they exist, mirror this national picture.

However, financing and budgeting for social protection and child protection is likely gender neutral (i.e. they ignore gender in design, perpetuating the status quo). Compared to peers, public investment in social protection and child protection is still low despite recent increases, and a high proportion of social protection allocations are for formal sector pensions rather than social assistance. Spending on social protection and child protection is also limited at county level. There is limited evidence on whether Kenyan public spending is overall gender-sensitive, but concerns that capacity for gender budgeting is very limited at central and county level. Kenya scored a D on the gender parts of the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) assessment in 2023.³ **Limited transparency** in Kenya's budget makes it difficult to ascertain the gender-responsiveness of child protection spending. The efficiency of Kenya's social protection and child protection spending is likely undermined by infrequent sector reviews and a scarcity of updated data, impeding necessary programme adjustments and the strategic allocation of resources. Further, at the local level officials interviewed for this study indicate further challenges related to limited operational budgets.

Governance and implementation

Implementation and governance arrangements are overall at best gender neutral. Child protection governance in Kenya is complex. While there are different attempts at coordinating governance, including initiatives such as the National Plan of Action for Children, this study has found that in practice coordination between child protection programmes and services is quite limited, specifically coordination with programmes and services specifically benefiting girls. On a horizontal level child protection programmes are integrated within a larger system of services directed at children, which can be found when assessing county programmes and initiatives. The division of responsibilities for social protection and child protection between counties and national government is not always clear.

Capacity to implement gender responsive social protection is curtailed by various factors, including a limited number of social workers and operational budgets and largely male local leadership. There

³ <https://www.pefa.org/node/5129>

is one Children's Officer for approximately 60,000 children across Kenya (though this ratio is worse in many counties, such as Turkana), meaning that workers are continually overstretched. The roles of Children's Officers and other social services workers are complex and delicate, not least on gender issues. However, the social services workforce receives very limited training to manage this complexity. Further, social workers' effectiveness is also constrained by limited operational budgets. While the study found no evidence on the implications of Children's Officers of different genders, male local leaders' centrality to social protection implementation was felt to present gendered challenges, for instance in targeting.

Kenya has developed guidelines and a policy to ensure the delivery of effective child protection case management, with some of these guidelines adopting a gender sensitive lens. The landmark National Care Reform Strategy for Children in Kenya 2022-2032 determines the role of the family and community in ensuring child protection, and seeks to reduce the number of children living on the street or in institutional care. However, the limited numbers of Children's Officers and their large workload and limited resources means that they usually struggle to implement these in a gender-sensitive way or indeed sometimes at all. On a county level, in addition to child protection volunteers the child protection system also draws on the support of community groups and networks, some of which aim to tackle gender-based vulnerabilities specifically, but these are not systematically supported.

The collection of gender-disaggregated data on social protection is simplistic and is not always regularly updated. Using data collected from Kenya's Social Protection Single Registry to improve the gender integration of social protection programmes remains a challenge. Evaluations of programmes tend to focus on generalised programme functioning, although some evaluations include specific sections on the impacts of programmes on women. Kenya has established strong tracking mechanisms and tools to monitor child protection service delivery. The Kenya Child Protection Data portal holds data on child protection cases disaggregated by gender and offers features which allow for users to look across geographies and service year. However, insufficient studies and assessments are being conducted on a county level to determine impact of case resolution. Impact assessment is limited, and those who are actively assessing impact and implementation do not always provide a gender analysis for non-gender specific studies. We did not find evidence of comprehensive gender audits in the child protection or social protection sector. Some work has been done on the challenges facing girls, such as the study on early marriage in Turkana, but these do not provide an overview of the whole sector (UNICEF, 2016).

Effective grievance mechanisms are an important part of service delivery, but it was noted that they can be difficult to access, or are designed in a way which does not take into account the different structural and individual vulnerabilities of women such as education, computer literacy, connectivity, and movement restrictions. Several respondents noted that they were unable to access grievance mechanisms and that many of those responsible for receiving grievances are men. Additionally, there is some evidence to suggest beneficiaries, especially less literate adult women, are not aware of grievance mechanisms.

Gender in the National Safety Net Programme design

Most elements of programme design for the NSNP social assistance cash transfers are gender neutral, although NICHE is largely gender-responsive. The objectives of the social assistance programmes are gender sensitive as their core principles include a focus on gender equality. However, social assistance programmes in Kenya tend to be neutral to some gender-specific vulnerabilities. Benefit design is overall gender neutral as, with the exception of NICHE, there is no effort made to direct funds to women or to provide benefits tailored to address gendered norms. The value of NSNP benefits is too low to fully address households' needs or to be transformative. A further challenge noted is the inconsistent provision of cash transfers. Gender neutral design may partly be explained by limited active involvement of women in the design. Eligibility is largely gender neutral with some gender sensitivity in the poverty criteria. It was noted by respondents that there has been very little effort to systematically target women in the design of social protection programmes, or to consider the benefits of prioritising women. Several respondents suggested that gender considerations would be better taken into account

by community-based targeting rather than poverty scorecards or proxy means tests. NICHE is the only cash transfer that targets women and encourages attending nutritional or positive parenting counselling, normally done by female caregivers.

The gender neutral payments delivery mechanisms of NSNP programmes can inadvertently create barriers that hinder women's access. Once women begin the registration and enrolment process, the time needed to complete registration and the travel considerations make registration particularly difficult. Despite significant development in the delivery mechanisms through the use of mobile banking, not accounting for gender barriers in banking access and connectivity has made it challenging for some women to access them. Some attempts, such as using MPesa or providing women with documentation to open a bank account, have been made to reduce the barriers preventing women from fully accessing social protection programmes, although progress is limited.

Messaging and links to complementary services, where they are made, are typically gender neutral. Messaging does not adopt a gender lens to ensure information is reached by female beneficiaries or to attempt to influence household dynamics around control of resources (which is a challenge across Kenya but especially in many counties). Links to complementary services are rare outside NICHE which includes men and women in baby friendly nutrition counselling, and do not address gender-specific needs. NICHE offers

Gender in the Child Protection system design

The child protection system design is gender neutral. Close coordination and collaboration at the county level can support developing alternative referral pathways to ensure a holistic approach to child protection, but this rarely happens, in part because information on services is not widely accessed, especially by women, despite projects such as the National Helpline 116 seek to bridge geographic challenges and provide information to support service uptake. As a consequence, potential service recipients do not understand the services offered and who its targets are, which often results in the lack of purposeful targeting of girls (who have gender-specific vulnerabilities) and limited service uptake by women. Access to services can often be impacted by other factors such as cultural norms that often imply adverse effects on girls.

Gender outcomes

The NSNP performs reasonably well in terms of equal access to benefits, with the unexplained exception of the PwSD-CT. Programme data from the Inua Jamii programmes (CT-OVC, OPCT, and PwSD-CT) suggests that as of 2023, 54% of indirect Inua Jamii beneficiaries were women. However, coverage of poverty is low and exclusion errors are unknown. Women represent 66% of the direct beneficiaries of Inua Jamii: CT-OVC women are 83%, OPCT 61%, and PwSD-CT 44%.⁴ However, respondents noted that even when the registered beneficiary is the woman, it is not always clear who actually receives the benefits, and even when women receive benefits, it is not clear who controls them.

There is limited evidence that the NSNP addresses gender-specific needs (such as the vulnerabilities of adolescent girls to violence or early marriage), other than through reducing household poverty, which is an important and significant impact.

There is some evidence that the NSNP supports enhancing empowerment (separate from gender-specific needs in the GRASSP framework), including increased economic empowerment, respect, and decision-making for women, though this is context dependent. Some respondents noted that the NSNP can increase the respect given to women, especially female heads of households. These impacts are somewhat limited by the declining real transfer size and the absence of messaging to men about the important role of women in households.

⁴ Data from Inua Jamii, July 2024. HSNP data are pending.

The assessment of social protection programmes also shows that programmes are having positive impacts on other household outcomes such as health, education, and positive parenting particularly from a gendered lens. Respondents highlighted the NICHE programme as a programme able to achieve some of these goals, with examples of husbands and fathers being involved in nutrition counselling and parenting support.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, we propose recommendations to improve the gender responsiveness and eventual transformativeness of social protection and child protection systems and programmes in Kenya - to move, in other words, social protection and child protection systems and programmes up the gender integration continuum. We propose twelve 'big ticket' recommendations and a series of 'additional' recommendations, organised around the GRASSP framework. These recommendations have been validated in workshops with GoK officials and partners. These recommendations take account of the GRASSP framework's levers of change: political commitment, finance, capacity building, institutional norms, evidence generation, and social movements.

Big ticket: Social protection and child protection system reform options

We focus these recommendations on the most critical system reform elements: finalising the legal framework with the passage of the Social Protection Bill nationally and in counties; improving participation and coordination; significantly increasing the volume, efficiency and gender responsiveness of social protection and child protection spending nationally and in counties; increasing the number of social workers, especially Children's Officers but also community networks, trained and capacitated to respond to gender issues; improving the quality and availability of data and evidence on gender in the social protection and child protection systems, including gender audits, with a particular focus on adolescent girls; preserving the Linda Mama maternity benefit; and implementing recommendations on NSNP and child protection programme design. We propose which recommendations should come first over the next three years. We outline ways in which the GoK could go beyond these big ticket recommendations to achieve gender transformativeness in these different areas.

Social protection programme improvements

We recommend some specific changes to the NSNP design to improve gender-responsiveness. These recommendations are based on the findings that most elements of the current NSNP design are gender neutral, but only NICHE is gender-responsive. We propose specific recommendations to improve programme design (to review objectives against gendered needs and harm), to conduct a process review the NSNP, to strengthen the role and gender inclusion of Beneficiary Welfare Committees, to improve the inclusion of women's and girls' vulnerabilities in eligibility in the context of complex households, to ensure women are not excluded from payments system for lack of access to digital finance or identity, to learn from, build on and expand NICHE's success, improve messaging for people of all genders to ensure they know about their rights and responsibilities, including about intra-household dynamics, and to support access to complementary services, including women's access to economic and livelihoods services.

Child protection programme improvements

Child protection programme design is typically gender neutral, and we make a series of recommendations to help programmes respond to gender needs in an organised and structured way. These include: guidelines for community networks, updated outreach and case management practices to include gender awareness, assessing opportunities for collaboration between county governments, strengthening the county workforce's ability to recognise gendered vulnerabilities, and conducting community-level training on psychosocial support.

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Abbreviations

Abbrev.	Meaning
COP	Child Online Protection
CPIMIS	Child Protection Information Management System
CT-OVC	Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children
CSPS	Civil Service Pension Scheme
CwD	Children with Disabilities
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ESR	Enhanced Single Registry
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGE	General Government Expenditure
GOK	Government of Kenya
GRASSP	Gender-Responsive Age-Sensitive Social Protection
HSNP	Hunger Safety Net Programme
KII	Key Informant Interview
KSEIP	Kenya Social and Economic Inclusion Project
MIS	Management Information System
NACP	National Action Plan for Children
NCCS	National Council for Children's Services
NICHE	Nutrition Improvement through Cash and Health Education
NHIF	National Hospital Insurance Fund
NSNP	National Safety Net Programme

NSSF	National Social Security Fund
OPCT	Older Persons Cash Transfer Programme
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PwSD-CT	Persons with Severe Disabilities Cash Transfer

Definitions

Term	Definition
Social Protection (Government of Kenya, 2024)	A set of policies, programmes and interventions, and legislative measures aimed at cushioning persons in Kenya against poverty, vulnerability, exclusion, risks, contingencies, and shocks throughout their life cycle and promoting the realisation of economic and social rights.
Social Assistance (Government of Kenya, 2024)	Refers to a protective function, mainly covering non-contributory transfer programmes aimed at preventing the poor or those vulnerable to shocks from falling into deeper poverty situations.
Social Insurance (ILO, 2014)	Refers to mechanisms that pool risk, such as health insurance, contributory pensions, or unemployment insurance.
Social Health Protection (Government of Kenya, 2024)	Refers to interventions that protect citizens against health risks and burdens throughout their life cycle, insuring all citizens against health hazards and preventing unexpected out-of-pocket health expenditures that might threaten income security.
Labour and Jobs (UNICEF, 2020)	Refer to programmes supporting employment and livelihoods, such as job matching services, childcare services, or family-friendly workplaces.
The Social Service Workforce (KBNS, 2020)	Provides outreach, case management, and referral services to ensure that families are connected to relevant services.
Child Protection (The Children Act, 2022)	Is the prevention of, and response to, exploitation, abuse, neglect, harmful practices and violence against children.
Child Abuse (The Children Act, 2022)	Includes the infliction of physical harm by any person on a child, inducement of physical harm by any person on a child by acts intended to cause harm or negligent acts or omissions that cause harm, the failure by any person to protect a child from physical harm or to report a case of child abuse, and other acts or omissions that affect a child's healthy social and emotional development and functioning.
Life Cycle Approach (Government of Kenya, 2024)	An approach in social protection that considers the specific risks and needs that individuals face at different stages of life, from infancy through old age. This perspective acknowledges that vulnerabilities and needs change over time and should be addressed accordingly in social protection policies

Gender-Transformative (UNICEF, 2020)	Programmes or policies that not only address gender disparities but actively seek to transform harmful gender norms and power dynamics. These approaches aim to promote gender equality and empower women and girls by addressing the root causes of gender inequality.
Gender-Responsive (UNICEF, 2020)	Programmes and systems that are designed and implemented to address and mitigate the specific risks and inequalities faced by different genders. These systems aim to be transformative by challenging and changing harmful gender norms and roles.
Gender-Sensitive (UNICEF, 2020)	Recognition of gender differences and inequalities, and the implementation of measures to address these in order to achieve specific programmatic outcomes without necessarily transforming the underlying gender norms and inequalities.
Gender-Neutral (UNICEF, 2020)	Policies or practices that ignore gender differences and inequalities, often resulting in maintaining the status quo or failing to address specific gender-related needs.
Gender-Discriminatory (UNICEF, 2020)	Policies or practices that perpetuate gender inequalities by reinforcing stereotypical roles or by failing to address gender-specific needs and vulnerabilities.
Multidimensional Poverty (UNICEF, 2020)	Multidimensional poverty is defined based on an individual's deprivation in at least three out of seven specific dimensions. These dimensions include nutrition, education, economic activity, information, water, sanitation, and housing. (KNBS, 2020)

1 | Introduction

This assignment presents a gender assessment of selected social protection interventions and systems, including the social protection and child protection workforce and case management systems. Specifically, the assignment looks at cash transfer programmes under the NSNP: the Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CT-OVC), the Older Persons Cash Transfer (OPCT), the Persons with Severe Disability Cash Transfer (PwSD-CT), the Hunger Safety Nets Programme (HSNP), and the Nutritional Improvement through Cash and Health Education (NICHE) programme. Additionally, it presents a broader mapping of social protection interventions in Turkana and Garissa counties, encompassing areas such as social assistance, social insurance, labour and jobs, and the social services workforce. It uses the Gender-Responsive and Age-Sensitive Social Protection (GRASSP) framework developed by UNICEF Innocenti to categorise social protection systems and interventions from gender discriminatory to gender transformative. Based on these findings, the assignment makes recommendations to improve the gender-sensitivity, -responsiveness, and -transformativeness of child protection and social protection systems and interventions in Kenya.

The report is structured as follows: the rest of this introduction offers a brief overview of the Kenyan context, followed by an overview of the assessment's purpose and rationale. Section 2 then presents the assessment's scope, objectives and methodological approach. Section 3 presents findings, structured around key elements of the GRASSP framework. These elements are presented over five levels covering: i) gender inequality, poverty, and vulnerabilities in the population, ii) the legal and policy framework, including financing, iii) implementation and governance, including social services workforce, information and data systems, iv) the design of the NSNP (including eligibility, payment delivery, messaging, and linkages to other sectors), v) the design of the child protection system, and iv) gender outcomes and impacts. Section 4 presents conclusions and recommendations. The recommendations are designed to enhance the gender responsiveness and transformative impact of Kenya's social and child protection systems by focusing on Big Ticket system reforms, and social protection and child protection programme improvements, with short-term, medium-term, and long-term actions aimed at increasing gender equality and empowering women and girls.

1.1 Context

Kenya is starting a demographic transition. There are 52 million Kenyans, of whom nearly 22 million (41.8% of the population) are children aged 0-17 in 2024, according to projections by the National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS 2019). Females make up just over 50% both overall and amongst children. There are a projected 11.6m adolescents between 10 and 19 in 2024 (KNBS, UNICEF, and UNFPA 2024). Kenya's population is growing rapidly, but as fertility rates are falling, the number of children is not expected to grow significantly beyond current numbers. The increase in the number of working-age Kenyans and the percentage of the total population they make up means the dependency ratio will fall rapidly.

Kenya's economy has made significant progress in recent years, coinciding with the beginning of the demographic transition. Kenya's per capita GDP is amongst the highest in the East Africa region at USD 2,190, according to recent estimates (IMF, 2024). Other East African countries such as Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Uganda have a per capita GDP of USD 1,790, USD 998, and USD 1,790 respectively. Kenya is one of the highest GDP growth zones in Africa (ADB, 2023), and having a GDP growth rate of 4.8% (World Bank, 2022), Kenya's economy is thriving.

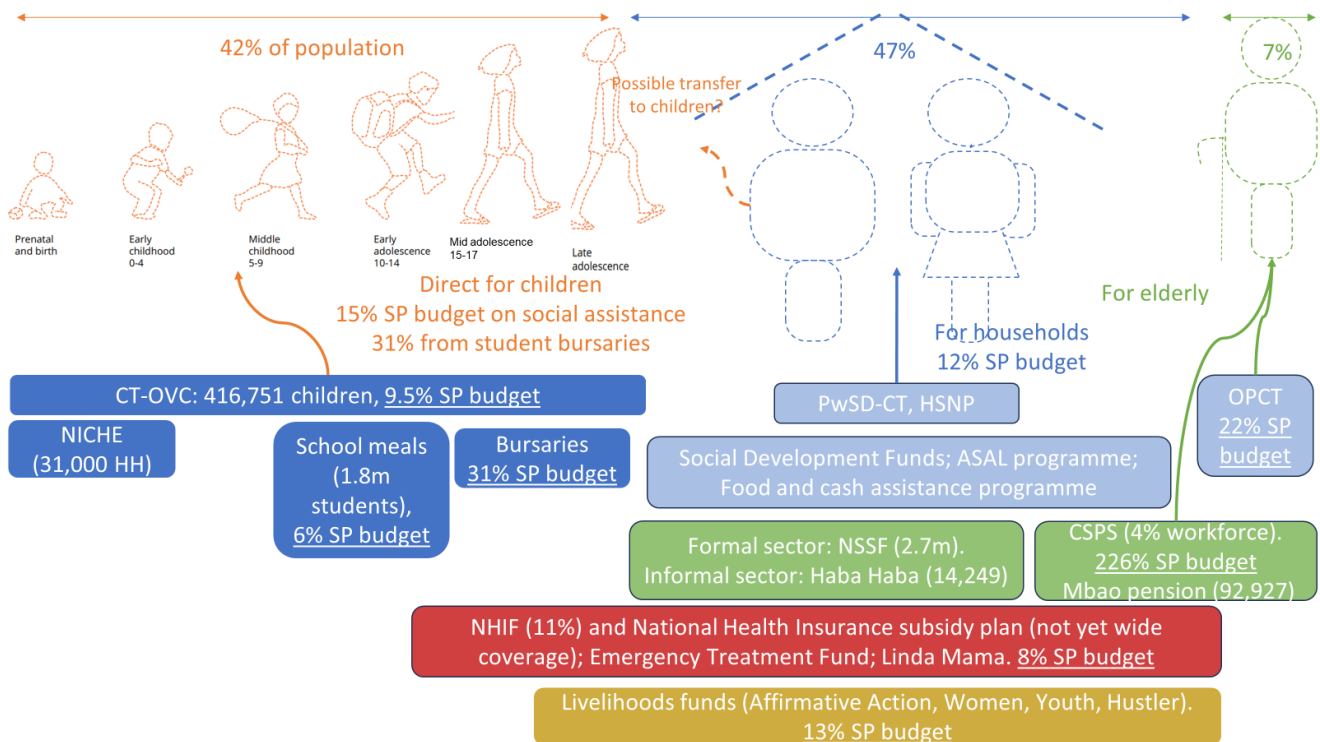
Poverty rates have declined in recent decades, in part as a result of GDP growth and investment in social protection, but they sharply increased during the Covid-19 pandemic, and currently hover around their 2015/16 levels (World Bank, 2023). A little over 9 million (41% of children) were estimated to be in monetary poverty in 2021, with nearly 7 million experiencing food poverty. 48% of children (11 million) were estimated to live in multi-dimensional poverty in 2019, down from 12 million in 2015/16, meaning they were deprived in at least three of nutrition, education, economic activity, information, water,

sanitation and housing. Factors associated with higher levels of poverty include geographical location, particularly in rural and arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs). Children are more likely to be multidimensionally poor if they have experienced shocks, are orphans, live in large households, or have household heads with lower education and employment status (KNBS, 2023).

Despite the Government of Kenya's (GOK) acknowledgement of the importance of gender equality and its place in development, and substantial improvements in gender parity for children, gender inequality remains a significant issue facing women in Kenya. (Ministry of Public Service and Gender, 2021). By 2022, most indicators of child health and nutrition, education, and protection demonstrated parity between boys and girls. However, adolescent girls continue to face specific vulnerabilities around early marriage, teenage pregnancy, sexual violence, progression to university, and FGM, and adult women typically do not participate equally in ownership, decision-making, and economic activity. The section on population needs below provides a more detailed overview of gender equality in Kenya, using the GRASSP framework of gender inequality, poverty, and vulnerability.

The Kenyan social protection system follows a lifecycle approach, offering income support to citizens during childhood, working age, and old age. This system is made up of social assistance programmes and contributory schemes. Social assistance is largely delivered through the four Inua Jamii cash transfer programmes: the cash transfer programme for orphans and vulnerable children (CT-OVC), the cash transfer for older persons aged 70 years and above (OPCT), the cash transfer for persons with severe disabilities (PwSD-CT), and the Hunger Safety Net Programme (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, n.d.). Social security schemes consist of a national pension, health insurance, and a social security fund for people with disabilities (Republic of Kenya, 2017). In 2021, the government in collaboration with development partners committed to the roll out of a Universal Child Benefit (UCB) pilot for children aged 0-36 months, which lasted 12 months (Republic of Kenya, 2021). An assessment of the UCB pilot shows improvements in health and nutritional outcomes as a result of the benefit transfer to the household, mainly through female caregivers (MLSP, 2024). The assessment credits the universality of the programme and the pairing and utilisation of already existing Inua Jamii structure with the success of the programme, offering a case for the expansion of benefits through an integrated approach. Additional programmes supported by development partners are also part of the landscape, most notably the Nutrition Improvements through Cash and Health Education (NICHE), a cash plus programme under the Inua Jamii ecosystem and supported by UNICEF with technical assistance (UNICEF, 2022).

Figure 1: Social protection programmes across the lifecycle in Kenya.



Kenya has made significant progress in building a larger, more effective social assistance system. Four cash transfer programmes fall under the umbrella of 'Inua Jamii', and coverage has expanded considerably (World Bank, 2021). The president's commitment to extend Inua Jamii to encompass 2.5 million recipients by 2026, and the Cabinet's directive to enrol 500,000 new recipients in the FY 2023/2024, demonstrate the government's dedication to social welfare. Registration for new beneficiaries began in September 2023 (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2023).

1.2 Purpose, rationale and objectives

Social protection programmes that address gender equality can significantly improve the lives of women and girls, with broader positive impacts on men, boys, and communities (Holmes, 2023). Designing social protection through a gender-transformative lens also helps to ensure that the root causes of gender equality are tackled, an important step towards eradicating poverty (Camilletti, 2020). Well-designed social protection programmes improve families' resilience to shock, protect women and girls from violence, increase access to services, and can improve women's economic empowerment, voice, and agency (Holmes, 2023). Most importantly, gender equality, a human right, is essential for creating peaceful societies, optimising human capital development, and boosting economic growth (United Nations, 2023).

Recent research by the GRASSP project found that social protection programmes which intentionally incorporate gender into their objectives from the design phase are more likely to achieve gender-responsive outcomes (UNICEF Innocenti, 2020). At a minimum, social protection systems should always strive to 'do no harm' but the goal should be gender transformation (UNICEF Innocenti, 2020). Without addressing the root causes of gender inequality, achieving goals of poverty reduction and addressing gendered risks and vulnerabilities is unlikely (UNICEF Innocenti, 2020). Social protection programmes should deliberately respond to gendered needs and work to transform harmful gender norms with long-term impacts (UNICEF Innocenti, 2020).

Gender assessments are a valuable tool for analysing the gender integration of current programmes and policies. The overall objective of a gender assessment is to strengthen gender outcomes through identifying inequalities and designing transformative legislation and policies (European Institute of Gender Equality, 2017). As well as assist in addressing imbalances between men and women, boys and girls and identifying inequalities within the many intersecting categories of social identity such as ethnicity, age, and social status (European Institute of Gender Equality, 2017).

This assignment's primary aim is to conduct a gender assessment of selected social protection interventions and systems in Kenya, primarily cash transfer and cash plus programmes under the NSNP, in addition to the social protection and child protection workforce and case management systems. We assess whether interventions and systems, at the very least, 'do no harm' but also analyse the extent to which they can address the root causes of gender inequality. The assignment also proposes actionable recommendations for improving the extent to which social protection programmes are gender-sensitive, -responsive or -transformative. We have also conducted two case studies in Turkana and Garissa to explore social protection and child protection programmes and their performance in terms of gender equality at a county level.

The specific objectives of the project are as follows:

1. Desk review and analysis on social protection gender integration in national social and child protection systems.
2. Carry out data collection and analysis on gender integration.
3. Propose recommendations for improving gender sensitivity and responsiveness.
4. Develop an implementation action plan, including a pilot for 3-4 counties.
5. Develop two case studies for Garissa and Turkana.

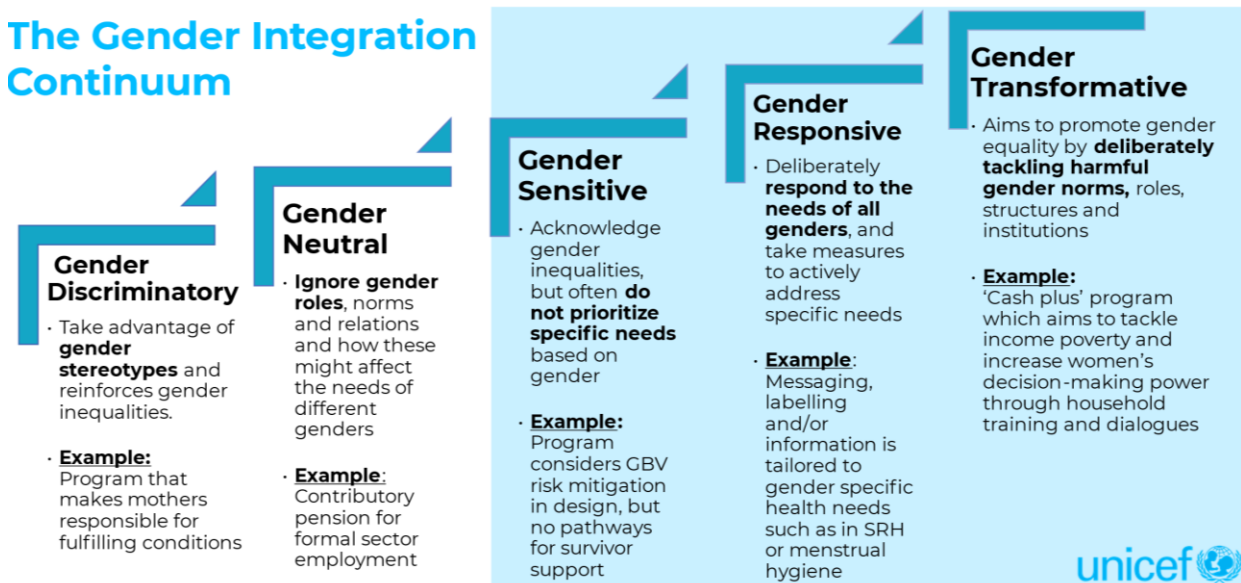
2 | Methodology

2.1 Approach

Several frameworks, toolkits, and guidance in gender integration or mainstreaming use some form of a gender integration continuum as a way of measuring a programme's or policy's commitment to gender equality and its contribution to gender equality outcomes. For this assessment, we will be using the Gender Integration Continuum developed under the Gender-Responsive Age-Sensitive Social Protection (GRASSP) research programme. The continuum offers a scale in which to assess the degree to which gender considerations are integrated into social protection policies and programmes, ranging from gender-discriminatory to gender-transformative approaches.

The assessment used principles from the GRASSP research project to guide the assignment and develop questions that would help establish where Kenya's social protection and child protection systems fall along the Gender Integration Continuum (UNICEF Innocenti, 2020). Designed by UNICEF Innocenti in 2020, GRASSP presents a gender integration continuum: At its lowest level, programmes may perpetuate gender inequality by reinforcing harmful norms (gender-discriminatory) or ignore gender differences altogether (gender-neutral), thereby maintaining the status quo. Moving up the continuum, programmes become gender-sensitive by acknowledging and adjusting to gender differences within their objectives. Gender-responsive programmes go further by actively addressing specific gender-based needs. At the highest level, gender-transformative programmes aim to fundamentally change the root causes of gender inequalities, challenging and altering harmful gender norms and practices to promote gender equality and empower women and girls.

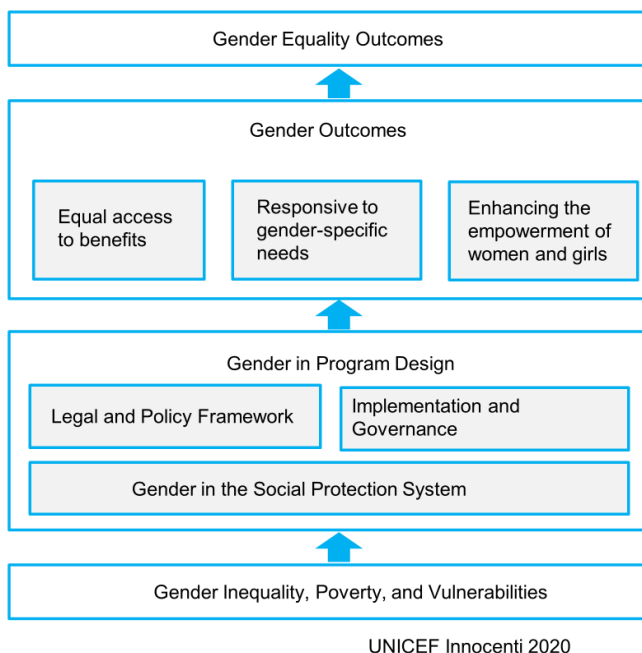
Figure 2: Gender Integration Continuum



Source (UNICEF Innocenti, 2020)

The GRASSP framework maps this continuum onto key elements of social protection: 1) Structural and individual drivers of gender inequality, poverty and vulnerability. These include unequal gender roles, unequal power relations, and exclusion from rights, entitlements and opportunities. We discussed some of this in the context section above. 2) Dimensions of a gender-responsive social protection system. This includes a gender-responsive legal and policy framework and financing, gender-responsive implementation and governance, including capacity to deliver (principally the social services workforce), M&E systems, data, management information systems, and grievance and redress mechanism, and gender responsive programme design, including (for social protection) benefits, eligibility, co-responsibilities, payments, messaging, and links to complementary services. 3) Gender responsive outcomes, including equal access to benefits, adequate response to gender specific needs, and enhancing empowerment of women and girls. 4) Gender equality outcome (economic security and empowerment, health, education, psychosocial well-being, protection and voice and agency) and impact (poverty, gender equality) areas. 5) Moderators such as intra-household dynamics and norms that affect every level of this framework. 6) Levers of change, such as political commitment, financing, capacity building, and so on. A summary of this framework is below:

Figure 3: GRASSP framework



Gender analysis must take into consideration underlying norms and outcomes and try to understand whether these were effectively considered in the design and implementation of social protection programmes and systems and child protection systems, including social workers and case management. In a varied context such as Kenya, this is not straightforward. For example, a cash transfer programme that transfers cash to women on the basis that they are more likely to spend on vulnerable members of the household including girls may be gender responsive (in seeking to achieve gender equal outcomes), but in some contexts, it may not be gender sensitive if women are then subjected to abuse because they receive the cash. In the analysis that follows, we attempt to explore these nuances as best as we can.

2.2 Data collection

To populate this framework, we used existing secondary data and collected new primary data.

Secondary data collection

The assessment involved reviewing international and Kenya-specific literature on gender in social protection and child protection. Relevant research collected in the desk review phase including secondary data, relevant published literature, policy documents, specific programme documents, and grey literature from Kenyan municipalities, counties, sub-counties and international sources. Throughout the data collection phase, we considered both the county case studies of Garissa and Turkana, as well as the broader context of Kenya.

Primary data collection

Secondary data was complemented with qualitative primary data collection methods including semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). KIIs were conducted with stakeholders from various government levels in Kenya and implementing partners. These stakeholders were jointly identified by UNICEF and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. The KII guide contained a section on consent, voluntary participation and project background/relevance which was administered prior to delving into the questions. KIIs were recorded where consent was granted based on anonymous participation.

Eight community FGDs were held in Garissa and Turkana County with participants sampled from the sub-counties. Diversity and inclusion were achieved through sampling men and women of different ages, people with disabilities, participants from different social protection programmes, and persons from vulnerable backgrounds. Each FGD had a total of 8-10 participants. Consent forms were administered to all participants detailing the introduction of the assessment, the significance of the project, and the invitation to voluntarily participate or decline participation. The mobilising and selection of the FGDs participants was facilitated through UNICEF and the National and county government for Garissa and Turkana using a pre-defined criteria. To enhance full participation given the sensitivity of the subject separate FGDs for men and women were held.

KIIs and FGDs were held in safe spaces that allow participants the freedom to talk openly. All tools were approved in advance by UNICEF and the technical working committee on gender (see below), and the data collection received ethical approval from NACOSTI.

2.3 Data analysis

Analysis was structured around the GRASSP analytical framework described above. We analysed qualitative and quantitative data using a mixed methods approach. We used a specialised AI software to implement loose inductive thematic analysis, identifying recurring patterns and ideas, and pulling out key messages. Quantitative data was housed in a database which included coverage data from the selected programmes disaggregated by gender when possible.

2.4 Stakeholder participation and engagement

We engaged with key stakeholders at all stages of the assessment in the following ways.

- Regular meetings with UNICEF and key government stakeholders through a Technical Working Group (TWG) to approve the inception report (including scope, approach, and data collection including tools), provide updates on the project and inform the design of the study/ deliverables. Members of this TWG also provided helpful comments on a first draft of this final report.
- All deliverables were sent to key stakeholders for review and we have enacted the feedback to ensure we are all aligned.
- Mapping of key stakeholders for data collection to ensure we spoke to the most relevant people. This includes key government ministries, specifically the Ministry of Labour and Social protection, as well as county governments in Garissa and Turkana.
- KIIs and FGDs with relevant stakeholders. We undertook interviews with national and local governments, and development partners. We also did FGDs in two counties.
- Result triangulation and socialisation. We have shared the first draft of the report, as well as conducted three rounds of review of the Turkana and Garissa case study documents. Amendments to the second draft of the report were enacted based on feedback form UNICEF, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and other stakeholders. A validation workshop was hosted on the 15th and 16th of August, where the study team shared with the Government of Kenya-led TWG. Comments and discussions from the validation session were collected to inform the final report and accompanying documents.

2.5 Ethical considerations

Throughout this study ethical principles were adhered to, with a focus on maintaining inclusiveness, respecting diversity, and ensuring participant safety and confidentiality. We adhered to the principle of the 'best interests of the child' ensuring that the welfare and best interests of the participants were the primary consideration in our methodology and design. Throughout, we upheld the obligations outlined in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines 2020, including independence, impartiality, credibility, the avoidance of conflicts of interest, honesty and integrity, and accountability. The approach proposed also adhered to other international standards, including for assessments and

reviews, such as the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluations, Data Collection and Analysis (2015), the UNICEF Policy on Personal Data Protection (2020), and the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluations (2016).

As this project involved primary data collection of human subjects, gaining ethical approval was paramount. We used the Daystar/NACOSTI fast track route to receive ethical approval as quickly as possible. Throughout the implementation of this project, our team ensured a continual ethical oversight including the monitoring of data quality, informed consent procedures, and participant interactions. At the end of our project, we will follow the guidelines on the dissemination of results with research participants and other stakeholders in a manner that upholds principles of inclusiveness and confidentiality.

2.6 Constraints and limitations

The scope of the assignment is extremely broad. Social protection and child protection are both in themselves complex and diverse sectors, and attempting to analyse them both in a single assignment with limited resources limits the depth of research and analysis that is possible. During inception, the research team proposed limiting analysis to a single social protection programme (the CT-OVC) but the TWG preferred to retain breadth rather than depth. The assignment also covers all age groups, rather than focusing on a key demographic such as adolescent girls. Subsequent work could certainly provide greater depth by focusing on a single sector and age group.

Certain limitations and constraints posed challenges to the project, primarily in relation to the primary data collection. Despite using the fast-track route, the ethical clearance still took some time, and this delayed data collection. A further constraint was ensuring that all key informant interviews could be contacted and conducted in a timely manner. There were some logistical challenges for primary data collection in Turkana and Garissa which we were able to work around, and which reinforced the remote nature of these counties, especially Turkana. There were some stakeholders that we were not given contact details for (Gender Mainstreaming Directorate Rep, Socio-Economic Empowerment Directorate, Anti GBV and Family Protection Directorate, National Government Affirmative Action Fund) and we would recommend that these stakeholders are engaged with at a later date. For other stakeholders, due to busy schedules some cancelled repeatedly.

Finally, the selection of Turkana and Garissa as case studies was not based on their representativeness for Kenya as a whole in other culture, vulnerability, or government capability. The county findings across the GRASSP framework therefore likely represent situations that are not typical of Kenya, but of counties with relatively high rates of multi-dimensional and monetary poverty in the northeast.

3 | Findings

The following section outlines key findings on the gender integration of social protection and child protection in Kenya, based on the GRASSP framework. The section begins with a discussion of gender inequality, poverty and vulnerability in the Kenyan population, followed by an exploration of the systems, including the legal and policy framework and financing, implementation and governance, and programme design. We then explore gender responsive outcomes and gender equality outcome areas.

3.1 Gender inequality, poverty and vulnerability

Gender equality outcomes have significantly improved in Kenya in recent years, especially for children. In recent surveys (the 2022 DHS, the 2021 KCHS, the 2021 Uwezo learning assessment, and the 2019 Census), outcomes for child poverty, health, nutrition, education, and protection are if anything better for Kenyan girls than boys, although there are some specific exceptions. Better educated mothers are associated with better outcomes for all children, but members of female-headed households are more likely to be deprived. Into adolescence and adulthood, however, Kenyan girls and women face specific vulnerabilities (such as FGM, early marriage, pregnancy, and sexual and intimate partner violence) and disempowerment (including exclusion from tertiary education, decision-making, ownership, and economic activity).

Kenya has a very young population, with 41.8% of the projected 2024 population under the age of 17 (KNBS 2019). Around 50% of this population is female with a slight male majority below 17 and a slight female majority overall. Currently in the second stage of demographic transition, the country has a significant opportunity to leverage its growing youth demographic for substantial economic growth (Nduati, 2017). The youth of the population also means that disparities affecting adolescents and children are particularly significant.

Poverty

Poverty rates do not vary significantly by gender in Kenya. According to the 2023 Kenya Poverty Report, 38.6% of Kenya's population live below the overall poverty line, as do 40.3% of all children under 18 (The National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Around 50% of adults and children were multidimensionally poor in 2019 (although this figure comes from before the pandemic). Men and women are roughly equally likely to be poor on both measures. Kenyan girls are now less likely than boys to be multidimensionally poor, but Kenyan women (aged 18 and upwards) are more likely than men to be multidimensionally poor, according to the 2024 Inequality Report. However, female-headed households (33% of all households) are more likely to be poor than male-headed households, with monetary poverty rates of 38.8% and 32.7% respectively (The National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Poverty and deprivation rates are higher in arid regions. For instance, only 65% of households in the arid regions have access to improved water sources, compared to 80% of non-arid areas (Ibid).

Even if poverty rates are similar, poverty, geography and climate can intensify vulnerabilities faced by girls. The effect of climate change, specifically extreme weather cases such as droughts and floods in the ASAL region, significantly contribute to an increase in child protection cases. Respondents from the government and communities from both Turkana and Garissa, believe that climate-based crises exacerbate poverty by posing increased risks to livelihoods and health. This belief is supported by the literature in Kenya which highlights the increasing impact on children's health, education, and opportunities (UNICEF, 2017). For example, child marriage reportedly increases due to financial constraints faced by families during drought. Droughts also contribute to increased cases of sexual violence for girls as they are forced to walk longer distances to collect water and firewood (Oxfam, 2017). Such crises can lead to the displacement of families and children into urban areas and living on the streets. An assessment of programmes in Turkana County reveals significant efforts by the department of Public Service, Administration and Disaster Management in designing programmes to address

specific gender disparities in its climate mitigation; with focus given to increase the gender responsive nature of diverse programming aspects such as communication, training, targeting and specialised programmes (County Government of Turkana, 2023).

Health

Child health outcomes have been steadily improving. Under-five mortality rates fell from 102 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990, to 41 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2022 (KDHS, 2022). According to the KDHS 2022, 80% of children aged 12-23 months have been vaccinated with basic antigens (BCG, Polio, DPT, and measles) (Ibid). However, health outcomes differ significantly across the country, in Garissa as few as 23% of children have been vaccinated (Ibid). Children living in northern, or pastoralist counties are more likely to die of preventable diseases. While maternal health outcomes had shown improvement, with maternal deaths per 100,000 live births decreasing from 564 in 2000 to 455 in 2015 (Census, 2019), recent years have witnessed a rise, with numbers now up to 530 (Ibid).

However, according to the WHO, Kenya still has one of the highest rates of maternal deaths globally (WHO, 2023). There are many reasons for this, but difficulty accessing health care facilities, and high costs are significant factors (UNOPS, 2021). Women living in rural areas sometimes need to travel far to reach healthcare facilities, while delayed funding from the national government to hospitals can mean that women must pay out of pocket for treatment (Nuna, 2023). COVID-19 exacerbated some of these problems, as some healthcare facilities closed, and others have struggled to recover from the strain on their resources (Hanne, 2020). Maternal mortality rates have been dropping but remain a concern, at 355 per 100,000 live births in 2022 (KDHS, 2022). Access to healthcare also differs, with women in urban areas more likely to receive care from qualified professionals (Yuen, 2022).

Child health and nutrition markers in the 2022 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) do not differ substantially between boys and girls, with some health markers showing slightly adverse outcomes for adolescent girls, including vaccination rates (boys have marginally higher rates of being fully vaccinated), those suffering from respiratory illness, fever, and diarrhoea, treatments offered to ill children, stunting, underweight, wasting, exclusive breastfeeding, and minimally acceptable diets. A slightly higher proportion of girls (80%) than boys (76%) aged 24-59 months are considered developmentally on track. Like health outcomes, nutritional outcomes have been improving over time, although they could improve further especially for adolescent girls which tend to show a higher prevalence of nutrition-related issues such as anaemia (National Council for Population and Development et al, 2024). In 2022, 18% of children under 5 were stunted (40% in 1993), 10% were underweight, and 5% wasted. 31% of 6-23 month olds had a minimally acceptable diet. Mothers with higher levels of education are associated with better child health and nutrition outcomes. In adolescence and adulthood, more females are obese and overweight and fewer females are thin, in comparison with males. Adolescent girls also suffer from a higher prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (National Council for Population and Development et al, 2024). Education

Education outcomes are reasonably equal across men and women and have been improving, although differences across regions remain. According to the 2022 DHS, 91% of women and 94% of men were literate. In the Uwezo 2021 survey, 43% of grade 4 girls and 38% of boys could read a grade 3 appropriate text, and 50%/49% could solve a grade 3 numeracy problem. However, literacy rates vary significantly across different counties. In some counties such as Nyamira, 99% of women are literate, but these figures drop to as low as 34.9% and 36% in Wajir and Turkana respectively (KNBS, 2022).

Enrolment rates in early childhood, primary, and secondary education have increased. The gross enrolment rate for girls in primary education was 96.24% in 2022, an increase from 92.97% in 2019 (UNESCO, 2023). Girls of all ages between 3 and 17 in Kenya are less likely to be deprived of education than boys, with the exception of girls aged 14-17 in urban areas and in some specific counties. Gender parity for primary and secondary gross enrolment is around 1, but is 0.8 at tertiary. According to Uwezo 2021, boys aged 4-16 are slightly more likely to be out of school than girls. However, adolescent girls face specific challenges with education if they marry or become pregnant. Nationally, 31.1% of girls have been

pregnant by the age of 19 (KDHS, 2022). This figure rises to as high as 50.1% in Samburu county, emphasising the challenges facing many girls as they try to access an education (Ibid). Gender disparities in education widen during adolescence, with challenges including inadequate sanitation facilities and menstrual protection, resulting in higher dropout rates among girls at puberty (UNICEF, 2017). Regional differences are notable, with only 5 out of 10 children aged 6-13 in arid areas enrolled in primary school, compared to 8 out of 10 nationwide (The World Bank, 2023). In secondary school, girls tend to have higher attendance compared to boys, boys are also more likely to drop out of school or have a lower transition from primary to secondary school in comparison to girls (National Council for Population and Development et al, 2024)

Child protection

A significant proportion of Kenyan children are vulnerable and lack comprehensive child protection. On a child protection index comprised of child labour, child marriage, and teenage pregnancy, 7.8% of girls aged 6-13 were deprived in 2019 (compared to 35% in 2009). In comparison, 8.5% of boys and 14.4% of girls aged 14-17 were deprived (Kenya Inequality and Well-being report, 2024). According to the 2019 Violence Against Children survey, 46% of girls and 56% of boys experience childhood violence. This intimates that, while girls continue to experience more violence than boys, numbers of child violence across Kenya are a significant concern.

Girls face specific child protection issues. The prevalence of female genital mutilation has declined from 38% in 1998 to 15% in 2022 (KDHS, 2022). 30% of these were circumcised aged 5-9, and 45% aged 10-14, usually by a traditional agent. However, rates differ significantly among different groups of women, 56.3% of women with no education have been circumcised, compared to 5.9% with tertiary education (Ibid). Regional disparities exist, with the Northeastern region, including Garissa County, reporting higher rates, reaching up to 96% or more. Education plays a significant role in this type of violence, as girls with no education are much more likely to undergo FGM compared to those who have attended primary or secondary school (UNFPA, 2017). However, progress is being made, for instance the number of women experiencing female genital mutilation (FGM) declined from 38% in 1998 to 15% in 2022 (KNBS, 2022).

Child marriage and teenage pregnancy create specific problems for girls. 25% of girls are married before the age of 18 (KDHS 2022). In some counties, such as Turkana, girls are considered an important part of a family's wealth (UNICEF, 2016). Once a girl is married, her husband will be required to pay her family a bride price (Ibid). To access these funds, the girls are married young and are sometimes considered to be assets, rather than children (Ibid). Data illustrates that girls married before the age of 18 have, on average, a 10+ year age gap with their spouses. This can have an impact on power dynamics, putting girls in a disadvantaged position. Teenage pregnancy, girls who become pregnant between the ages of 15 and 19, is also a problem across the country. There are 835,000 teenage mothers in Kenya. In some counties, such as Samburu, up to 50% of women have been pregnant between the ages of 15 and 19 (KDHS, 2022). Child marriage and teenage pregnancy severely impacts girls' education, limiting their adult earnings and autonomy, especially in abusive homes (UNICEF, 2017; UNICEF, 2023). They can also impact health and nutritional outcomes, women who have married or had children young are less likely to take their children to healthcare appointments and sometimes adopt a poor nutritional lifestyle. By contrast, boys are more likely to drop out of school for child labour, affecting future income and increasing the probability of substance abuse and related domestic violence (UNICEF, 2017; Nation, 2021). In some counties such as Samburu, moranism increases the number of boys who drop out of school, or who do not enrol at all, and can also increase rates of female genital mutilation (FGM).

'The other concern that is not even properly documented is cases of child marriage. In some communities it is accepted that at ten years, you can be ready for marriage, for instance. And so, you get frustrated. You go to the village; you find little girls of five years. They wear the beads that are a sign that this girl is not going to school. This girl is being prepared for child marriage.'

Child Protection Specialist, Development Partner

Child and teenage pregnancies are interlinked with child marriage, perpetuating a cycle of heightened vulnerability. Research on child marriage outcomes in Kenya reveal that more than 60% of girls married before 18 also gave birth before reaching 18 (UNICEF, 2023). Teenage pregnancies have also been found to lead to early marriage, further contributing to this cycle. Here gender disparities are glaring. A baseline study conducted in 2016 of more than thousand respondents between the age of 15 and 24 in varying countries has found that while 13% of girls left school due to teenage pregnancy, less than 1% of boys left school after becoming young fathers (Gitau et al., 2016). One respondent reports that child pregnancies are underreported and sometimes girls give birth at home, exposing them to further risks.

'If you go to the hospitals, at neonatal clinics, you'll find those who come in. In terms of the ages, it's just a tip of the iceberg. Many of them don't go to hospital when they are pregnant'.

" ... we have a teenage child, a teenage mother who is 13 years old. What do they know about caregiving?"

Child Protection Specialist, Development Partner

Child neglect was also repeatedly flagged by respondents. Child protection needs are often connected to the overall poverty and vulnerability of the family. 45,000 Kenyan children live in institutional care (Directorate of Children Services, 2023). Cases of neglect (for example in Garissa) typically indicate that children are being neglected because of family circumstances. Reported cases of child neglect are rising, in 2022 Kajiado county noted that 90% of cases reported to Children's Services were cases of child neglect (Janet, 2022). Child pregnancies are also associated with child abandonment, usually left to the care of the grandmother or other women in the household, many who are already taking care of their own children. Here respondents refer to the interlinked realities of women and girls across generations, where cycles of abuse reinforce the welfare of the children and their mothers.

Disability also increases vulnerability across the life cycle and along gender lines. In one instance respondents report that children with disabilities suffer from abuses such as being chained, or neglected, Girls with disabilities further suffer from inequities in access to services and child outcomes are evident, as illustrated by the underrepresentation of girls under five and children with disabilities in existing social protection schemes (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, 2017). Children with severe disabilities are often abandoned by other members of the family and left to the care of the mother who is then unable to seek livelihood to support the child. The 2022 Disability Needs Assessment also illustrated that significantly more boys with disabilities are in education than girls, 10.6% of boys had attained middle level or university education, compared to just 2.4% of girls (UNICEF, 2022). Men with disabilities are working in Kenya more than women. The needs assessment found that 70.1% of men are in employment, compared to just 29.9% of women (Ibid). Moreover, less women had access to primary health care than men. 37.3% of women stated that healthcare was very accessible, compared to 46.9% of men (Ibid).

'You find women who've been abandoned because they have children with disabilities, severely disabled, someone who needs 24 hours care, you just can't leave them if you want to go look for work. So, you're kind of held hostage. So, there's a lot of psychological stress.'

Representative - National Hospital Insurance Fund

In 2022, a needs assessment of the lives of people with disabilities in Kenya found that 69.1% of carers are women, meaning that they shoulder a significant amount of unpaid care (UNICEF, 2023). 97.4% of primary caregivers said that they had not recently been engaged in economic activity often due to the burden of caregiving. (UNICEF, 2023).

Gender based violence

Gender-based violence persists as a significant issue throughout the life cycle, particularly during adolescence and adulthood. According to Kenya's Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) in 2022, an estimated 34% of women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15, and 13% of women have experienced sexual violence at some point in their life (KNBS, 2023). 41% of women who have ever had a husband, or an intimate partner have experienced intimate-partner violence. Sexual violence in childhood is also a challenge. The 2019 Violence Against Children Survey found that 15.6% of girls had experienced any type of sexual violence in childhood, compared to 6.4% of boys (UNICEF, 2019). Research has increasingly highlighted the long-term consequences of gender-based violence including the health burdens, intergenerational effects, and demographic consequences illustrating the importance of prioritising this issue (KNBS, 2023).

A higher proportion of women aged 15-49 (34%) than men (27%) have experienced gender-based violence since the age of 15, according to the 2022 DHS. 13% of women and 7% of men have experienced sexual violence. Women are more likely to report experiencing intimate partner violence than men (41% of ever married women have experienced intimate partner violence, and 36% of men), but men are more likely to report experiencing controlling behaviours (28% men and 20% women).

Gender norms, roles, and practices

Recent surveys suggest persistent inequalities in relationships between men and women in Kenya. Both the 2022 DHS and the 2021 Kenya Continuous Household Survey (KCHS) provide evidence of gender disparity in empowerment and activity. According to the DHS, 55% of married women make decisions alone on how to use their cash earnings, and 40% make decisions with their husband. 66% of married women usually make decisions either alone or with their husband on their own healthcare, major household purchases, and visits to family. 34% of married women make their own informed decisions about sex. 43% of women and 35% of men believe a husband is justified in beating his wife. 5% of women own a house alone and 28% own jointly, compared with 35% and 9% of men. 78% of women own a mobile phone (43% own a smartphone) and 79% had and used a bank account or a phone for financial transactions in the previous 12 months. Men are more likely than women to access the internet.

According to the 2022 DHS, 55% of women and 46% of men are married, and women marry younger: the median age of first marriage for women aged 25-49 is 21 years, but 26 years for men. Women are typically having fewer children (3.4 in 2022) than in the past (3.9 in 2014) and having their first child later (20.7 years in 2022 and 18.6 years in 1998), but 15% of adolescent girls (aged 15-19) have been pregnant. Women report wanting a fertility rate of 2.9.

The roots of gender inequalities and harmful practices require deeper and more context-specific investigation than is possible in this study, but are important to explore in developing gender-responsive programming and messaging.

Economic empowerment and time use

Kenyan women on average spend less time working and more time on unpaid care than Kenyan men. According to the 2021 KCHS time use survey, in both rural and urban areas, Kenyan men spent 1.5x as much time in each 24 hour period (nearly 6 hours) as women (3 hours 20 minutes) on paid employment and production, and women spent nearly 5x as much time (nearly five hours) as men (one hour) on unpaid domestic work. Men spent slightly more time (16 hours) than women (15 hours) on learning and personal and social 'non-productive' activities (socialising, self-care, and culture). Almost all women did some unpaid domestic work, but only 43% of men, while 80% of men and 69% of women engage in 'productive' activities. Women are less likely to be employed than men: the 2021 KCHS finds 56% female employment and 69% male.

21.6% of female youth (aged 14-24) are not in education, employment or training, in comparison to 15.1% of men of the same age group (KNBS, 2021). Labour force participation is higher for men than women, 64.3% to 62.6% respectively. However, in rural areas, this is reversed, 68.2% of women are in the labour force compared to 63.9% for men across all ages (KNBS, 2022). Statistics are also dependent on the highest education level attained, whereas the highest labour participation is amongst women who never attended school (83.1%) and women with post graduate education (89.3%) in comparison to women who have attended secondary school for example at 59.85 (Ibid). These figures are consistent with the labour market structure in Kenya, where more than 50% of women work in elementary occupations, and services and sales work (UN Women, 2023). Elementary occupations include jobs involving simple and routine work and hand-held tools and physical effort, for women this is primarily in agriculture, education and employment in household activities (UN Women, 2023). While women's stake in sectors such as manufacturing and information and communication has increased, men still outnumber women in industrial occupations and trade work (UN Women, 2023; MPSg, 2020). Disparities between men and women also include a 31.3% gap in monthly wages, with women working fewer hours than men in paid employment because of various factors such as women's unpaid care work responsibilities and discriminatory practices in the labour market (UN Women, 2023).

3.2 Gender in social protection and child protection systems

The second element of GRASSP is gender in the social protection system. This is divided into three dimensions: i) are there gender-responsive legal and policy frameworks including financing, ii) are there gender-responsive implementation and governance arrangements (including the workforce and information systems), and iii) is there gender-responsive programme design (targeting, payments, etc.)? The GRASSP framework broadly situates the legal and policy frameworks and implementation and governance arrangements as common to social protection and child protection, while the programme design is specific to social assistance and social care services. We will follow this way of thinking about social protection and child protection in Kenya. The next section sets out the legal and policy frameworks for social protection and child protection. After this, we explore implementation and governance arrangements for social protection and child protection. Finally, we look at programme design, first for social protection (principally the NSNP) and then child protection.

Overall, Kenya's child protection legal and policy frameworks are gender sensitive (i.e. they acknowledge gender inequalities but do not always prioritise gender needs). While the legal framework of social protection can be considered gender sensitive, the social protection policy framework can be ranked as gender-responsive (i.e. it deliberately responds to the needs of all genders). Unfortunately for both social and child protection these rankings are not matched by the necessary financing, with financing and budgeting for social protection and child protection can be considered gender neutral (i.e. they ignore gender in design, perpetuating the status quo). Similarly, **implementation and governance arrangements are at best gender-neutral** Most elements of **programme design for the NSNP social assistance cash transfers are gender neutral or (in the case of NICHE) gender responsive.**

3.2.1 Legal and policy frameworks

This section assesses the legal and policy frameworks in Kenya for social protection, child protection and gender equality. The section begins by presenting the national and international legal framework for rights and commitments for gender equality within social protection and child protection. It then explores the policy and financing of social protection and child protection in Kenya, through a gender lens. Broadly, these legal and policy frameworks are gender-sensitive with the social protection policy framework is gender-responsive. When a legal and policy framework exists at county level, these findings are also mirrored.

Legal framework

Kenya has a comprehensive and gender-sensitive legal framework for social protection and child protection, grounded in the constitution. Article 43(3) of the constitution mandates that 'the State shall provide appropriate social security to persons who are unable to support themselves and their dependents' (Constitution of Kenya 2010). The constitution pledges to address the needs of women and children, recognised as vulnerable groups in society. Article 27 (3) also emphasises that men and women have the right to equal treatment, including equal opportunities in the political, economic, cultural and social spheres (Ibid). The 2010 Constitution reinforces this commitment by referring to gender equality and women's empowerment. That same year saw the establishment of the National Gender and Equality Commission, tasked specifically with promoting gender equality and non-discrimination. While the document does not specifically outline the importance of gender equality within the social protection system, it does advocate for the inclusion of both men and women across all levels of the public service (Ibid).

Constitutional protections for children are also explicit. The constitution states that children have the right to basic education, nutrition, healthcare, shelter, protection from abuse, neglect, harmful practices, violence, parental care and child protection (Ibid). However, there is no distinction between the needs and challenges facing boys and girls. Kenya is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The country has ratified international agreements such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,

Legislation provides specific enactment of several constitutional rights. The Children's Act of 2022 provides legal protections for Kenyan children. It outlines extensive provisions for social security, social protection, and child welfare in a comprehensive legal framework. It guarantees every child in need of care, whose parents or guardians are unable to support them, access to social security, which includes alternative care options like kinship care, guardianship, kafalah and foster care. The Act also mandates protection for children from abuse, neglect, and exploitation and stipulates the state's duty to provide supportive services for child welfare. The act also addresses issues of gender and gender-based discrimination thoroughly stipulating protections for girls from FGM, virginity testing, girl child beading and child marriage, and, for boys, forced circumcision, adopting a gender sensitive approach in section 23. The Protection Against Domestic Violence Act of 2015, which provides relief to female victims of GBV. The Social Assistance Act (2013) established a National Social Assistance Authority to identify and provide social assistance to people in need. Very little mention was made of gender in the Social Assistance Act, although the law did define that the National Social Assistance Authority must be made up of both men and women (Republic of Kenya, 2013). The draft Social Protection Bill (2024) - not yet passed – introduces measures to safeguard the integrity and effectiveness of social protection programmes, emphasising a rights-based approach and universal coverage. The bill explicitly refers to gender-responsive social protection as one of its key guiding principles (Republic of Kenya, 2024).

County legislation on social protection and child protection is emerging as a subject of discussion, but the non-passage of the national Social Protection bill has curtailed counties passing their own social protection legislation.

Policy frameworks

The recent adoption of the Kenya Social Protection Policy (2023) constructs a gender-responsive framework for social protection. The policy sets several strategic objectives which include expanding social protection coverage to secure income throughout different stages of life, facilitating access to social health protection, improving the system's response to shocks, enhancing citizen well-being, and boosting institutional capacity for effective social protection delivery. In terms of implementation, the policy underscores the importance of robust institutional structures at both national and county levels to ensure efficient delivery of social protection services. It proposes enhanced coordination across all levels of government and with development partners to streamline efforts and maximise impact. The policy also establishes a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure accountability and foster synergies across different social protection initiatives. Financing strategies include diversifying and expanding funding sources to improve coverage and the adequacy of benefits, with a suggestion to explore the establishment of a Consolidated Social Protection Fund and other innovative financing mechanisms. Additionally, the policy recognizes ongoing challenges and the need for legal and institutional reforms to close existing gaps and better integrate social protection efforts across various government functions and partnerships.

The 2023 policy emphasises gender equality and integrates measures to address the needs and challenges of women and girls using a gender-responsive approach. It acknowledges their vulnerability and the importance of their inclusion in policy design to ensure beneficial outcomes. The policy uses social protection as a strategic tool to prevent gender-based violence and enhance women's economic status through programmes supporting entrepreneurship and employment. Additionally, it underscores the significance of improving access to education and health services for women and girls, and advocates for strengthening legal frameworks to protect their rights within social protection systems. Many of the themes discussed in the policy are confirmed and discussed in the findings below.

While some respondents noted explicit gender discussions in forming the policy, others felt these discussions weren't sufficiently reflected in the final text. Concerns were raised about needs assessments lacking gender disaggregation, especially across various regions. Other than references to public hearings and community consultation sessions, the process of designing the Social Protection Policy is unclear, so it is difficult to ascertain to what extent gender was a consideration.

Child protection policy frameworks are generally gender-sensitive. In 2022, the government published the landmark National Care Reform Strategy for Children in Kenya 2022-2032 (MoLSP, 2022). The document acknowledges gender-specific practices such as FGM and child marriage in the analysis of drivers of institutionalisation. This strategy affirms the role of the family and community and seeks to reduce the number of Kenya's children currently living in orphanages and institutional care settings (currently 45,000). This reform to the childcare system is grounded in the need to support family-strengthening initiatives, this includes social protection programmes such as cash transfers and other child protection prevention and response programmes, and includes some objectives to increase services for vulnerable groups including those that are affected by gender based violence (GBV). However, the strategy does not have a comprehensive approach to gender disaggregated data, or tailored messages or interventions to different genders, or great detail on gender-specific needs.

Policies that address issues which face girls have also been developed. In 2020, the GoK also released the National Prevention and Response Plan on Violence against Children in Kenya 2019-2023 (MoLSP, 2020). This plan recognised the high prevalence of violence against children (VaC) and the need to address it with multi-sectoral actions. The plan set out a number of strategic focus areas, including one on family support (including economic strengthening), as well as response and support. These recent initiatives, therefore, directly address the need for a unified and holistic approach to the social protection and child protection sectors. The National Policy for the Prevention and Response to GBV in 2014 outlines strategic actions against gender-based violence (GBV). However, it doesn't have significant detail on gender specific interventions, or a consistent focus on gender throughout (for instance when looking at child marriage). Annex 1 of this report details some key policy reforms and actions taken by the GoK in

the five primary areas of child protection - care reform, violence against children, child protection workforce strengthening, justice for children, and civil registration.

Several policies also refer specifically to gender in economic development. Starting with the Sessional Paper No. 2 of 2006, the government asserted its dedication to economic revitalization inclusive of gender equality concerns. Efforts continued with the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan of the State Department of Gender Affairs, offering a strategic approach to gender integration in national development and socio-economic spheres. The National Policy on Gender and Development of 2019 further refined these efforts by providing a clear roadmap for equal gender participation across all sectors. The Ministry of Public Service and Gender also has a 2020-2025 Strategy on Achieving Sustainable Development Goal No.5 on Gender Equality and Empowerment of all Women and Girls which prioritises realising the rights and potential for women and girls across Kenya (Ministry of Public Service and Gender, 2021). The Kenyan policy landscape also includes the Fourth Medium Term Plan 2023-2027 (2024), which emphasises the improvement and expansion of social protection systems to cover more vulnerable populations, including women and girls, as well as the integration of social protection with other programmes such as economic empowerment, stressing a holistic approach to poverty reduction and enhanced security of vulnerable populations. The plan also gives considerable attention to issues facing women and girls specifically through addressing the need to close gender gaps in education and health and implement measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence.

County social protection and child protection policies and plans are also relevant, but typically – where we assessed them in Garissa and Turkana, where they are bound up with other issues – do not differ substantially in their gender sensitivity from national policies.

Financing

Overall, evidence suggests that financing and budgeting for social protection and child protection is likely gender neutral, and does not match the gender-responsiveness and sensitivity of the legal and policy frameworks. While this research does not delve deeply into this area, as it would require a dedicated study, the collected data was able to identify general challenges and barriers related to financing in service delivery, as well as the integration of gender into the financing of social protection and child protection systems. Allocations for social protection, child protection and gender-specific programmes are limited relative to peers, and there is limited evidence of gender-sensitive budgeting or capacity to do this. Furthermore, current budget allocations show a high proportion of social protection spending allocated for formal sector pensions rather than social assistance. This is particularly significant for Kenya's large informal sector which is not typically enrolled in pension plans despite some efforts to extend coverage by the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) such as Haba Haba (World Bank, 2024). Finally, respondents report inefficiently low operational budgets and weak links between policy and budgets.

Compared to other countries, government investment in social protection is low. In 2021/22 Kenya spent 1.23% of the government budget and 0.4% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on social protection, an increase on previous years, but less than the 5% recommended by ILO for low-middle income countries and below the expenditure level of comparable countries (ILO, 2021). Child protection received 0.26% of the government budget in 2021/2022. The percentage of share of the state department for social protection and state department for Gender has also been steadily decreasing from 1.99% in 2019/2020 to 1.7% in 2023/2024. According to a study done in collaboration with UNICEF on social protection expenditure, the State Department of Social Protection which oversees three key programmes: Social Development & Children Services, National Social Safety Net, and Policy, Planning and General Administrative Services. The bulk of the Department's expenditure from 2017/18 to 2021/22 is attributed to the NSNP, which accounts for 88% of total spending, while Children Services, constitutes 11%, and Policy Planning and General Administrative Services, which makes up just 1% of the total expenditure. Within NSNP spending the OPCT programme accounts for the bulk of spending at 70% in comparison to CT-OVC at 27%, and PwSD-CT significantly lower at 3% (Houghton, 2024).

Spending on social protection and child protection is also limited at county level. Budgets for Turkana and Garissa county indicated that objectives are not translated into financial commitments for child protection programmes (County Government of Turkana, 2023' County Government of Garissa, 2023). In Turkana and Garissa where a majority of the budget is from the national government 92.5% and 80% respectively, budget allocations for social protection are low (County Government of Turkana, 2023' County Government of Garissa, 2023). In Turkana, the Ministry of Education, Sport, and Social Protection accounts for 12.67% of the total budget, a bulk of which is allocated for Early Childhood Development and Education (55.8%) in comparison to Social Protection allocations at 6.7% (County Government of Turkana). Specific child protection budget lines are not available in county budgets.

Available evidence suggests limited Kenyan public spending specifically on gender. One study found that a small proportion of Kenya's budget is allocated specifically to gender equality: 0.3% from 2018/2019 to 2020/2021 based on calculations of Kenya's SDG commitments (Mauti, 2024). In Garissa the Department for Gender, Social Services, Culture, Youth, and Sports, received less than 1% a smaller fraction of the overall budget, less than 1% in for the 2023-2024 (County Government of Garissa, 2023). Across the region, Uganda and Rwanda have had more success embedding gender-responsive budgeting approaches.⁵

Kenya's public financial management practices are not gender responsive. Kenya's gender score in the Public Expenditure Financial Accountability (PEFA) assessment in 2023 was D, which indicates 'poor performance'.⁶ According to the PEFA assessment, the PFM process can be termed "gender irresponsible", budget documentation is not gender responsive (although programme based budgets offer an opportunity to mainstream gender into budgets), and legislative scrutiny of budgets and audit reports is not gender sensitive (because budget documentation has no gender perspective).

There is limited evidence on whether Kenyan public spending is overall gender-sensitive, but concerns that capacity for gender budgeting is very limited at central and county level. Respondents note that the technical authority for budgeting lies with the treasury which despite having a gender department, still lacks capacity in gender mainstreaming. Furthermore, the Ministry of Public Service, Gender and Affirmative Action, mandated to coordinate gender mainstreaming in national development planning (Ministry of Public Service, Gender, and Affirmative Action, nd), lacks the authority and resources to support this role. According to respondents, despite the push for gender mainstreaming in the budgeting process, the uptake has been slow and often misunderstood. Programme budget designs reportedly lack specific financial considerations to address the needs of women, such as budget allocations to improve security in the service uptake process. Respondents point to factors hindering gender mainstreaming, including misconceptions about its benefits, fear of its costs, and lack of technical know-how.

"Unfortunately, the gender discourse in Kenya has been narrowed down to a state department of gender, which unfortunately, I dare say is one of the weakest departments in this country that has no muscle to move their agenda on pushing gender equality through spending forward. Now, who is this institution that has the power to move gender equality through spending? It's treasury. Is the Treasury fully on top of gender equality? Discourse is nearly non-existent".

Social Policy and Economics Specialist

⁵ <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/display/book/9798400246968/CH016.xml#:~:text=for%20governments%20worldwide,-Gender%20budgeting%20not%20only%20signals%20a%20government's%20commitment%20to%20advancing,highlights%20areas%20for%20advancing%20practices.>

⁶ <https://www.pefa.org/node/5129>

“We need to move beyond just looking at the criteria and ticking boxes, but also having some information or knowledge to assess vulnerability, then from there you are able to give more targeted support, or you're able to front a case [for increased investment] based on technical know-how. I would say if we are able to have better programme implementation, we will definitely have better gender mainstreaming and we will definitely target those that need the help most”

Gender Specialist - Development Partner

Limited transparency in budgeting processes makes it difficult to ascertain the gender-responsiveness of child protection spending. Respondents report that often budgets for items related to child protection are designed by government officers who have limited experience with child protection implementation and are thus unable to accurately predict needs. Government staff also struggle to translate child protection services into the budget language required by the treasury, illustrating challenges in both directions. This claim should be further assessed given the stated role of the National Council for Children's Services (NCCS) in policy formulation and programme design. The budget making process is also hindered by competing interests within and across departments, this is fuelled by confusion and lack of clarity in the division of the child protection mandate and roles mentioned above. Furthermore, at the county level officers report feeling that child protection is not prioritised, and that attention to child protection suffers from an assumption that child protection cases are ‘dealt with’.

At the local level officials interviewed for this study indicate further challenges related to limited operational budgets. Here respondents mention the challenges faced when carrying out validation operations for beneficiaries, and community engagement across the different programmes in the implementation and assessment stage. In some instances, respondents reported that due to these challenges some officers are forced to use personal funds to carry out their work. County officers also noted that welfare community networks and volunteers lack resources to implement their work and would benefit from operational budgets.

“I'm using my salary to do my work.”

Sub-County Officer

Further, the efficiency of Kenya's social protection and child protection spending is likely undermined by infrequent sector reviews and a scarcity of updated data, impeding necessary programme adjustments and the strategic allocation of resources. According to respondents, critical gaps exist in the planning, budgeting, and public finance systems, where a disconnect between data, policy, and budget allocation fails to address the needs of the poorest, including women, girls, children, and individuals with disabilities. Moreover, respondents report that a lack of transparency remains a challenge. This is supported by research which confirms that gaps in information on social protection programmes in national government budget documents hinders the assessment of financing of the sector, and spending performance (Houghton, 2024).

“I would very strongly say the missing link is basically the planning, budgeting and public finance systems. So, at the end of the day, we all know that the government has no other mechanism of delivering any programme or any development other than the budget process. Now, the budget process starts with evidence. Then that evidence is transformed into what is this evidence telling us about how we need to get the economy to grow and get the majority of the population out of poverty? Now, that is where the missing link is”.

Social Policy and Economics Specialist

3.2.2 Governance and Implementation

This section covers implementation and governance arrangements for social protection and child protection. Following the GRASSP framework, this includes discussions on: system governance, capacity to deliver through the social services workforce, M&E, data, management information systems, and grievance and redress mechanisms. **Overall, implementation and governance arrangements are at best gender neutral.**

Governance

Governance for social protection is gender neutral. Governance arrangements for social protection were amended according to Executive Order No. 1 of 2023 to the State Department for Social Protection and Senior Citizen Affairs, under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. This department includes several directorates: the Directorate of Children's Services, which should ensure the protection and welfare of children in accordance with the Constitution and the Children Act, 2022; the Directorate of Social Assistance, which manages cash transfers to older persons, persons with disabilities, and vulnerable children; and the Directorate of Social Development, focused on empowering vulnerable groups for improved livelihoods. Additionally, the National Social Protection Secretariat coordinates social protection programmes. The department's stated commitments include empowering communities and ensuring that vulnerable groups enjoy equal rights and opportunities as part of Kenya's national development strategy (MLSP, n.d). The suggested Social Protection Bill (2024) also proposes to enhance the governance structure of social protection through establishing the National Board for Social Protection, which would be responsible for providing strategic direction and oversight for the implementation of social protection interventions. Respondents note that in the midst of governance changes often implementing bodies especially at the county level are not sensitised adequately where they are able to understand their role; this was made in reference specifically to understanding the counties' role in social protection and gender mainstreaming at the county level.

At county level, the interactions between staff from the national departments and from county ministries around social protection is typically coordinated informally, but not in a way that substantially adds to gender sensitivity. Some respondents noted that there can be some uncertainty about relative responsibilities. County ministries of social protection tend to combine many different functions that can, in the view of some respondents, make it difficult to focus on gender responsive delivery.

Child protection governance in Kenya is complex. Kenya has a diverse tapestry of child protection initiatives, policies, strategies and programmes across different bodies covering different areas of service provision such as service registries, school specific programmes, helplines, and more, however programmes do not have specific measures to target girls or account for gender-based vulnerabilities. The diverse and rich nature of the sector, while promising, is yet to translate into the administrative and bureaucratic bodies of the state, especially at the county level. Lack of understanding of lines of responsibility between the national and county level has been a frequently expressed frustration by county officials. Some respondents report that the delineation between national and county programmes is vague and ambiguous. While others feel frustrated that county child protection programmes and initiatives are not being captured or tracked closely. Here respondents can be understood to be referring to programmes such as the extensive Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) programmes, and other programmes specifically targeting girls such as support for pregnant adolescent mothers and GBV centres. This also refers to a lack of clarity around what constitutes child protection, which wouldn't normally include ECEC however which was raised by respondents in this capacity.

Child protection falls primarily under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection under the Directorate of Children's Services (DCS) and National Council of Children Services (NCCS). The DCS is supported by initiatives in the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice, by development partners and NGOs (Directorate of Children's Services, 2023). As described in the section on Social Protection, the DCS is anchored in the Children Act of 2022 and safeguards the rights and welfare of children through

establishment, provision, promotion, coordination and supervision of services and facilities designed to advance protection and the wellbeing of children and their families. The Directorate has eight regional, forty-seven (47) County and Three hundred and twenty (320) Sub County offices countrywide that provide essential services to children. Child protection volunteers also support child protection in villages. The DCS provides a range of services and programmes, described in the mapping of child protection programmes section. While the DCS provides leadership for the implementation of the child protection framework, the National Council for Children's Services (NCCS) serves as a coordinating agent on all matters relating to children. In addition to advising on and developing policies for child protection, and collaborating with various agencies to ensure the welfare and rights of children are upheld, the NCCS also works on formulating and monitoring the implementation of programmes related to children's welfare, including family empowerment and social security, while regulating and supporting child welfare initiatives and adoptions both domestically and internationally (NCCS, 2024).

'It is still disaggregated in very different departments. And therefore, what we are doing right now, as a conversation, [across] the country is trying [...] clarify the issues of child protection and then we can be able to assign government at different levels.'

Council of Governors Representative, National

The structure of the case management system of child protection in Kenya follows a multi-tiered approach, emphasising the importance of policy formulation, coordination, resource mobilisation, and awareness at various administrative and community levels. The following table illustrates the functions of the different tiers of child protection case management.

Table 1: Child Protection Across Various Levels

Level	Role and Responsibilities
National	<p>The national council of children services focuses on policy formulation, coordination, and advocacy for child rights, while establishing and supervising County Children Advisory Committees (CCACs).</p> <p>The Directorate of Children Services ensures the protection and welfare of children by creating, providing, promoting, coordinating, and overseeing services and facilities that enhance the safety and wellbeing of children and their families.</p>
County Level	<p>County Children Advisory Committees: Their main role is to advise the County Governments on the implementation of children's services and programmes. They focus on ensuring that the rights and welfare of children are respected and upheld across all county jurisdictions. This includes monitoring the delivery of children's services, advising on budget allocations for children's services, and ensuring compliance with national standards.</p> <p>Sub County Children Advisory Committees: Tasks include the coordination of services aimed at protecting children, advocating for child-friendly policies and practices within the sub-county, and ensuring that children's rights are prioritised in local governance and community activities.</p>

Location al Level	Community Based Organizations, Community Health Volunteers, Child Protection Volunteers, and Faith-Based Organisations: These entities engage in extensive mapping of service providers, lead and coordinate service delivery, mobilise resources, and raise awareness about child protection.
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Despite initiatives such as the National Plan of Action for Children, this study has found that coordination between child protection programmes and services is quite limited, specifically coordination with programmes and services specifically benefiting girls. Respondents on the county level expressed the need for child protection programmes and initiatives to be designed under a larger child protection system which is able to leverage the resources and workforce already working with children in other areas such as health promoters, and community volunteers. Coordination by the state department of Gender Affairs in the Ministry of Gender, Culture, the Arts and Heritage is critical in ensuring that services across different sectors support improving the welfare of girls. Moreover, individualised and tailored nature of services was also stressed through upscaling coordination, not only during the implementation of programmes, but the design phase as well. Here, it is not explicit on how these individualised services can be designed for girls specifically.

‘Basically I wish we would transit into a comprehensive welfare system that is able to do correctly targeting the people, tracking their progress, and being able, therefore, to intervene differently for different people, to be able to ensure that everybody in society, everybody within the community, the attention is given when it is due.’

Representative- Council of Governors

On a horizontal level child protection programmes can be integrated within a larger system of services directed at children, which can be found when assessing county programmes and initiatives. While counties do not usually have a distinct child protection programme, they do have programmes which have a child protection embedded objective, mainly focusing on addressing childhood vulnerabilities and programmes across other sectors such as health and education. These programmes aim to complete child services necessary for affecting gender equality indicators for girls. According to a government official, the Early Childhood Education (ECE) programme in many counties is an example of a programme which seeks to address root causes of childhood vulnerabilities. Under the council of governors’ specific attention has been given to ECE, where the county governments plan to employ approximately 50 thousand ECE teachers. An assessment conducted by UNICEF Innocenti (2022) on the potential of ECEC programmes to be gender-transformative has found that in order for ECEC programmes to be responsive they must be designed with gender-integrated quality markers in all areas from curriculum development to linkages with non-education programmes within the system. The same research also highlights the role ECEC can have on integrating women caregivers into the workforce, and by extension promoting improved development outcomes for the households and the women (UNICEF Innocenti, 2022). ECEC centres can also be sites for the provision of other services, such as parenting programmes covering child protection issues. For example, ECEC sites could host awareness courses on child protection issues that specifically impact girls and could teach caregivers positive practices to ensure a safe environment for children. These sessions could also act as a point for teachers to detect child protection issues in the home. In Turkana, some primary schools provide protection for girls who have escaped child marriages, with teachers acting as a crucial confidant for young girls.

Health and social protection services also have opportunities to integrate child protection. Specialised services within health facilities could be provided for gender-based violence survivors,

particularly psychosocial support and counselling. Social protection programmes such as cash transfers aimed at households with vulnerable children can also be considered an example of such programmes. Targets for these programmes however do not always contain specific objectives for girls. Another key challenge in this programme is linking child protection programmes not only in the design but in the assessment of impact to create further buy-in for child welfare and child protection programmes, and ensuring they are gender integrated.

Capacity and the social services workforce

Implementation arrangements for social protection in Kenya are at best gender-neutral. Gender-sensitivity and responsiveness is limited by several factors, notably the insufficient and overburdened social services workforce, which often lacks the capacity to address gender-specific needs effectively. The lack of adequate training and resources for social workers means that service delivery often remains gender neutral. Additionally, the male-dominated leadership in community-level decision-making further exacerbates the challenge, as it can lead to the exclusion of women and girls from critical social protection programmes.

In Kenya, the social service workforce is supposed to help people meet their social, economic, educational, and health needs, but limited numbers affect their ability to do this. Children's Officers, overseen by the Directorate of Children's Services, are a central part of this workforce. However, according to a recent study by UNICEF, there are only about 400 Children's Officers deployed in the field, equating to a ratio of 1:60,000 children's officers to children under 17 (UNICEF, 2024). This is at the lower end of numbers of social workers per child in Eastern and Southern Africa. This ratio was estimated by workshop participants as 1:180,000 in Turkana. In addition to this, there are around 500 Child Protection Volunteers. Several respondents stated that there is too much work for social workers/children's officers to do, especially given their low numbers. The gender of the formal social services workforce was not discussed by respondents (although the gender of local leaders was - see below).

The roles of Children's Officers and other social services workers are complex and delicate. As we outlined above, there are several gender-specific needs (such as vulnerability to FGM or teenage pregnancy) and some stipulations in law and policy for girls. Children's officers work with children at risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation, as well as those separated from their families or orphaned. They also support the implementation of social assistance programmes for children such as the CT-OVC (Ibid). Officers under the Directorate of Social Development also provide a case management role through supporting the mobilisation and empowerment of individuals, family and people with disabilities, among other vulnerable groups. Social development officers are typically responsible for overseeing the implementation of social protection policies and programmes. Their tasks include managing the delivery of benefits, ensuring compliance with regulations, and addressing the needs of vulnerable populations. They often act as case managers, coordinating support and connecting beneficiaries with necessary services, which may include health care, education, and employment support. Workshop participants felt that children's officers are often asked to carry out almost all tasks.

However, the social services workforce receives very limited training to manage this complexity. The Kenyan National Association of Social Workers is a body for all social professionals that seeks to promote the development of social work standards, strengthen the social welfare workforce in Kenya, and promote research and capacity building (Africa Social Work and Development Network, n.d.). It also works closely with professionals in the field of education and healthcare in an attempt to provide well-rounded service provision (International Federation of Social Workers, n.d.). However, social work is not a regulated profession in Kenya, and it is not clear that all social workers are adequately prepared to deal with complex vulnerabilities. Many respondents felt that the social service workforce in Kenya has not been properly set-up and therefore struggles to function. There is a 10-day training course at the Kenya School of Government for the professional workforce working in the child protection sector. This course was developed by UNICEF to provide standardised training for the child protection workforce. There have

been some trainings which have covered around 25% of children officers. However, funding remains a challenge as the government has not yet budgeted for these training sessions.

Social workers' effectiveness is also constrained by limited operational budgets. Respondents raised that it can be challenging for social workers to travel around counties, in part due to the size of certain counties, but also due to available infrastructure and safety. This is especially true when trying to reach very rural areas. When asked about the challenges facing county officers, constantly respondents report that lack of resources to implement their duties, as well as to support community structures designed to assist in their work such as social welfare committees was limited. Research also suggested a disconnect between the national government and the county governments. Those working in social protection at the county level mentioned that they don't know the national government very well. It is unclear whether these challenges with the social service workforce are more significant for women and girls, and this is an area that warrants further research.

Male local leaders' centrality to service delivery presents gendered challenges. For example, enrolment and registration processes for social assistance programmes are largely done in correspondence with community-based targeting, and proxy-means testing (Development Pathways, 2017). Respondents noted that community-based targeting involves talking to the village leaders to decide who would be the most eligible for social protection programmes. Often, the leadership in villages remains very male dominated. This can mean it is challenging to ensure that women are prioritised, or actively engaged in the programme as users are targeted through a leadership who may disagree with giving financial aid directly to women. This is partly caused and exacerbated by security challenges meaning that women feel unsafe and sometimes are to raise issues with male Chiefs.

'Most of the chiefs and assistant chiefs are male are men. Majority.'

Department of Children's Services

Kenya has developed guidelines and policy to ensure the delivery of effective child protection case management, with some of these guidelines adopting a gender sensitive lens. Guidelines and tools in place include the Guidelines for Child Protection Cases Management and Referral by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (2018) which lists respect for gendered diversity as one of its main pillars, in addition to the National Guidelines on Management of Sexual Violence in Kenya which provides tools for investigation, reporting and service delivery tailored for girls and boys (Ministry of Health, 2014).

Despite the formalisation of a national framework for child protection, the limited social services workforce is a critical barrier to their operationalization. Kenya's child protection workforce has benefited from training and experience across different counties, but lack of funding to employ an adequate number of the child protection work force and operations budget are a barrier to the implementation of services. Respondents note that there is limited know-how in the area of gender integration which suggests a gap in training on gender sensitivity in service delivery among other training gaps. Moreover, research on social protection in the east Africa region has found that key challenges in case management within the context of social protection include high caseloads, limited resources, and the need for ongoing training and support for case managers. These challenges can impact the quality and timeliness of service delivery to beneficiaries (OECD, 2017; World Bank, 2021).

Social workers (children's officers) are expected to 'upload data, write court reports, attend meetings and more.'

Garissa County Children Services County Co-ordinator

Recent administrative changes at the level of counties means that many counties and sub-counties are yet to be staffed with the required child protection personnel. The Violence Against Children and Youth Survey 2019 by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (DCS, 2023) as well as an assessment of the Ministry's assessment of the 2013-2017 strategic plan both cite the challenges of lack of new workforce employment on the ministry's functional capacity (MoLSD,2022) this is confirmed by respondents who say that in some counties there is as low as one child protection officer. Respondents also note that ministerial changes where the ministry of social protection and child protection is now separated from gender has resulted in the loss of gender experts in the ministry. This coupled with limited-service delivery capacity can have adverse effects overall, and on girls specifically who require more outreach in case management.

'You might talk of even one officer in an entire county. So, it's a very big issue, the workforce.'

World Bank Specialist

According to respondents the limited number of staff has resulted in an overwhelmed and overworked workforce, affecting quality of service, where child protection officers are often unable to complete the case management cycle or deal with the different issues associated with each case.

'We have very enthusiastic child protection officers that have been moved across the country...So the capacity is not the issue. I would say the issue is mostly resource based in terms of both human and finances ...That way we'll avoid the situation of touch and go sort of implementation where we do a little bit of this, a little bit of that, and then a little bit of the other.'

Development partner expert

On a county level, in addition to child protection volunteers the child protection system also benefits from the support of community groups and networks, some of which aim to tackle gender-based vulnerabilities specifically. Community child protection groups often make up the second line of defence for child protection officers through supporting cases. For example, children's officers also support legal cases and criminal abuse cases. Other officers that also can be counted to deliver support for the target population include child health and community outreach health officers, as well as support in identifying vulnerable households through intimate knowledge of nutritional indicators, or school attendance. Furthermore, networks such as the Gender and Child Protection Network in Turkana offer a useful avenue for the issues of child protection to be addressed from a gender lens. While the county integrated development plan does not specify areas of intervention by the network, the overall goal is to facilitate a protective environment for children. While these networks can contribute to resource gaps, the majority of these bodies consist of predominantly men which respondents note often results in a lack of gender sensitivity and the exclusion of the needs of women and girls. Membership into the Gender and Child Protection Network is drawn from various agencies, suggesting that they delegate male staff to join the network.

'They can tell you, oh, that household, you should not have even gone to this one. There is one that is more vulnerable than this one. Then they also do monitoring on their own, they can report to you that there is that household where the children are not going to school.'

Representative - Directorate of Children Services

Data, monitoring and evaluation, and information management

The collection of gender-disaggregated data on social protection is simplistic and is not always regularly updated. The basic demographic information gathered proves insufficient in showing the number of eligible pregnant women or identifying eligible female-headed households accurately. Respondents noted that enhancing the depth and specificity of data collection within social protection programmes is crucial for effectively targeting and supporting vulnerable groups, such as pregnant women and female-led households. Additional data, collected regularly, is required to ensure processes are as gender integrated as possible. The National Gender Statistics Assessment (2018) also found that data is not being used sufficiently for detailed gender analysis. This is not just happening in social protection, but across the social sectors, resulting in a limited understanding of how different institutions are impacting women (Ibid). In particular, the assessment noted a lack of data on the economic empowerment of women (Ibid). This suggests a limited understanding of how social protection programmes are having an economic impact on women. The Social Protection Bill (2024) looks to address some of these challenges by stating that the Single Registry should be expanded to better use gender and age disaggregated data. This is supported by the Gender Sector Statistics Plan which looks to improve the collection of gender-disaggregated data in Kenya (Gender in Kenya, 2021).

Using data collected from Kenya’s Social Protection Single Registry to improve the gender integration of social protection programmes remains a challenge. While these databases provide basic reports on the gender distribution within various programmes, their potential to enhance gender integration is not always realised (Republic of Kenya, 2019). Due to the number of different systems, data is often replicated. Several respondents mentioned that integrating data collection systems could allow for data to be updated in real time which could ensure that women are not inadvertently excluded. They also noted that manual registration processes are still required, which are time-consuming and leave room for error. Updating information systems could also ensure that additional gender-disaggregated information is collected, which could be used by the social protection workforce.

‘The coordination of data is held in many hands by different players.’

National Gender and Equality Commission

Evaluations of programmes tend to focus on generalised programme functioning, although some evaluations include specific sections on the impacts of programmes on women. There are disparities in monitoring and evaluation practices across different programmes. NICHE and the HSNP benefit from robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms supported by UNICEF and FCDO, respectively, while programmes like CT-OVC do not have effective monitoring and evaluation systems (Republic of Kenya 2019), although they were robustly evaluated while at pilot phase. Most notably, the latest evaluation of the HSNP2 explored the impact of the programme on women, and we discuss in section 3.3 on gender-responsive outcomes. However, across the social protection system in Kenya, evaluations sometimes focus on the big picture, including issues such as the number of people covered by a programme, the monetary benefits, and the costs, rather than on areas of inclusion and exclusion (Republic of Kenya, 2020). Government officials and development partners highlighted that there is little consideration during monitoring and evaluation of the impact programmes have on women and girls. Monitoring practices within some social assistance programmes in Kenya are limited, making it challenging to access gender-disaggregated information (Ibid). Monitoring typically occurs only at the household level and doesn’t capture details such as who within the household accesses funds, how the money is used, and which individuals raise complaints (Development Pathways, 2017). In 2018, the GoK introduced a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to address some of these challenges, although it is unclear how successful it has been so far.

‘But what about the other issues in terms of representation, in terms of the challenges we are talking about?’

Social Policy Expert, UNICEF

Kenya has established strong tracking mechanisms and tools to monitor child protection service delivery.

The Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) which is a web-based database designed to gather information concerning child protection cases in Kenya (MEASURE Evaluation, n.d.). The CPIMS collects data on a range of child protection cases, encompassing instances of violence, abuse, neglect, custody, abandoned children, orphaned children, and truancy (Child Protection Information Management System, n.d.). Guidelines for data collection suggest that services are gender sensitive on paper, guidelines such as the Guidelines for Child Protection Case Management and Referral in Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2018) support the collection of gender disaggregated data through mainstreaming gender across data collection tools, and establishing “Respect for Diversity” which includes sex as a standard in the operation in case management.

The Kenya Child Protection Data portal holds data on child protection cases, however significant challenges exist regarding the number of cases that are captured and also resolved.

The data portal illustrates cases disaggregated by gender and offers features which allow for users to look across geographies and service year. Data shows that for reported cases the highest caseload is for neglect cases, followed by custody cases, and that this is the same for both girls and boys. The data however does show disparities in coverage across all categories except for defilement and trafficking where there are marginally more cases involving boys than girls. Categories of abuse that disproportionately affect girls such as FGM, and child marriage are tracked, however the caseload for these categories appears to be low based on reported cases, suggesting missing data. This raises concerns around how many additional cases may be missed each year, but it is suggested that the numbers are significant. For example, FGM cases only made up 13 cases out of the 25, 636 cases involving girls for the year 2023/2024. Another significant area where data is missing is intervention data. The portal shows that for both boys and girls most uploaded case information are missing intervention data. These gaps illustrate that case management processes are not well captured, it is difficult to know if children received the full range of services required.

Workshop participants felt that the inter-operability and connectedness of these systems was limited, although perhaps with some variation depending on the county and the skill of the operator.

Insufficient studies and assessments are being conducted on a county level to determine impact or case resolution.

This is further hindered by lack of clear baselines and targets for programmes related to impact as opposed to reach. Counties like Garissa and Turkana which suffer from high rates of FGM and child pregnancies do not have clear tools to track the impact of programmes on these specific challenges. Respondents also reported that insufficient grievance channels are in place to address or capture child protection cases, and also some of the harm that might arise from programme implementation. The low child protection workforce contributes to the inability of officers to follow up on cases or to conduct visits for example to assess individual cases. Respondents have repeatedly voiced concern that individual follow up and assessment are needed for many cases but are unable to do so due to limited financial and personal resources. Respondents report of the challenges of tracking FGM prevention cases among pastoral communities due to their movement affecting the consistency of the service.

Impact assessment is limited, and those who are actively assessing impact and implementation do not always provide a gender analysis for non-gender specific studies.

For instance, financial assessments for child protection and social protection systems seldom contain gender analysis of budgets, and often only present gender disaggregated data in beneficiary size. Programmes designed with a clear investment plan are not sufficiently measuring the implementation and impact

of their investment. One respondent commented that despite funding on FGM and many programmes linked to addressing this issue, there is little data to support the effectiveness of programmes to address issues like FGM. This makes decisions such as increasing coverage or upscaling certain interventions difficult, especially in an environment where government resources are limited. Despite trends showing that FGM has reduced significantly (UNICEF, 2021, KDHS 2022), the lack of mass communicated information on the impact of interventions limits the visibility of these advancements.

'A lot of resources have gone into them that the incidence and equivalent threat for FGM has not significantly gone down,

KII - National Gender and Equality Commission

We did not find evidence that there are regular gender audits in the child protection or social protection sector.

Grievance and redress mechanisms

Effective grievance mechanisms are an important part of service delivery, but they are sometimes difficult to access, or are designed in a way which does not take into account the different structural and individual vulnerabilities of women such as education, computer literacy, connectivity, and movement restrictions. Respondents felt it important that the users of social protection programmes are easily able to raise grievances about the programmes, the system, and the social protection workforce where needed. There are some systems in place, such as the beneficiary welfare committees and programmes which have been set up to accommodate grievances (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, n.d.). Beneficiaries noted that grievances often have to go through Chiefs, who remain almost exclusively men (see section on capacity and workforce), this means that some women do not feel comfortable in taking forward gender-specific grievances such as exclusion, sexual abuse and exploitation or emotional violence. This problem was also raised during the evaluation of the UCB pilot (Republic of Kenya, 2024). Workshop participants noted that men may not complain to female desk officers for gender-based violence, and that complaints may in practice rarely be heard in private. Not being able to raise a grievance with someone of your own gender or in private very likely puts people off from raising grievances at all.

It was also noted that it takes a considerable amount of time to address complaints, leaving women to wait a long time to have their complaints heard. This approach hampers the accessibility and transparency of grievance processes, underscoring the urgent need for gender integrated mechanisms that enable women to voice their grievances and seek redress within the social protection framework. Better accountability mechanisms would give women a place to raise issues beyond problems with the social protection programmes by giving them greater access to the social protection workforce. An email and telephone line have been set up to respond to grievances on the Inua Jamii programme, but there is little evidence to indicate how successful it is (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, n.d.). County officers note that in the absence of access to an email account and the ability to submit written grievances due to educational challenges, beneficiaries are forced to come to their offices to file complaints which are then sent to a national system. This can be particularly challenging to women especially those in households where women's movement is not allowed, security concerns for women when travelling and care responsibilities. Lastly, respondents highlighted the difficulty in tracking the number of grievances filed, stating that beneficiaries often do not get a response.

'I would like to see grievances and complaints reported on a sex disaggregated basis. Is it men and women and how are they getting addressed?'

Senior Economist, The World Bank

Additionally, there is some evidence to suggest beneficiaries are not aware of grievance mechanisms (see section on messaging). The 2024 evaluation of the UCB found that only 48.9% of beneficiaries knew where to file complaints, although there was no evidence concerning whether men or women were impacted by this differently (Republic of Kenya, 2024). This problem was also raised by respondents who noted that lots of beneficiaries are not aware of how to make complaints about a programme. It was noted that this is a problem that affects women to a greater degree as men are more likely to be literate and therefore have a better understanding of what is going on. The study could find no evidence of any grievance or complaints mechanisms for child protection services, suggesting that families are not able to file complaints at all.

Some workshop participants felt that in addition there were risks of political interference in grievance mechanisms, which both undermine the extent to which they are addressed and put people off raising these challenges.

3.2.3 Programme design

Objectives

The objectives of the social assistance programmes are gender sensitive. These programmes are designed to contribute to achieving the goal of social protection, which, as set out in the 2023 Kenya Social Protection Policy, is to “ensure that the people of Kenya live in dignity and are able to exploit their human capabilities to further their development and contribute to the economy.” The policy notes that implementation should be guided by core principles including “Gender equality and women’s empowerment: promoting equal rights and opportunities for all genders in the design and implementation of Social Protection interventions.” The specific objectives of the four cash transfer programmes are not explicitly to do with gender but with addressing vulnerabilities of children, older persons, persons with severe disability, and households in the ASALs. NICHE aims to improve the nutritional status of children from conception to 1,000 days. The wider social protection system has smaller programmes that do more directly address gender (such as the Women Enterprise Fund or free maternal health care under Linda Mama), but these are relatively small in terms of budget allocation and coverage.

The study has found that social protection programmes in Kenya tend to be neutral to some gender-specific vulnerabilities. Specific groups such as teenage mothers were recognised by respondents as not being specifically eligible, and yet are also some of the most vulnerable women. Part of this comes from the fact that social protection programmes adapt too slowly to incorporate different vulnerable groups. Social protection programmes in Kenya often have specific objectives, such as cash transfers for children, the elderly, or people with disabilities. This can lead to the exclusion of vulnerable people who do not fall into one of those categories, including on the basis of gender. A child protection specialist also stated that this problem extends beyond targeting, they mentioned that the design of social protection programmes is very rigid and unlikely to change, despite input from local communities. It is likely that the design of social protection programmes will miss out on opportunities to evolve to become more gender-responsive or gender transformative if they are not routinely examined. Incorporating the thoughts of local communities, specifically around gender, can support this process.

'Maybe they can come up with a deliberate strategy targeting women...'

Department of Children's Services

'I think speaking more to people from the communities that these programmes seek to service...a bit more of a concerted effort to really look at the programmes.'

The World Bank

Benefit design

Benefit design is overall gender-neutral, despite NICHE being largely gender-responsive. The four principal programmes are designed as standard cash transfer programmes: eligible households or individuals selected on the basis of a category and/or poverty receive regular cash transfers delivered electronically. The NICHE top-up is designed with a more strongly gender-responsive focus on mothers, who may either be the eligible household member if pregnant or are typically assumed to be the primary caregiver for children under three.

The value of NSNP benefits is too low to fully address households' needs or to be transformative. The money provided each month is not increased to account for inflation, and is too low as a baseline, and as such the impacts on households are often quite small (UNICEF, 2020). This was highlighted as a concern among many beneficiaries. The amount of money a household receives does not change depending on the number of children they have. For example, every household might be given 2000 shillings, even if one household has one child and another has five (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, n.d.). Women respondents note that a majority of the spending from cash transfers under the NSNP programmes is dedicated to essential household needs such as food, health and education. This is particularly relevant given research showing the significant increase in food inflation in comparison to non-food items (KNBS, 2023). The trade-off here is between adequacy and coverage, the adequacy of benefits may be low but to increase them might impact the coverage rates. While this debate impacts both men and women, it has a particular impact on women through their capacity as the primary caregivers and their comparatively limited access to employment. The respondents note that generally, women have a high number of dependents that they need to support, and for longer periods as they often continue to support second generations as grandmothers. Data shows that Kenya has an overall high dependency ratio of 70% (World Bank, n.d.).

Due to the low value of cash transfers, there were 'lots of concerns raised by community members and even schoolteachers that the money has less impact on the beneficiary.'

Child Protection and Safe-guarding Coordinator, Catholic Diocese of Lodwar

'The money helps but is so little compared to the needs of the family. Some women have up to eight children.'

FGDs with Women, Turkana

A further challenge noted is the inconsistent provision of cash transfers. When funds are delivered late or not at all, it sometimes means that children have to miss school to work. However, other respondents noted that when the funds are delayed, and arrive as a bulk sum, this sometimes allows families to make larger investments, such as starting a business or paying off significant school fees. This shows once again how the benefits of social protection are not linear.

'They should also increase the money to five or ten thousand, the current economy is so hard and two thousand is so little.'

FGDs with Women, Turkana

'It shows how dependent they are on this money and how it supports them.'

Garissa County Children Services County Co-ordinator

'It's better to wait 5 months and get Kshs.10,000. When it comes every month, you are forced to use it up at once.'

FGDs with Men, Garissa

Gender neutral design may partly be explained by limited active involvement of women in the design. There is very little evidence which indicates whether women have been involved in the design process. Respondents from the KIIs noted that, while some consultations with both men and women are conducted, these inputs are incorporated into pre-decided programme structures, limiting their ability to truly influence programme design. The consultations that are carried out are done with both men and women, and there is little evidence to suggest they are done with a gendered lens. Discussions around a potential cash transfer for orphans and vulnerable children began during the parliamentary elections towards the end of 2002, with many candidates advocating to allocate more resources to this group (OPM, 2008). During the design process for the CT-OVC, a needs assessment was carried out, but this focused on children, and there didn't appear to be a gendered lens (The World Bank, 2019). The design of the programme built on existing initiatives in Kenya such as the then-pilot HSNP rather than incorporating a completely new design and was determined by government officials and development partners (Ibid). Furthermore, the lack of available experts to propose necessary adjustments further impedes progress towards a more equitable and empowering social assistance framework. Respondents speak of a lack of expertise and technical knowledge in designing gender responsive amendments to social protection programmes.

'I'm quite sure they did do consultations...but these end up being designed by the government sitting in a room with [development partners]'

Senior Economist, Development Partner

Eligibility

Eligibility is largely gender neutral with some gender sensitivity in the poverty criteria. None of the four principal programmes takes gender explicitly into consideration in overall eligibility criteria. Any individual over 70 is in theory eligible for the OPCT, irrespective of gender. When transfers are rationed, this is on the basis of poverty or population rates. The CT-OVC, PwSD-CT, and HSNP are household level transfers, with eligibility determined by i) the presence of a vulnerable child or orphan, person with a severe disability, or, in the case of the HSNP, living in selected ASAL counties, and ii) poverty criteria which vary slightly across programmes. At the level of the poverty criteria (such as the proxy means test in the case of the HSNP) gender of the household head can play a small role (with female headed households being more likely to be selected, all other things equal, but it would not be correct to say that these programmes are explicitly targeting women.

It was noted by respondents that there has been very little effort to systematically target women in the design of social protection programmes, or to consider the benefits of prioritising women. The

CT-OVC targets households that are extremely poor and are home to orphans and vulnerable children. Women remain the primary caregivers in Kenya, while female-headed households are more likely to be poor than male-headed households (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). As such, programmes that target poor children may be slightly likely to reach more female beneficiaries than male.

Several respondents suggested that gender considerations would be better taken into account by community-based targeting rather than poverty scorecards or proxy means tests, on the basis that gendered vulnerability is highly localised. This is in part a reflection of a belief - also expressed to researchers during analysis of the HSNP targeting mechanism - that community-based targeting is more effective than other forms at identifying vulnerability; for instance, through observing the lack of smoke from a cookstove. To some extent this may also reflect a desire to localise control of selection of eligible beneficiaries rather than ceding power centrally. However, it may well also be that it would be easier to achieve gender sensitivity and indeed responsiveness in targeting if it was better able to incorporate localised understandings of gendered vulnerability.

NICHE is the only cash transfer that targets women as it targets NSNP beneficiary households with children under two, and pregnant and lactating mothers, and provides a cash top up and counselling on nutrition and (in one county) positive parenting. This is gender responsive, and reviews have found positive impacts on female empowerment, decision-making, and economic well-being.

Globally, there is evidence of social protection programmes being able to target vulnerable women, such as teenage mothers. Zambia's Social Cash Transfer programme includes specific provisions for teenage mothers, providing them with access to healthcare and educational support so that they can return to school (Davis, B., et al, 2015). In Chile, the Chile Solidario programme has taken things one step further, providing young mothers with psychosocial support as well as cash and access to health and education services (Galasso, 2006). These examples are ways in which social protection programmes could be explicitly designed to target vulnerable women.

'There is no attempt to really, target female caregivers in particular, or women in the household.'

Social Protection Specialist, Development Partner

Co-responsibility

None of the NSNP programmes have co-responsibility. NICHE has co-responsibilities for caregivers to attend nutritional counselling sessions or positive parenting sessions. Typically, these are expected to be female caregivers, which has the potential to inadvertently emphasise a woman's role as the primary caregiver (Simon, 2019). Emphasising this role could exclude women from certain employment or educational opportunities by giving weight to the argument that they should remain in the home. We did not find strong evidence to support this idea from our respondents.

Payments

The gender neutral payments delivery mechanisms of NSNP programmes can inadvertently create barriers that hinder women's access. In some instances, in order to access benefits women are required to present certificates that may be difficult for them to obtain. To benefit from programmes like the CT-OVC programme, a death certificate is a prerequisite to verify that the child is an orphan. According to the WHO, Kenya has a limited capacity in counting births, deaths, and causes of deaths which can cause challenges in providing people with the relevant documentation (WHO, 2022). A national identification card is required when enrolling on to social protection programmes. Data on ID ownership show that for 2021 88.9% of women owned IDs in comparison to men at 93.9% (World Bank, n.d.) For women living in urban areas, getting this documentation could require significant time and expense (Ibid). Women who were never formally married or lack official documentation may face challenges meeting these requirements, thereby further marginalising these already vulnerable individuals. This gap in the design

criteria of social protection programmes poses an obstacle for many beneficiaries. However, the additional challenges facing women in being able to access a national ID card exaggerate these challenges for women in accessing crucial financial support, highlighting the need for more inclusive and accommodating eligibility criteria within social protection initiatives.

'For one to be under the programme you must have a required documentation and getting some of those documents is hard'

FGDs with Women, Turkana

Once women begin the registration and enrolment process, the time needed to complete registration and the travel considerations make registration particularly difficult. Women from FGDs in Garissa and Turkana noted that it can be challenging to get registered onto a programme as they do not have any help caring for their children. They noted that the registration process can take a long time or is sometimes quite far away, meaning they are unable to take their children with them, but equally do not have anyone to care for them. This is particularly true for women living in rural areas, if the registration for a programme only takes place in one part of a county, the distance to travel there can be substantial.

'Women can't travel to enrolment in programmes because 'they don't have anyone to care for the children''

FGDs with Women, Turkana

Despite significant development in the delivery mechanisms through the use of mobile banking, not accounting for gender barriers in banking access and connectivity has made it challenging for some women to access them. The lack of available banking agents was raised by many respondents, who stated that beneficiaries often have to travel very far to reach pay points. It was also highlighted that banking agents sometimes don't visit these regions due to the cost, which makes it more challenging for women to receive money. This is a particular concern for women living in pastoralist regions where restrictions are often put on women's ability to travel due to beliefs around their place in the home. It can also be dangerous for women and girls to travel alone in certain parts of the country, due to increased risk of sexual violence (UNICEF, 2017). It was noted by respondents that this is a particular problem in the ASAL region, which is sparsely populated, meaning women must often travel very far. Some women are also restricted from travelling by their husbands, who consider it to be damaging to their reputation for their wives to travel alone. The challenges of using cash agents were also highlighted by the social protection sector review conducted in 2017 (MLSP) which found accessibility challenges, fraud and security concerns, and delays to be associated with using an agent. Using mobile money to distribute funds has helped alleviate some of these challenges facing women, however it was noted by respondents that MPesa is not always available, or women do not always have mobile phones and are forced to register the men or other family members as beneficiaries. UN Women found that alone 50% of Kenyans currently own a mobile (although 50% of these people are women) and therefore MPesa is not always possible (UN Women, n.d.). If beneficiaries lose their debit cards they sometimes need to travel as far as 100km to reach an area where they can get a new one. This can be more challenging for women due to having to arrange childcare, and the social and physical problems that can prevent them from travelling.

"We prefer MPESA since going to an agent requires transportation which is very expensive.'

FGDs with Women, Turkana

'Travelling in some parts of the country, there are no agent paying points. [Women] had to travel for long distances.'

Department of Children's Services

Some attempts have been made to reduce the barriers preventing women from fully accessing social protection programmes, although progress is limited.

KIIs conducted for this research suggested that the GoK has attempted to make it easier for women to access bank accounts through supplying them with basic documentation, supporting them to access social protection programmes. However, we were unable to triangulate this claim fully. Kenya has been able to significantly reduce gendered-financial exclusion. The gender gap for financial inclusion narrowed from 12% in 2005 to 5.4% in 2019, achieved largely through the development of mobile money. However, specific policies pushing for gender equality in financial inclusion are lacking (Financial Alliance for Women, 2022). The Inua Jamii cash transfers provide payments through the Kenya Women Finance Trust, a microbank which aims to reach women without a bank account (KWFT, n.d.). They do this by providing a range of banking options such as mobile banking and agency banks. While the research has not found a breakdown of cash transfers using mobile banking disaggregated by gender, statements by mobile banking providers indicate that 300,000 beneficiaries with an M-Pesa account are estimated to receive transfers in 2023 (Business Daily Africa, 2024). These figures should be assessed in light of mobile banking access disparities for women where women are reported to have lower mobile phone ownership and lower internet use (GSMA, 2020). Other banks in Kenya, such as Wema Bank, are signatories of the UNEP Finance Initiative which works with financial institutions to help women accessing banking (UNEP, n.d.). However, social protection programmes are at best doing a limited amount to help ensure the financial inclusion of women to guarantee they are able to access financial support.

The government 'is providing them with basic documents which will enable them to open bank accounts...'

Development Partner UNICEF Kenya

Messaging

Messaging is typically gender neutral. Lack of adoption of a gender lens in information dissemination and overall communication may limit the information reaching female beneficiaries. Additionally, findings conclude that no attempt was made to use messaging around services to influence household dynamics over resource control to ensure women who were registered retained access to benefits.

Communicating with users of social protection programmes is important for ensuring they take up services and maximise impact.

This is even more important for women who sometimes face challenges travelling, and therefore receiving benefits, and can be used to respond to gendered vulnerabilities. Several respondents suggested that women living remotely, especially in the ASAL region, did not receive regular communication from programme staff working on social assistance programmes, leaving them isolated. In this region, travel can be dangerous for women, while the significant amount of domestic work they are required to do also limits their ability to fully engage with social protection programmes (UN Women, 2022). Respondents noted that the scarce presence of programme staff within these villages results in inadequate support for women residing there, reducing effective communication and access to programme services. A survey conducted in 2019 found that 57% of respondents did feel like the NHIF communicated readily with them, however, it is unclear how gender impacted these results (Mwangi, et al., 2019). This suggests that the social protection system does not

prioritise communicating with women to ensure they are fully taking up social protection benefits. Workshop participants felt that households typically rely on local networks, radio, and chiefs for information. However, there is no evidence that specific communication, tailored to the needs of men and women, and boys and girls, is being articulated.

We must start 'with having communication strategies that are clear...if you have a good communication strategy, you know how to communicate to the lowest level'

Directorate of Children's Services

Lack of gender-sensitive communication on programme benefits and services can often lead to adverse effects, especially when programmes are perceived to challenge traditional norms.

It has been noted that increasing levels of female empowerment can also lead to increased levels of gender-based violence (ICRW, 2020). Often this is due to men attempting to reassert control over women (Ibid). Respondents note that men often feel (incorrectly) that these programmes disproportionately target women, and often view it as a challenge to their authority and familial norms. Poor communication when attempting to make changes to social protection can exacerbate damaging gender norms (Ibid). Respondents also highlighted how improved communication and outreach could engage men and boys and improve gender-responsiveness on a wider scale. Currently, KIIs suggest that the social protection system is perhaps not engaging beneficiaries as effectively as would be necessary to influence the intra-household dynamics.

Link to complementary services

Findings suggest linkages to complementary services are gender neutral, with the exception of NICHE which includes men and women in baby friendly nutrition counselling. **Linkages between social protection and other sectors are limited in general and more so in response to gender specific vulnerabilities.** The NSNP transfer programmes are not designed or targeted with any particular focus on health or education, although originally information on average monthly spending on health and education was used as a way to calibrate transfer values (Republic of Kenya, 2017). However, values have not been adjusted for inflation or household size so this linkage is no longer likely to be valid. The NICHE programme is designed to strengthen the coordination between social protection and the child protection and health sectors, albeit currently at a small scale. The NHIF is available to all Kenyans over the age of 18, however there are no specific design elements to the fund to target women. In 1998, the fund was open to all informal workers, many of whom are women, but this was not done specifically with gender integration in mind. Instances of coordination can be found at the county level where social protection departments and health departments attempt to support registration and strengthening institutions that are NHIF accredited, despite resource constraints. Given the stated limited capacity by respondents in applying a gender transformative lens, social protection programmes would benefit from a closer collaboration with the state department of gender and affirmative action. While the department does indeed have a stated goal of ensuring gender is mainstreamed across government bodies, respondents state that the impression is that the department has no authority or leverage to do so.

Child protection

The child protection system design is gender neutral. The findings highlight that child protection systems, through coordinated efforts at the county level, are designed to be inclusive but this rarely happens. While programmes like the NICHE focus on mothers, overall, there is no specific targeting based on gender, ensuring that both boys and girls can access services equally. Gaps in information dissemination sometimes result in women and girls not recognizing themselves as beneficiaries, suggesting the need for clearer communication to ensure all genders benefit equally from these protections.

The study has found other areas of collaboration include emergency response programmes coordinated across different departments directly mandated with child protection and other departments delivering related and parallel services. Cash transfer programmes targeting drought related malnutrition have benefited from coordination on the county level in determining target beneficiaries and supporting the assessment of vulnerabilities to inform benefit design. The NICHE programme which centres mothers stands out as an effective programme that is able to address the effects of household vulnerabilities, namely poverty and lack of nutrition, as well as offer support to caregivers through other programmes, such as parenting support through community parenting groups. The involvement of many stakeholders in child protection in these programmes also promotes a multifaceted monitoring system with different performance and impact indicators provided by the different departments. With child pregnancy being a key issue for girls, it is unclear if such programmes have a specific focus on young and adolescent mothers.

The study has found evidence that close coordination and collaboration at the county level can support developing alternative referral pathways to ensure a holistic approach to child protection. Child protection officers at the county level when empowered with resources and information can help direct families to further services. In one case a county child protection officer was able to support women care givers in the households to access income generating grants and in-kind transfers.

Critical to the functioning of the child protection system is access to information on available services. Here the research has found that information on programmes is not always readily available through official channels but can be found through informal social media groups such as WhatsApp, which is also more accessible to children, specifically adolescents. One respondent speaks about the difficulty in finding child protection information and having only found it in the office for persons with disabilities, while accessing a different service. Overall, when information is available community members often are proactive in seeking services. To address this challenge, Kenya has initiated programmes such as the National Directory for Children's Services Providers which is a comprehensive resource containing a list of agencies and programmes in Kenya that offer services for children (Better Care Network, n.d.). This directory is the result of a collaboration between the National Council for Children's Services (NCCS) and the Department of Children's Services (DCS) of Kenya, along with other stakeholders in the field. This directory furnishes essential details about each service provider, including their registration status, the specific sub-county/ward where they operate, the age, category, and gender of the children they serve, their contact information, organisational type, a brief description of the services they offer, and the duration of their operation (Better Care Network, n.d.).

Projects such as the National Helpline 116 seek to bridge geographic challenges and provide information to support service uptake. The helpline serves as a confidential reporting channel available to both children and adults who have observed or experienced violence against children and wish to report their concerns anonymously (Kenya, 2019). It also functions as a resource for obtaining information on matters related to children and accessing counselling services. The helpline serves as a vital platform for children to report instances of abuse and other distressing concerns, providing them with immediate counselling and facilitating efficient referrals to child protection services (Child Kenya, n.d.). Additionally, members of the public can use the helpline to report cases on behalf of children.

The findings indicate that one of the manifestations of lack of information is a lack of understanding by potential service recipients of the services offered and who its targets are, which often results in the lack of purposeful targeting of girls and lack of service uptake by women. In one case an officer spoke about how on the community level information gaps are resulting in lack of understanding of child protection or child rights, and the availability of systems to address these challenges. Women respondents note that since programmes are usually not explicitly targeting women, they assume that they are not the target beneficiaries of these services. Another challenge of lack of accurate and clear information is individuals and communities assume they are not part of the target group. The lack of information is particularly critical for the access of services, and in the case of Kenya has been found as a

barrier to help-seeking in the cases of sexual violence which as illustrated above affect women and girls disproportionately (Fernandes, et al, 2020).

Access to services can often be impacted by other factors such as cultural norms and beliefs which tend to have adverse effects on girls. In some cases of rape, communities depend on local justice mechanisms such as the payment of a fine or land, or even physical fights. Cases of rape involving young girls are often not covered by these traditional mechanisms and even when followed the money paid is not directly reaching the girls, while they still face the brunt of community stigma as a result of the sexual violence. Close implementation with communities can also support in uncovering some of these cultural barriers and drivers of child abuse. For example, in one case a local practitioner reports that they were astonished to learn of the different forms of violent punishment accepted throughout the community. This is supported by other research which found that in the case of sexual violence against women and girls to not report cases perpetrated by members of the family (Fernandes, et al, 2020).

3.3 Gender outcomes

The NSNP performs reasonably well in terms of equal access to benefits, with the unexplained exception of the PwSD-CT. There is limited evidence that the NSNP addresses gender-specific needs, other than through reducing household poverty. There is some evidence that the NSNP supports enhancing empowerment, including increased economic empowerment, respect, and decision-making for women, though this is context dependent.

3.3.1 Equal access to benefits

The coverage of social protection programmes has been expanding but significant gaps remain. Currently, NHIF has enrolled a total of 4.5 million members, which is about 11% of Kenya's population with coverage skewed towards formal sector employees (98%) and only 16% of informal sector workforce (which makes up more than 80% of Kenya's workforce) are covered. This is particularly important for women who are engaged in different sectors than men in the informal sector that includes both paid and unpaid work which limits their access to social insurance coverage (UN Women, 2023; HFG, 2014). Due to programmatic challenges, the number of households covered by the CT-OVC has been reduced from 350,000 in 2016/2017 to 280,000 in 2022/2023 (Nilofer, 2023). In total, coverage rates of the government's four main cash transfer programmes have expanded considerably, from 240,000 households in 2012 to 1.19 million in 2020. UNICEF estimates that there are 13 million children living in poverty in Kenya highlighting how many children potentially lack the support that they need (World Bank, 2021). Moreover, there remains a significant gap for people, and children, with disabilities, less than 1% of people with severe disabilities are covered by social protection (Kenya, 2017).

Programme data from the Inua Jamii programmes (CT-OVC, OPCT, and PwSD-CT) suggests that as of 2023, 54% of indirect Inua Jamii beneficiaries were women, compared to 46% men (Genesis Analytics, 2023). The CT-OVC and OPCT reach more female indirect beneficiaries (53% and 58%) than males, the PwSD-CT reaches 3.5 times as many males as females. It is unclear why so few PwSD-CT beneficiaries are female, but this suggests some gender discrimination in implementing targeting or recording indirect beneficiaries. Women represent 66% of the direct beneficiaries of Inuja Jamii. For CT-OVC women are 83%, for OPCT 61%, and for PwSD-CT 44%.⁷

Respondents noted that even when the registered beneficiary is the woman, it is not always clear who actually receives the benefits. Respondents stressed that there is no guarantee that she will be the one with control over the funds; this is consistent with the findings on gender inequality in relationships presented in section 3.1. Analysing household dynamics and power relations, as well as precisely who is benefiting, is therefore important, but beyond the scope of this study.

⁷ Data from Inua Jamii, July 2024. HSNP data are pending.

3.3.2 Gender-specific needs

Social protection and child protection systems can sometimes address gender-specific needs, including those discussed above in the section on drivers of vulnerability. We found limited evidence of this. Evidence is also needed to determine the impact social protection programmes have on girls specifically, and more in detail across the life cycle. On the county level, government departments in Garissa and Turkana target vulnerabilities specific to girls, such as providing reproductive health support for underaged mothers and economic empowerment services, although not necessarily under social protection departments. There is limited evidence to suggest that the social protection system is working to reduce some of the negative effects felt by women, such as the increase in rates of gender-based violence that are sometimes caused by cash transfer programmes.

3.3.3 Enhancing empowerment

Evidence from the assessment indicates that social protection programmes can have a positive economic impact on women. A key reason for this is the unconditional nature of the benefits provided, giving women money allows them to make decisions around what they would like to spend those funds on. An evaluation of the HSNP2 that looked at impact on women found that cash transfers helped women set up new business ventures and improved their overall feelings of empowerment (OPM, 2018). The HSNP2 evaluation noted that the increase in income from cash transfers has helped women access the start-up capital they needed to establish businesses, often centred around food stalls or clothing businesses (OPM, 2018). Findings from the CT-OVC noted a 7% increase in the participation of women in non-farming enterprises, and a 6% increase in the number of women who own livestock (Ministry of Labour, 2017). Due to this, the long-term impacts of providing cash assistance can be significantly more substantial than programmes that distribute food or other sources of in-kind benefits. There are also examples of women working together to use their resources and benefit a larger group of women. Women in Turkana discuss using a ‘merry go round’ approach where each month a group of women contribute a small amount and then one woman in the group is able to use the savings. This helps with making larger payments, such as school fees. Social assistance programmes lead to wider economic impacts beyond those that specifically impact women but still have an overall positive impact on the country.

‘A woman will tell you I have been able to buy two goats. What this means is that you can actually see that a few months later on they are growing their assets.’

Social Policy Expert, UNICEF

‘Women are now able to plan for the household and take care of the household.’

Representative, National Hospital Insurance Fund

‘We also use the cash to send back some of our children who have been chased from school for lack of fees.’

FGDs with Women, Garissa

It was also noted by some respondents that the social protection system can increase the respect given to women. Beneficiaries stated that providing women with a certain degree of financial independence, allowing them to buy goods, provide for their families, and maintain a stable home has wider impacts on the ways in which women are perceived by society. Engagement with the social protection system, such as attending community meetings and partaking in additional education and training gives women an opportunity to voice opinions and make community-level changes (ILO, n.d.). Seeing women as competent heads of households also helps shift wider community opinions around the role of women (Ibid). Some programmes, such as the NICHE programme, appear to be having a

significant impact on the lives of women and girls, and men and boys, by specifically targeting support towards women which allows them financial independence for themselves and their children.

However, these impacts are not felt universally, and local context is very important. Many respondents raised the fact that in some parts of the country, trying to provide women with financial independence can often be challenging given cultural norms which dictate women's movement and her engagement outside the household. One problem, raised by the social protection workforce, is that it can be challenging to engage women in social protection programmes when community visits occur. This refers to women enrolling in social protection programmes, but also engaging in community consultations or meetings when they occur. It was suggested that more work needs to go into visiting women at their homes as they may struggle to access programmes and initiatives due to travel constraints or because of the burden of domestic housework. It was also mentioned that in some communities it is not accepted by the men that women should be engaged with society outside of the home (consistent with the survey evidence presented above). This theme also came through in the evaluation of the HSNP2. A social worker interviewed stated that women are 'not obedient to their husbands just because of this money,' (OPM, 2018). This quote from a social worker suggested that ideas around gendered norms are very deeply embedded in the social fabric in some areas.

'There are some areas you will be surprised where the husbands will not allow their wives to own a phone.'

Garissa County Children Services County Co-ordinator

'Once you give the woman the money, they think she has taken over the family.'

Representative, Directorate of Children's Services

Finally, engagement in the social protection system can also increase women's agency and voice the level of respect afforded to women, particularly in female-headed households. Many respondents noted that the support provided by social protection programmes gives women more free time, either through additional financial resources to purchase useful goods, or by being able to use funds to access services that their children can attend, such as schooling. The evaluation of the HSNP2 also found that women who were able to use the cash transfers to make decisions saw an increase in the respect and autonomy afforded to them (OPM, 2018). This was also noted by beneficiaries as a powerful way to give women a voice in the community. Giving women and girls a stronger voice has far-reaching impacts and can begin to shift community-level dynamics around the role of women and girls in society (Ibid). This can also be very influential for boys who then grow up with a different understanding of what a woman should do and is capable of (Camilletti, 2020). While these outcomes are positive for women, this does not necessarily mean the social protection system is gender responsive as there is little attempt to specifically target women with financial support. For social assistance programmes both men and women can be the named-beneficiaries, and there is also no additional support given to help women access social security such as the NHIF.

'Women have a voice in the community, especially where there are social gatherings and participation.'

Directorate of Children's Services

3.4 Gender equality outcome areas

These gender-responsive outcomes can lead to gender equality outcomes in several areas, including economic security and empowerment, improved health, enhanced education, improved psychosocial well-being, increased protection, and enhanced voice and agency. This section assesses the extent to which child protection and social protection in Kenya have contributed to health, education, and voice and agency, mediated by a range of factors including intra-household dynamics, norms, and wider economic and political conditions. We did find evidence around the other outcome areas that we have not discussed already in the previous section.

Health and education

The assessment of social protection programmes also shows that programmes are having positive impacts on other household outcomes such as health and education, particularly from a gendered lens. The endline evaluation of the UCB pilot found that the benefits increased girls' access to education, although the evaluation provided little insight into why that happened (Republic of Kenya, 2021). Government officials interviewed noted that the financial benefits provided by social protection programmes do help children access education, but this is often on a small scale. Moreover, it was not suggested that social protection programmes help girls in particular access schooling. Respondents from the government and users give examples of funds from NSNP programmes being used to cover school fees, and other needs if only minimally due to the limited sums transferred; this is confirmed by the social protection sector review (Republic of Kenya, 2017). It was also noted by some beneficiaries that the NICHE programme is able to link social protection with child protection, nutrition, and health, causing the programme to have wider impacts. UNICEF's case study on the NICHE programme in 2022 also illustrated the positive health impacts caused by NICHE, but an explanation of whether these impacts are different by gender was lacking (UNICEF, 2022). It was also noted by respondents that the social protection system should work more closely with other sectors, such as health and education, to increase the benefits felt by children and specifically target gendered inequalities.

There is some evidence to suggest that social protection programmes are having a positive impact on maternal health and positive parenting. The evaluation of the UCB pilot found an increase in the number of women giving birth at health facilities, and an increase in early uptake of breastfeeding (Republic of Kenya, 2024). It was noted by staff from the NHIF, that this programme is also having a positive impact on maternal health through the provision of free antenatal care that has been in place since 2013. Maternal deaths per 100,000 births had dropped from 564 in 2000, to 483 in 2015, although there has been a concerning trend back up in recent years to 530 in 2020, suggesting these programmes are not as effective as they could be (World Health Organisation, 2023). The programme also determined an increase in positive parenting practices, but there was no evidence to suggest whether fathers were more involved in caregiving, or whether there were any differences in the treatment of boys and girls (Ibid).

This evidence is in line with international evidence on cash transfers and positive benefits. This same evidence indicates that more intentionality with respect to gender and messaging could further enhance these benefits.

Voice and agency

In some countries, the social protection system has been shown to have a positive impact on family stability, particularly in reducing cases of domestic violence. In our study, respondents suggested that targeting women with monetary benefits can be very powerful, but if men are not engaged at all then this can lead to exacerbating intra-household relations. International literature notes how important it is to engage fathers in childcare (Hatty and Banman, 2022), and many of our respondents noted that it is very important to engage fathers in social protection programmes. Men can be engaged in additional education or educational opportunities, and this can lead to a reduction in violence in households, particularly violence aimed at women and girls (Casey, et al., 2016). **Respondents highlighted the NICHE**

programme as a programme able to achieve some of these goals, with examples of husbands and fathers being involved in nutrition counselling and parenting support. This helps shift societal expectations that childcare responsibilities fall solely on women. This can also be very impactful on children's relationships with their fathers. Global evidence emphasises the importance of fathers in the early years and engaging men in social protection programmes is one way to improve father-child relations (Brandao, et al., 2021).

Global evidence suggests that these benefits are not universal. Although we found no direct evidence of this, beneficiaries noted that engagement in social protection programmes can increase gender-based violence, particularly if that support is aimed specifically at women. This was noted in the evaluation of HSNP2, where incidents of violence were reported after women received funds (OPM, 2018). Providing money to women can exacerbate intra-household relationships about the roles of men and women, while providing money to men can sometimes lead to additional expenditure on unhealthy habits such as alcohol, raising the likelihood of violence in the home. During the evaluation of the HSNP2, male beneficiaries raised frustrations about having to make decisions with their wives, which they felt was not the woman's role (OPM, 2018). These concerns were also raised during the evaluation of the UCB pilot, some women interviewed stated that they would be assaulted by their husbands if they received the money themselves (Republic of Kenya, 2024). It was noted by respondents that even if women are the primary receivers of cash transfers, they may not always have decision-making authority over where the money is used. It is important to consider the local community and the household characteristics from the outset of a social protection programme. The importance of engaging the social protection workforce in this was also emphasised, ensuring that they have the training and support required to manage different household and community-level dynamics.

'The opportunity to participate in the economy boosts the esteem of men...'

Representative, National Hospital Insurance Fund

'The majority (of men) take the money home to benefit their families.'

FGDs with Women, Garissa

'Especially when we receive the money it really causes disagreements in homes.'

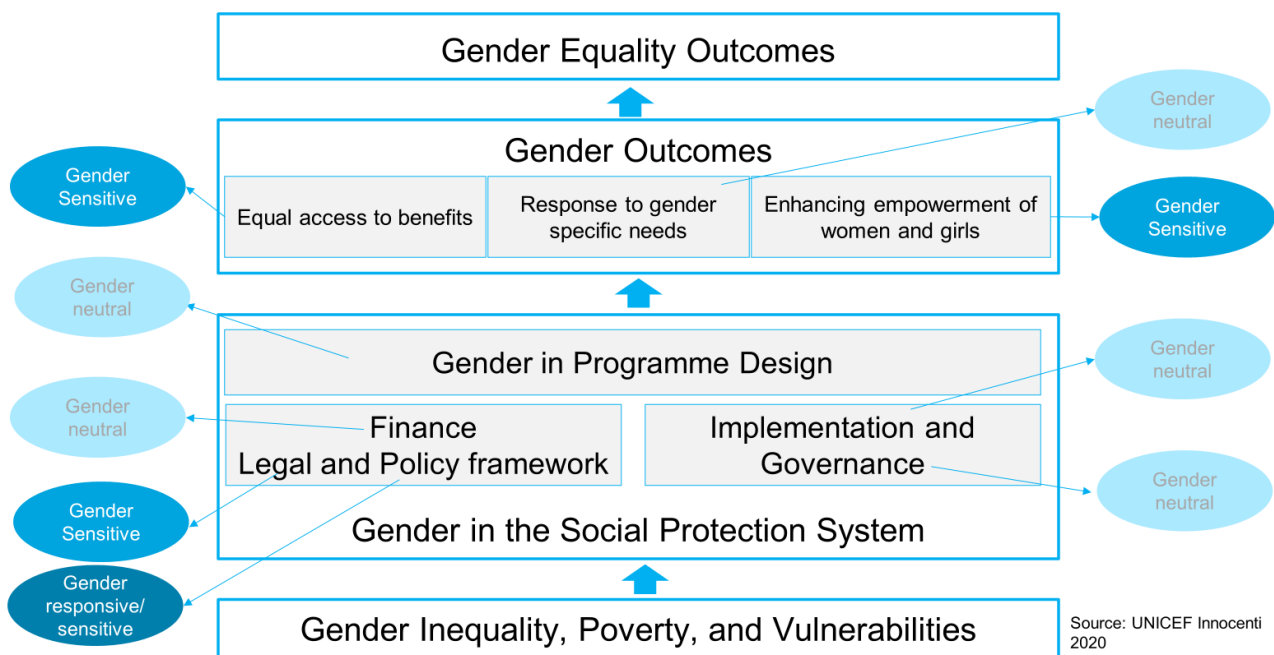
FGDs with Women, Turkana

4 | Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

The report has examined the gender integration of the social protection and child protection systems in Kenya. It has done this through analysing the vulnerability, the legal and policy frameworks, implementation and governance systems, programme design, and outcomes, using primary data collection and a comprehensive desk-based review. Findings are summarised in the figure below:

Figure 4: Summary findings of gender in Kenya's social protection and child protection systems



The study has found that the situation of children in Kenya is improving and gender parity has been achieved for most children's outcomes, but gendered vulnerabilities affect adolescent girls and women. Child protection issues are often linked to other vulnerabilities in the household and traditional practices affecting girls, which stresses the need for a holistic life-cycle approach to protection overall. Adolescent girls face some specific vulnerabilities around child marriage, teenage pregnancy, and FGM. Adult women are less engaged in paid work, do more unpaid care, and are often not empowered within the household. Vulnerabilities have been found to be affected by climate and economic challenges facing the ASAL region, with cases of child abuse linked to droughts, floods and rapid urbanization. Respondents report that in the time of droughts, girls are more likely to be married as a result of household poverty. In addition to child marriage, child neglect and abandonment were amongst the most reported issues by respondents. The research also found that while these vulnerabilities made children at risk of abuse, it also served as a hindrance to service access. If programmes are to reach the most vulnerable, service design needs to account for barriers to service related to child pregnancy, disability, and geographic location among other factors.

Against this background, Kenya's legal and policy frameworks for social protection and child protection are largely gender sensitive, while the social protection policy framework can be categorised as gender-responsive. The Kenya Social Protection policy (2023) clearly outlines gender as an essential consideration for the social protection system, specifically stating that the system should be gender-responsive and gender equality is one of its guiding principles. Respondents from the KIIs also affirmed that women are sometimes, although not often, consulted during the design process, although it was suggested that the changes made following these consultations are often minimal.

Kenya has shown commitment to child protection through the design and establishment of a robust legal and institutional framework for child protection. Laws such as the Children's Act 2022 provide a foundation for a comprehensive and multi-sectoral response to child protection. Policies such as the National Care Reform Strategy for Children in Kenya are gender sensitive, but do not always prioritise the needs of different genders in intervention design.

However, implementation and governance arrangements are gender neutral. Respondents stressed the need for child protection services to be delivered under a larger child welfare framework and leveraging on existing child development programmes in the areas of education and health especially at the county level. A further major challenge is the lack of human and operational resources available to respond to child protection and social protection needs. Respondents feel that the system has dedicated and enthusiastic child protection personnel, but they are unable to meet the level of demand.

Social protection system design is gender neutral, while NICHE can be considered gender-responsive. Some cash transfers, such as NICHE and UCB pilot, specifically try to target an increasing number of female beneficiaries in order to expand the benefits for women. However, this is not the norm, and Kenya's main social assistance programme, Inua Jamii, does not do this. It is noted that targeting women often has greater impacts for both women and children, and the specific targeting of women ensures that some of Kenya's social protection programmes are taking note of gender. However, this approach can inadvertently reaffirm women's role as the primary caregiver, running the risk of further cementing gendered norms.

The study has illustrated challenges around ensuring that women are able to access social protection programmes. Respondents noted that in certain parts of the country it is very challenging for women to travel, and the social service workforce do not make frequent trips to visit these women. In some communities gendered norms make it challenging for women to engage in community events, increasing the likelihood that they will miss out on important communication. Often information is relayed through village Chiefs who are overwhelmingly male, which sometimes leads to women being excluded from communication. Another key issue that was raised by respondents' centres around the required documentation which is often very difficult to get hold of. For example, to be enrolled onto the CT-OVC it is required that you have a death certificate proving that the child is an orphan, something that lots of caregivers do not have access to. Concerns were also raised over grievance mechanisms, that these are hard to access. Child protection practitioners in particular feel that the lack of understanding of how child protection is linked to other child development needs has led to a lack of prioritisation of child protection, an area where this is illustrated is the limited investment in resources to measure for impact or implementation.

Lack of complex gender disaggregated data, and clear data overall on the programme delivery and evaluation presents as a challenge to both child protection and social protection, and efforts to assess gender-responsiveness of programmes and services. While some programmes include MIS systems and available data, more needs to be done to increase data transparency and complexity to ensure different aspects of service delivery are being tracked. Respondents consistently expressed frustration at not knowing who is really benefiting when looking at the data, limiting their assessment ability. Under the CPMIS, gender-related data such as data on FGM and child marriage is much lower than other sources, leading to a misrepresentation of the problem. If the data collected by the CPMIS is used to project the gender-related violation of children then the figures used will be incorrect, likely minimising the challenges.

Gender outcomes are mixed. There are more female indirect and direct beneficiaries than male in the NSNP. Moreover, the continued emphasis on targeting female beneficiaries led to some discussion during the FGDs about the challenges facing men regarding social protection programmes. However, given gender norms, it is not clear that female (caregivers) always control the benefits. Respondents noted that in certain parts of Kenya social norms still give men sole control over financial resources. Gender-specific needs are rarely addressed directly by the NSNP (with the exception of NICHE). Overall,

the gender-responsiveness of the system could be improved, by focusing more explicitly on gender-specific needs and local gendered norms.

The social protection system's performance across the gender integration continuum is summarised in the table below. While it creates some financial relief for households, it does not purposely address gender specific needs or always consider gender dynamics in its implementation, nor is it transforming gender norms, practices or power dynamics. Conducting comprehensive KIIs and FGDs suggests that the social service workforce could be used more effectively to engage with vulnerable families, but this requires increased resources and available staff. Additional focus should also be on actively engaging men and women in a range of additional services, to encourage the inclusion of fathers into childcare and domestic responsibilities, while also giving women an opportunity to learn new things, socialise more, and boost their self-esteem. The specific targeting of female beneficiaries has the potential to be significant, but only with careful consideration of different local contexts and an adequate benefit value. The following table presents the main dimensions of social protection through the NSNP and its scores across the gender continuum.

Table 2: Social Protection Performance Across the Gender Continuum.

Dimension	Key Findings	Judgement
Legal Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kenya's constitution lays a strong foundation for social protection, particularly focusing on the needs of vulnerable groups such as women and children. 	Gender Sensitive
Policy Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recent adoption of the Kenya Social Protection Policy (2023) constructs a gender-responsive and occasionally transformative framework for social protection. The new Social Protection Policy and the pending Social Protection Bill emphasise gender-responsive social protection as a guiding principle. Child protection policy frameworks are generally gender-sensitive, acknowledging gender inequalities but not always prioritising them in intervention design. 	Gender Responsive (Social Protection) Gender Sensitive (Child Protection)
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The governance structure for social protection in Kenya has been strengthened through Executive Order No. 1 of 2023, which established the State Department for Social Protection and Senior Citizen Affairs under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. While there are efforts to link social protection with other critical social sectors like education and health, challenges persist in ensuring adequate coordination and gender sensitive governance. 	Gender neutral
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government investment in social protection and child protection sectors in Kenya has been relatively low and has seen a decline over the years. On the ground, local government officers face significant 	Gender Neutral

	<p>operational hurdles due to these constrained budgets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further complicating the landscape are issues related to inflation adjustment, insufficient funding for the specific needs of women and girls, and a lack of robust gender-responsive budgeting. Kenya scored a D on the 2023 PEFA assessment overall and for gender. • Despite reliance on funding from both national government sources and international support, the capacity for implementing gender-sensitive budgeting remains weak. 	
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social protection programmes in Kenya aim to be gender neutral, with some specifically targeting women in caregiver roles. However, there is a significant gap in female participation in programme design, which can lead to overlooking gender-specific needs and reinforcing traditional gender roles. • Design of programmes often does not take gender-specific challenges into account, such as the difficulty for women in obtaining necessary certificates and national IDs, as well as financial inclusion and connectivity, which disproportionately affects them. • There is a notable lack of gender-specific communication strategies in social protection programmes, which hinders the effective engagement of women and may prevent them from fully benefiting from the services offered. • Community-based targeting and proxy-means testing, often coordinated by male village leaders, can lead to biased prioritisation, inadvertently sidelining women. • logistical issues such as the distance to registration centres and the lack of childcare options during registration disproportionately impact women, especially those in rural areas • The social service workforce faces significant challenges. These include understaffing, excessive workloads, and inadequate resources, particularly in rural areas where infrastructure and safety issues further restrict service delivery. The disconnect between national and county government operations complicates effective service delivery. • The effectiveness of the social service workforce is also hampered by the lack of support for community structures like social welfare committees. These challenges can make it difficult for the workforce to adequately address women's needs or local gendered norms. • The reliance on male chiefs to process grievances creates an uncomfortable and inaccessible environment for women to report gender-specific issues. • The systems in place for collecting and utilising gender- 	Gender Neutral

	<p>disaggregated data are simplistic and infrequently updated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluations of social protection programmes often overlook the gender-specific impacts, focusing more on general functionality. 	
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social protection programmes are found to have a mixed impact on gender norms. While they provide financial means that enhance respect and economic empowerment for women within communities, programmes can also inadvertently exacerbate gender-based violence when they are perceived to alter traditional norms by men. Additionally, programmes that fail to actively engage men can exacerbate household gender tensions. The impact of cash transfers is often undermined by their failure to keep pace with inflation, disproportionately affecting women who typically manage household budgets and care responsibilities. Social protection programmes have shown positive impacts on maternal health and children's education, improving metrics like hospital births and breastfeeding rates. 	Gender Neutral

Similarly, the child protection system has gender responsive policy and governance frameworks, but gender neutral implementation and design systems. The table below illustrates.

Table 3: Child Protection Performance Across the Gender Continuum.

Dimension	Key Findings	Judge ment
Policy and Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kenya has built a strong multi-tiered and cross sectoral child protection system, bolstered by a strong policy framework centring child rights, and guidelines which suggest awareness of gender inequality. A notable legislative advancement is the Children Act of 2022, which provides a comprehensive framework for child protection. This Act addresses gender-specific issues, such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child marriage, reflecting a targeted approach to protect children from gender-based harms. Child protection policies acknowledge inequalities but go less far in prioritising them in response. 	<i>Gender Sensitive</i>
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines and policies for case management include gender diversity, as a core pillar and offer tailored tools for service delivery, especially for girls and boys affected by violence. Limited documentation on the design process, lack of child protection actor participation, and challenges in budgeting due to competing interests highlight weaknesses in 	<i>Gender Neutral</i>

	<p>designing child protection programmes. This has led to services being inefficient or lacking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child protection delivery system is supported by community child protection groups and networks that contribute to service delivery, but often lack gender sensitivity due to male-dominated participation. In one example, we found a committee which focuses on gender and child protection which is promising. • Respondents identified a deficiency in gender integration within the child protection services, indicating a training gap that affects the delivery of gender-sensitive services. • Effective coordination across departments at the county level enhances emergency response programmes and aids in determining target beneficiaries for programmes like the NICHE programme, which focuses on mothers and includes parenting support. • A significant barrier to service uptake is the lack of readily available information about child protection services. While the National Directory for Children's Services Providers aims to bridge this gap, on-the-ground challenges like cultural norms and insufficient outreach hinder access, particularly for women and girls. • Cultural beliefs and local justice practices, such as fines or physical retribution for offenses like defilement and rape, often fail to protect young girls adequately and perpetuate stigma and injustice. • There is a pervasive lack of understanding at the community level regarding child protection and rights, compounded by information gaps that lead many to believe they are not the target beneficiaries of available services, especially affecting women and girls who may not see themselves as intended recipients to protection services in general and child protection services specifically. 	
Evaluation and Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kenya has established robust systems such as the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) to monitor child protection cases. This system collects comprehensive data on various forms of child maltreatment including violence, abuse, neglect, and more, and is designed to be gender-sensitive through the collection of gender-disaggregated data and adherence to guidelines that emphasise respect for diversity in case management. • Assessments on county levels are scarce, with insufficient data on case resolution and programme impact on challenges like FGM and child pregnancies, highlighting the need for more focused impact evaluations and gender-disaggregated data. • While the Kenya Child Protection Data portal provides gender-disaggregated data, it reveals that certain categories of abuse that disproportionately affect girls, like FGM and 	<i>Gender neutral</i>

	<p>child marriage, show surprisingly low caseloads based on reported cases, in breaking with high prevalence of these issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are limited gender-assessments conducted in financial analyses, making it difficult to gain a comprehensive understanding of the financial resources that would be required to tackle gender-specific challenges. • Impact assessments of child and social protection programmes often lack a detailed gender analysis, reducing the effectiveness of interventions targeting gender-specific issues in the future. 	
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4.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, we propose recommendations to improve the gender sensitivity, responsiveness, and transformativeness of social protection and child protection systems and programmes in Kenya – to move, in other words, social protection and child protection systems and programmes up the gender integration continuum. Recommendations are designed also to improve gender equality outcomes, address gender-specific vulnerabilities and increase empowerment of women and girls. These recommendations take account of the GRASSP framework’s levers of change: political commitment, finance, capacity building, institutional norms, evidence generation, social movements. These recommendations have been discussed and improved at a validation workshop for the study and in further KSEIP design workshops. They are also based on a recent ‘Feminist Priorities for Extending and Adapting Social Protection in Africa 2022’⁸.

In the table below, we set out recommendations by system element, and show how each recommendation will change the GIC score of implemented. We also highlight ‘big ticket’ recommendations, which are key for progress in each area. For these big ticket recommendations, we provide further recommendations to achieve gender transformativeness.

⁸ <https://www.unicef.org/esa/media/12866/file/UNICEF-Social-Protection-Study-Africa-2022.pdf>

Table 4: Recommendations.

Guidance

The table on the next page is colour coded. The GIC score is coded different shades of blue (from light – neutral – to darker – responsive).

The table is also linked to the main body of the report. Press Ctrl and click on a system element, and you will be taken to the relevant section of the recommendations below.

The table is designed to be interactive. To change how it is organised, click (in Microsoft Word) anywhere within the table, and then on Table Layout, and Sort, and then select how you want it to be sorted. For instance, if you want all the big ticket recommendations at the top, sort by type (descending) and then system element.

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Word interface with the 'Table Layout' ribbon active. The 'Sort' button is circled in red. A red arrow points from the 'Sort' button to the 'Sort by' dropdown in the 'Sort' dialog box. The dialog box shows the following settings:

- Sort by: System element (Type: Text, Using: Paragraphs, Ascending selected)
- Then by: Type (Type: Text, Using: Paragraphs, Ascending selected)
- Then by: (Type: Text, Using: Paragraphs, Ascending selected)
- My list has: No header row

The background shows a table with columns: System-element, GIC-status, Type, Timing, and GIC-status-if-implemented.

System element	Current GIC status	Type	Recommendation	Responsible	Timing	GIC status if implemented
Capacity to deliver	Neutral	Big ticket	Increase allocations for social service workforce, including Children's Officers.	GoK	2027	Sensitive
Capacity to deliver	Neutral	Big ticket	Allocate greater resources to training staff working on social protection and child protection programmes and systems.	GoK	2026	Sensitive
Capacity to deliver	Neutral	Additional	Expand on the gender mainstreaming efforts by the Department of Gender and Affirmative Action for child protection and social protection by disseminating guidelines.	MoLSP	2025	Neutral
Capacity to deliver	Neutral	Additional	Work with expert partners and existing bodies to formally establish social work as a regulated profession in Kenya	MoLSP	2027	Neutral
Capacity to deliver	Neutral	Additional	Explore community networks for child protection and gender, aiming to list effective networks and organisations	County Departments of Gender	2025	Neutral
Capacity to deliver	Neutral	Additional	Support sensitization efforts towards governmental bodies on roles, responsibilities and mandates	DPs	2025	Neutral
Capacity to deliver	Neutral	Additional	Deliver gender-responsive child protection and social protection training to children's officers and local officials	DPs	2026	Neutral
Capacity to deliver	Neutral	Additional	Explore a secondment programme to rotate gender experts across departments	GoK	2026+	Neutral
Child protection programme	Neutral	Big ticket	Implement the programme design recommendations for child protection	GoK	2025	Responsive
Child protection programme	Neutral	Additional	Develop guidelines for community social protection and child protection networks with a minimum quota of women participants	County Departments of Gender	2025	Neutral

System element	Current GIC status	Type	Recommendation	Responsible	Timing	GIC status if implemented
Child protection programme	Neutral	Additional	Include gender awareness under outreach sessions	County Departments of Gender	2025	Neutral
Child protection programme	Neutral	Additional	Update outreach and case management practices to actively link women and girls to GBV services	MoLSP	2025	Neutral
Child protection programme	Neutral	Additional	Ensure all county departments' budget, workplans, projects and activities are gender responsive	County governors	2026	Neutral
Child protection programme	Neutral	Additional	Conduct county level assessments of current opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing between county departments	County governors	2027	Neutral
Child protection programme	Neutral	Additional	Strengthen their workforce's ability to recognize vulnerabilities and threats faced by women	County governors	2025	Neutral
Child protection programme	Neutral	Additional	Introduce training on psychosocial support on a community level	County governors	2026	Neutral
Data and evidence	Neutral	Big ticket	Conduct a gender assessment of MIS for all social protection and child protection programmes	GoK	2025	Sensitive
Data and evidence	Neutral	Big ticket	Design and commission a standard and routine rapid gender audit that can be regularly implemented of the child protection and social protection programming	GoK	2025	Sensitive
Data and evidence	Neutral	Big ticket	Commission research on the specific vulnerabilities facing adolescent girls and boys in Kenya and investment case for addressing them	GoK	2026	Sensitive
Data and evidence	Neutral	Additional	Enhanced data sharing amongst all agencies involved in social protection	MoLSP	2025	
Data and evidence	Neutral	Additional	Commission a separate assessment using the GRASSP framework that focuses specifically on child protection	DPs	2026	Neutral
Data and evidence	Neutral	Additional	Commission a gender assessment of social insurance and other social protection programmes	MoLSP	2027	Neutral
Data and evidence	Neutral	Additional	Commission a process evaluation of the NSNP	MoLSP	2027	Neutral

System element	Current GIC status	Type	Recommendation	Responsible	Timing	GIC status if implemented
Data and evidence	Neutral	Additional	Insist that all evaluations or reviews of elements of the social protection or cash transfer system or their programmes dedicate resources to addressing gender-specific questions	MoLSP	2025+	Neutral
Data and evidence	Neutral	Additional	Commission research that looks at gender dynamics in households receiving social assistance	DPs	2026	Neutral
Data and evidence	Neutral	Additional	Work to support the voices of girls and women to be expressed	DPs	2025	Neutral
Data and evidence	Neutral	Additional	Conduct assessment on the efficacy of parenting programmes in specific projects and their gender-responsiveness	DPs	2027	Neutral
Data and evidence	Neutral	Additional	Enhance social protection and child protection monitoring mechanisms at the county level and assessments on women's and girls' access to services overall	GoK	2026+	Neutral
Finance	Neutral	Big ticket	Commission products to argue for increased financial allocations to social protection and child protection.	MoLSP	2026	Sensitive
Finance	Neutral	Big ticket	Commission a periodic gender assessment of the GoK budget across the life cycle	GoK	2027	Sensitive
Finance	Neutral	Additional	County legal frameworks should include a mandate for social protection and child protection budgeting, and County Directors of budget must be engaged in policy frameworks	County governors	2026	Neutral
Finance	Neutral	Additional	Child protection and social protection stakeholders in Kenya should form an inter-governmental structure to argue for greater budget allocations	NSPS	2025	Neutral
Legal and policy framework - overall	Sensitive	Big ticket	Organise stronger participation of special groups such as women, adolescents, persons with disabilities, etc. in programme and policy design and work to support the voices of girls and women to be expressed.	GoK	2026	Responsive

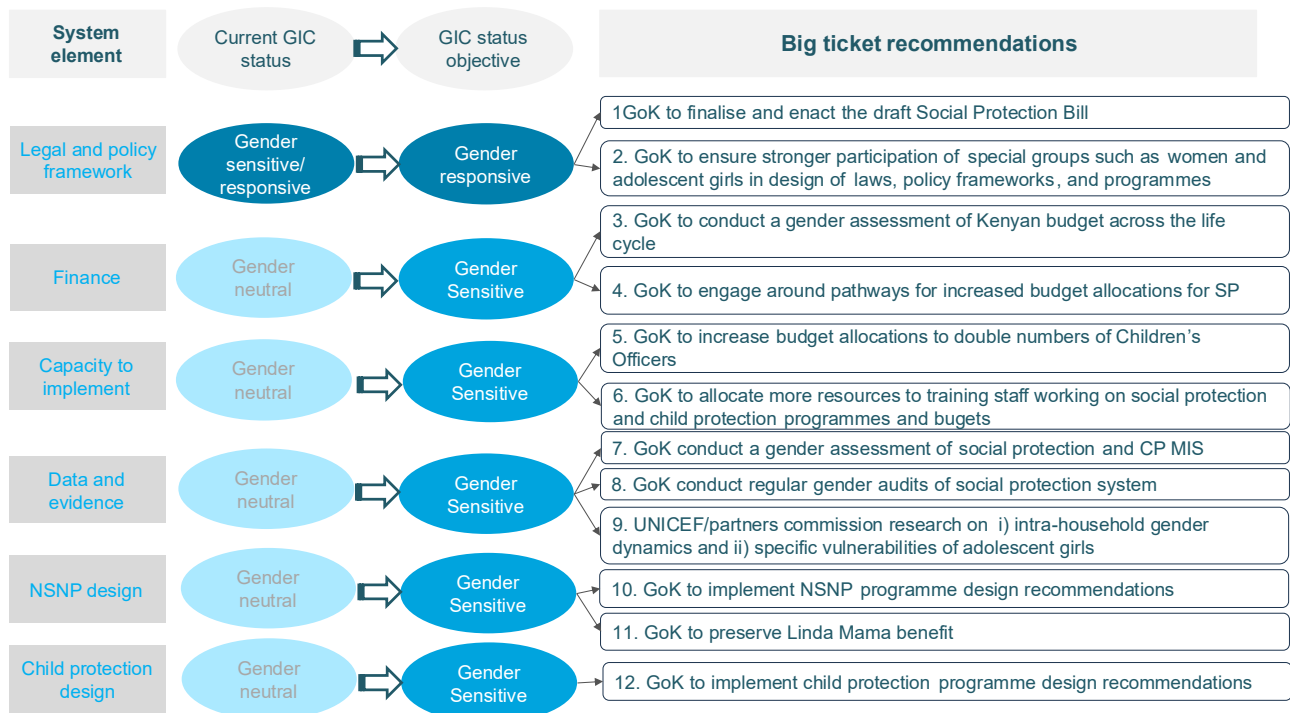
System element	Current GIC status	Type	Recommendation	Responsible	Timing	GIC status if implemented
Legal and policy framework - overall	Sensitive	Additional	Facilitate coordination between different sectors of government	NSPS	2026	Sensitive
Legal and policy framework - overall	Sensitive	Additional	Introduce guidance for better coordination on how to harmonise different bills at different levels and sectors anchored in the law for coordination of county and national programmes.	NSPS	2026	Sensitive
Legal and policy framework - social protection	Sensitive	Big ticket	Finalise and enact the Social Protection Bill	GoK	2025	Responsive
NSNP design - complementary services	Neutral	Additional	Link women to other services which improve economic outcomes	NSPS	2027	Neutral
NSNP design - co-responsibilities	Neutral	Additional	Consider including incentives and behaviour nudging in social protection programmes to promote shared caregiver roles	NSPS	2026	Neutral
NSNP design - eligibility and targeting	Neutral	Additional	Review targeting approaches to ensure that gendered vulnerabilities are adequately taken into account	NSPS	2026	Neutral
NSNP design - eligibility and targeting	Neutral	Additional	BWCs and local leaders should be empowered on matters of gender sensitivity	County Departments of Gender	2026+	Neutral
NSNP design - eligibility and targeting	Neutral	Additional	Review whether benefits are passing sufficiently to women in the household	NSPS	2026	Neutral
NSNP design - eligibility and targeting	Neutral	Additional	Improve the inter-operability of different MIS	MoLSP	2025	Neutral
NSNP design - eligibility and targeting	Neutral	Additional	Engage with Civil Registration Services and National Registration Bureau to ease and fast track women's acquisition of relevant documents	NSPS	2025	Neutral

System element	Current GIC status	Type	Recommendation	Responsible	Timing	GIC status if implemented
NSNP design - messaging	Neutral	Additional	Design a communications campaign that explicitly targets women and girls for the provision of information about their entitlements and options	MoLSP	2026	Neutral
NSNP design - payment delivery	Neutral	Additional	Ensure that women have sufficient access to digital payment options to collect payments safely	NSPS	2025	Neutral
NSNP design - payment delivery	Neutral	Additional	Conduct ID registration drives in rural and remote areas	Civil registrar	2025+	Neutral
NSNP design - programme design	Neutral	Big ticket	Implement the programme design recommendations for NSNP	GoK	2025	Responsive
NSNP design - programme design	Neutral	Big ticket	Preserve Linda Mama maternity benefit	GoK	2025	Neutral
NSNP design - programme design	Neutral	Additional	Take action to remove basic barriers to access that affect women in particular	MoLSP	2025	Neutral
NSNP design - programme design	Neutral	Additional	Review the experience with NICHE in detail	MoLSP	2026	Neutral
NSNP design - programme design	Neutral	Additional	Ensure that the composition of Beneficiary Welfare Committees (BWCs) is gender balanced	County Departments of Gender	2027	Neutral
NSNP design - programme design	Neutral	Additional	Emphasise the critical role of the unpaid care economy, and to advocate for continued expansion of maternity grants, formal childcare provision, and childcare subsidies to those who cannot afford it	DPs	2027	Neutral

Summary of Prioritized Big Ticket Reform and Programme Recommendations

Big ticket recommendations are summarised in the figure below:

Figure 5: Big ticket reform recommendations



The text below summarises prioritized twelve big ticket reform recommendations for the Social Protection and Child Protection system, including recommendations for NSNP and Child Protection. Further detail on these prioritized top must-do recommendations can be found in the specific sections that follow.

Big Ticket System Reforms

1. **GoK should finalise and enact the Social Protection Bill** as soon as possible, to finalise the current legal framework for gender-responsive social protection.
2. GoK, with support from development partners, should **organise stronger participation of special groups such as women, adolescents, persons with disabilities, etc. in programme and policy design** and in the specification of objectives as well as **work to support the voices of girls and women to be expressed**, including on emerging issues in child protection and social protection.
3. GoK, with support from development partners, should **commission a periodic gender assessment of the GoK budget across the life cycle**, including age dimensions to encompass children, adolescents, and adults.
4. MoLSP should engage around the next budget cycle on **possible pathways to increasing budget allocations and spending for social protection by commissioning a combination of products designed to strengthen commitment from MoF, the President, and parliamentarians for increased financial allocations** for social protection and child protection. Increased budget allocation could improve coverage of women and girls in general, support higher transfer values, support programmes addressing specific vulnerabilities, support more cash plus programming, support more and better trained social workers, and is a necessary condition for several other recommendations below.

5. **GoK should increase allocations for social service workforce, including Children's Officers,** to enhance child protection capacity and gender-related social protection referrals and linkages for households.
6. **The GoK should allocate greater resources to training staff working on social protection and child protection programmes and systems.** This includes working with the Kenya School of Government to organise short-term training programmes for the social protection and child protection workforce, particularly Children's Officers but also including those involved in budgets to support gender mainstreaming in budgets.
7. **GoK, with support from development partners, should conduct a gender assessment of Management Information Systems (MIS) for all social protection and child protection programmes** to determine the current state of gender relevant data, including gender disaggregation, in terms of both data collection and analysis.
8. GoK, together with **development partners should design and commission a standard and routine rapid gender audit that can be regularly implemented** of the child protection and social protection programming.
9. **GoK with development partners should commission research on the specific vulnerabilities facing adolescent girls and boys in Kenya,** and an investment case for addressing them
10. **GoK should implement the programme design recommendations for NSNP to enhance gender-responsiveness.** The most pivotal programme design recommendations include programme objectives (e.g. adolescents, unpaid care/ care economy, disability), cash transfer value and payment modality (digital transfers), eligibility criteria and targeting of women, ID registration requirements, inter-linkages between child protection and social protection case management, and gender-responsive communications campaigns/ messaging.
11. **GoK should preserve the Linda Mama maternity benefit, which plays an essential part in protecting women during a key life cycle period of gendered vulnerability.** Withdrawing this benefit as a cost saving measure would significantly worsen outcomes and Kenya's gender responsiveness.
12. **GoK should implement the programme design recommendations for Child Protection to enhance gender-responsiveness through:** Key priorities for design recommendations include increasing the social service workforce, providing gender-sensitive training for them, strengthening referrals and interlinkages for GBV services, psychosocial support, and social protection programmes especially for unpaid carers, national and county budgeting for allocation and spending, and increasing the voices and agency of women and adolescents.

4.2.1 Social protection and child protection system reform options

We focus these recommendations on the most critical system reform elements: finalising the legal framework with the passage of the Social Protection Bill, improving participation and coordination, significantly increasing the volume, efficiency and gender responsiveness of social protection and child protection spending, increasing the number of social workers, especially Children's Officers but also community networks, trained and capacitated to respond to gender issues, and improving the quality and availability of data and evidence on gender in the social protection and child protection systems, including gender audits, with a particular focus on adolescent girls.

Legal and policy framework

The bulk of the legal and policy framework for gender-responsive social protection is in place, with the current exception of the 2024 draft Social Protection Bill. However, there are some challenges with meaningful participation of women and adolescent girls in policy design and coordination between government sectors and across the existing bills.

Big ticket items

1. **MoLSP should work with Parliament, relevant committees, and the Attorney-General's office to finalise and enact the Social Protection Bill** as soon as possible in 2025, to finalise the current legal framework for gender-responsive social protection. This will allow County governments in the medium term to generate legislation, policy, and financing, on the basis of model versions that the NSPS should develop. Each County should develop its own social protection policy.
2. In future legal and policy developments in these sectors (and certainly in programme design), the MoLSP and the State Departments of Gender, with support from development partners, should from 2026 **organise stronger participation of special groups such as women, adolescents, persons with disabilities, etc. in programme and policy design** and in the specification of objectives. Kenya has a strong tradition of community participation in design, but relatively less participation from women in policy-making, and there are some specific difficulties in involving women in this sort of participation on an equal basis, which will need careful planning to overcome, perhaps with technical assistance. This could be initiated as part of KSEIP II.

These recommendations, if implemented, would lead to a gender responsive legal and policy framework. In order to achieve gender transformative framework, the **GoK would need to update the social protection Bill and Policy to actively challenge and change underlying structures that perpetuate gender inequality**. This implies that the GoK should update language from needs to rights; targeting to structural change; participation to leadership. Ensure data and evidence for transformation, accountability and monitoring. In addition, the policy process should be restructured such that **women and girls lead policy design**, not merely express their voices.

Additional recommendations

3. The NSPS should **facilitate coordination between different sectors of government** with responsibility for child protection and social protection, including MoLSP, MoH, MoE, and County governments. The NICHE programme has offered a successful indication of how this could work in practice (which is complex and requires significant further thought), but further authoritative support to this is likely important.
4. The NSPS should also **introduce guidance for better coordination on how to harmonise different bills at different levels and sectors anchored in the law for coordination of county and national programmes**. This might involve guidelines on harmonising definitions, eligibility, data management protocols, and referral pathways. Joint M&E

Financing

The legal and policy frameworks provide a strong basis for making remaining elements of Kenya's social protection and child protection systems more gender-responsive and -transformative. **Central to these improvements over the long-term will be increasing public financing to the sectors and spending these budgets more efficiently in terms of gender, including a greater operational spend and more gender-responsive allocations.**

Big ticket

1. **The NSPS should commission from 2025 a combination of products designed to support the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MoLSP) to strengthen commitment from MoF, the President, and parliamentarians for increased financial allocations** from the National Treasury and county governments for social protection and child protection in the next budget cycle in 2026 (in part on the basis of the legal and policy framework). These products could include i) strong evidence on the results and benefits of social protection and child protection spending in Kenya, ii) investment cases for (gender-responsive) child protection and (gender-responsive and child-sensitive) social assistance in Kenya (similar cases exist for other countries in the region), iii)

detailed fiscal space analysis for child protection and social protection, and iv) an outline financing plan for increasing expenditure on these sectors to levels of regional peers. This should also be communicated effectively to stakeholders in central positions. This should take place around both budgets and the Medium Term Expenditure Framework. Increased budget allocation could improve coverage of women and girls in general, support higher transfer values, support programmes addressing specific vulnerabilities, support more cash plus programming, support more and better trained social workers, and is a necessary condition for several other recommendations below. This can build upon efforts to improve allocations in other sectors. This recommendation, if implemented, would lead to gender sensitive financing. In order to achieve gender transformative financing, the **GoK would need to allocate significantly greater resources to social protection and child protection** – in line with allocations in middle income countries.

2. The GoK, with support from development partners should **commission from 2027 a periodic gendered assessment of the GoK national and county budgets**, including age dimensions to encompass children, adolescents, and adults, which includes the development of gender-based budgeting and tagging, in order to achieve greater clarity on gendered allocations and expenditure at national and county level. This would be undertaken by Treasury with budget data but in collaboration with ministries that have a gender mandate, and includes a budgetary review of all expenditures (and performance indicators) that either specifically address gender or are relevant to gender issues. It consists in retrieving the expenditures from the general budget from the IFMIS, then on the basis of programme formulation identifying the activities with a gender objective and then presenting the findings. The periodicity of these assessments should align with Kenya's Medium Term Expenditure framework. This recommendation, if implemented, would lead to gender sensitive finance. In order to achieve gender transformative finance, the **GoK would need to implement the recommendations of the gender budget assessment**.

Additional

3. **County legal frameworks should include a mandate for social protection and child protection budgeting, and County Directors of budget must be engaged in policy frameworks.** County governments should allocate a certain proportion of their budgets to social protection programmes.
4. **Child protection and social protection stakeholders in Kenya should form an inter-governmental structure in 2024/25** to convene arguments for increased budget allocations and more efficient spending through engagement with the media, civil society leaders, and politicians. This should include the NSPS, DSD, and county representatives.

Capacity to deliver through the social services workforce

Kenya has limited numbers of social workers (especially Children's Officers) relative to most other countries including peers and relative to the complex vulnerabilities they are supposed to manage. This - together with limited operational budgets - significantly curtails the implementation capacity of government for gender-responsive social protection and child protection. To respond, we recommend that:

Big ticket

1. **Planning officers in the MoLSP should work with Treasury and at county level to increase allocations for Children's Officers by 2027**, aiming to at least double the number of Children's Officers deployed in the field by 2030, with provisions for quality gender-sensitive training and operational budgets to carry out their work, and preferably recruiting a large proportion of women. This could be phased with a start in Counties that face high vulnerabilities and limited per child social workers. UNICEF and other development partners should support this, building on their existing efforts to increase the number of Children's Officers, through targeted advocacy

and technical assistance on financing plans (see recommendation above) and capacity development activities.

2. **The GoK and county governments should from 2026 allocate greater resources to training staff working on social protection and child protection programmes and systems.** This includes working with the Kenya School of Government to organise short-term training programmes for the social protection and child protection workforce, particularly Children's Officers but also including those involved in budgets to support gender mainstreaming in budgets. Budget and planning officials in the MoLSP should in the next budget cycle review the circumstances in which they can increase the operational budget for the social services workforce, community networks for outreach, and financial services providers for cash transfers, perhaps working with Treasury to make allocations available at County Level. Additional allocations might be piloted in specific counties with particular vulnerabilities, such as Garissa and Turkana. Costing for training child protection staff has already been undertaken.

These recommendations, if implemented, would lead to gender sensitive capacity to deliver. In order to achieve gender transformative capacity to deliver, the **GoK would need to recruit, train, and retain a social service workforce sufficient to implement gender transformative social protection and child protection**, which implies allocating significantly greater resources to this than in the recommendations above.

Additional

1. **The MoLSP should expand on the gender mainstreaming efforts by the Department of Gender and Affirmative Action for child protection and social protection**, specifically by disseminating guidelines, ensuring that dissemination is looped back in a simplified gender budgeting assessment checklist for example. Tools can be developed in collaboration with between the Department of Gender and Affirmative Action and development partners, whereas implementation and follow up would fall on the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, and County Governments.
2. **The MoLSP works with expert partners and existing bodies to formally establish social work as a regulated profession in Kenya**, and develop standards and guidelines to support this, with a particular view to gender responsiveness. This should include a specific curriculum for training, developed with the Kenya School of Government (perhaps extending existing courses rather than overhauling the curriculum). This could be supported by UNICEF or other partners.
3. **County Governments (especially Departments of Gender) should explore community networks for child protection and gender**, aiming to list effective networks and organisations in 2024. These organisations should have the capability to identify and support or lead the management of child protection issues, and so should have some minimal level of training and regulation. This should include strengthening existing community mechanisms such as Beneficiary Welfare Committees and Area Advisory Committees, and integrating the work of CPVs and CHVs. In subsequent years, County Governments or the MoLSP could allocate budget to capacitating these organisations to achieve minimum service standards, and then contracting them to deliver parts of the child protection case management system.

Supporting these recommendations, we suggest that:

4. **UNICEF and other development partners support sensitization efforts towards governmental bodies on roles, responsibilities and mandates** in preparation for the design and assessment of county plans for the year, in order to minimise overlap and maximise mutual reinforcement between national and county governments and different departments working on child and social protection. This can include brief sensitization material outlining roles and responsibilities in the different bodies in the social protection and child protection ecosystem.

Sensitization sessions can be held online to minimise costs. Sensitization sessions can also be a window for feedback from the lower and mid-level child protection and social protection workforce, increasing ownership and shared accountability. Sensitization sessions can also serve as opportunities to deliver minimum training modules on gender responsive Social Protection and Child Protection through collaboration with development partners and gender experts within the government.

5. UNICEF and other development partners **deliver gender-responsive child protection and social protection training to children's officers and local officials** within county Governments' training cycles. They should coordinate with Department of Gender and Affirmative action to ensure monitoring and oversight of training, as well as sharing of resources.
6. **The GoK explore a secondment programme**, learning for example from Canada's [interchange system](#), where gender experts from government institutions serve short term rotations in different social protection and child protection bodies at the national and county level. Here rotations can take into account budgeting development schedules, assessment periods, as well as government year schedule overall to ensure maximisation of intended benefit from capacity sharing secondment initiative. Secondments can also occur in reverse where social protection and child protection officers, as well as officers in the national treasury can be seconded to the department of gender and affirmative action, or development partners with a strong gender budgeting technical capacity or other gender mainstreaming tools.

Data and evidence

While there are functioning management information systems for both child protection and social protection, neither appear fully gender-sensitive. And while there is some evaluative and other evidence on gender aspects of child protection and social protection in Kenya, there are substantial gaps. In particular, most evidence focuses on social protection and child protection receives relatively less attention (including in this study). These gaps and the lack of gender-sensitive programme data curtail both reform efforts and improvements to the gender sensitivity of programme implementation and design. We therefore recommend that the GoK conducts gender assessments of MIS, the implementation of the child protection system, and regular audits of the social protection and child protection sectors. Partners should commission relevant research on household gender dynamics and adolescent girls:

Big ticket

1. **The MoLSP with support from development partners conducts in 2025 a gender assessment of MIS for all social protection and child protection programmes** to determine the current state of gender relevant data, including gender disaggregation, in terms of both data collection and analysis. Development partners could try to move this quickly. Findings from this should determine the need and scope for upgrades to the MIS systems to improve the degree to which they are able to capture information related to the coverage and performance of programmes in relation to women, men, girls and boys, focusing on applying an intersectional lens, including age, disability, geography and poverty. These upgrades should be carried out with some urgency, supported as needed by development partners. If implemented, this recommendation would support a gender sensitive implementation arrangement, but to achieve a gender transformative arrangement, the **GoK would need to update the MIS to support gender transformative programme design and implementation.**
2. State Department of Gender, together with **development partners work with MoLSP to design and commission a standard and routine rapid gender audit that can be regularly implemented** of the child protection and social protection programming, starting in 2025. Upfront, this should consist of a well-developed process to establish standardized mechanisms that also take into account ongoing and future gender assessments and studies (e.g. GBV/VAC, paid and unpaid care, and economic empowerment, etc.). These audits should include regular assessment of gender-based budget allocations and spending. The audits could be biennial, or

aligned with MTEF (four years) with the possibility of more frequent checkins. If implemented, this recommendation would support a gender sensitive implementation arrangement, but to achieve a gender transformative arrangement, the **GoK would need to implement the recommendations of the audits.**

3. **GoK with development partners should commission research on the specific vulnerabilities facing adolescent girls and boys in Kenya from 2026**, and an investment case for addressing them, with a view to generating precise recommendations on how these gender-specific needs can be addressed through the social protection and child protection systems. This could build on the issues identified in this study, including: FGM, early marriage, teenage pregnancy, sexual and other gender-based and intimate partner violence against girls and boys, violent extremism, substance abuse, school drop out and transition to tertiary education or the labour force, and the reproduction of gender norms around decision-making, ownership, and control, and on the ideas and initiatives set out in the Adolescent Girls Initiative- Kenya evaluation in 2020 which showed that early multi-sectoral investments in adolescent girls can have substantial long-term impacts.⁹ This can also consider the forthcoming study of the Child Vulnerability Assessment undertaken by KNBS and UNICEF. Currently neither the social protection (nor social assistance) nor child protection system is well scoped around the needs of this critical group, and stronger evidence on these needs and how to address them might generate momentum to achieve this. UNICEF's Adolescent Girls Programme strategy¹⁰ emphasises the importance of promoting health and nutrition, advancing education and relevant skills, and protection from violence and offers initial evidence for the investment case. This research could be undertaken through KSEIP II and calls for proposals from UNICEF Innocenti research centre. If implemented, this recommendation would support a gender sensitive implementation arrangement, but to achieve gender transformative implementation and financing, the **GoK would need to implement the recommendations of the research.**

Additional

4. **MoLSP should oversee enhanced data sharing amongst all agencies involved in social protection.**
5. **UNICEF or other development partners in 2024/25 commission a separate assessment using the GRASSP framework that focuses specifically on child protection** in different counties where there are variations in the types of GBV against girls prevalent (FGM, Child Marriage, etc), while also exploring different communities, traditions, norms, and economic conditions and how they interact with the child protection system. Here also a focus can be on child protection workforce given the nature of child protection services and the centrality of case management. Assessment should also include the child protection data portal, specifically data collection practices, reporting, and data collection capabilities of the workforce, and the reliability and accuracy of the portal.
6. **MoLSP should in 2025 commission a process (and possibly impact) evaluation of the NSNP** to review social assistance objectives, design and implementation to assess gender-responsiveness, and how this can be improved. Consider addressing emerging trends and shifting needs, prioritise marginalised girls and boys, and review shock-responsive social protection mechanisms to check whether gender is adequately integrated into shock-responsive social protection. Development partners may be able to support this. UNICEF and the World Bank would support this.
7. **MoLSP should in coming years commission a gender assessment of social insurance and other social protection programmes not covered in detail by this review.** This would underpin

⁹ Austrian, K., Soler-Hampejsek, E., Kangwana, B., Maddox, N., Wado, Y., Abuya, B., Shah, V., and Maluccio, J. 2020. "Adolescent Girls Initiative–Kenya: Endline Evaluation Report." Nairobi: Population Council.

https://prevention-collaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/AGI-K_EndlineEvalReport.pdf

¹⁰ https://www.unicef.org/media/146091/file/Adolescent_Girls_Programme_Strategy_EN.pdf

wider improvements to the gender responsiveness of the social protection system outside the NSNP.

8. MoLSP and the Department of Gender should from now on **insist that all evaluations or reviews of elements of the social protection or cash transfer system or their programmes dedicate resources to addressing gender-specific questions.**
9. **UNICEF or other development partners consider commissioning research that looks at gender dynamics in households receiving social assistance**, with a view to developing strong 'do no harm' recommendations in cash transfer design. This is given the evidence on gender inequalities in decision-making from the 2022 DHS (and elsewhere).
10. **UNICEF and other development partners should (continue or intensify) work to support the voices of girls and women to be expressed**, including on emerging issues in child protection and social protection, system and programme design, and in engaging with implementation. Specifically, this could include organising meetings between girls and women and individuals involved in different elements of the social protection and child protection systems with policymakers and government officials at county or national level. Gender disaggregated data and knowledge management overseen by Gender Technical Working groups would greatly enhance advocacy efforts.

Further data and evidence recommendations to consider include:

11. Conduct **assessment on the efficacy of parenting programmes in specific projects and their gender-responsiveness**, specifically how they can support changes in the division of care labour. This can be implemented in pilot projects such as the UCB, or ongoing projects such as NICHE focusing more on this topic as opposed to a general assessment. A policy brief could also be developed based on evidence and best practices available in the short run to develop guidelines for parenting counselling. Guidelines can then be adopted by the Social Protection and Child Protection workforce working on programmes with this component.
12. **Enhance social protection and child protection monitoring mechanisms at the county level and assessments on women's and girls' access to services overall** and as well as barriers related to individual and structural vulnerabilities which might affect access and benefit from social protection and child protection programmes and services. This can be piloted in one of the ASAL counties and monitored for replication in the upcoming year or the year after in other countries. Stakeholders include the department of gender and affirmative action, the Ministry of labour and Social Protection, county governments, and development partners.

4.2.2 NSNP design improvements

Alongside these system reform recommendations, we also recommend some changes to the NSNP design to improve gender-responsiveness. These recommendations are based on the findings that most elements of the current NSNP design are gender-sensitive, but only NICHE is gender-responsive.

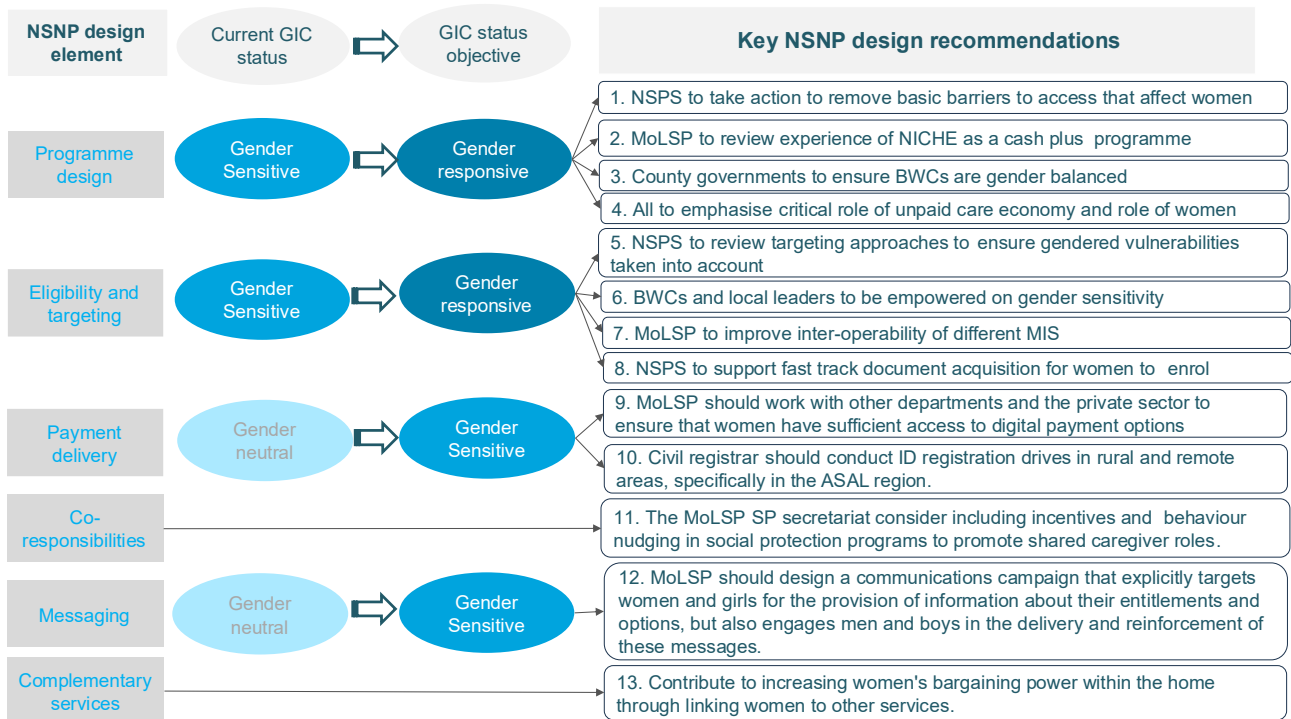
Big ticket

1. **GoK should implement the programme design recommendations for NSNP to enhance gender-responsiveness, starting in 2025.** The most pivotal programme design recommendations include programme objectives (e.g. adolescents, unpaid care/ care economy, disability), cash transfer value and payment modality (digital transfers), eligibility criteria and targeting of women, ID registration requirements, inter-linkages between child protection and social protection case management, and gender-responsive communications campaigns/ messaging.
2. **GoK should preserve the Linda Mama maternity benefit in 2025 and beyond.** This benefit is a key plank of a gender sensitive social protection system. Removing this would substantially worsen Kenya's social protection system and in particular its gender sensitivity.

While these big ticket recommendations would, if implemented, improve NSNP design to responsive, to achieve a gender transformative NSNP design the **GoK would need to redesign the NSNP more fundamentally to address structural drivers of gender inequality and gender-specific vulnerabilities.**

Detailed recommendations are illustrated in the slide below.

Figure 6: NSNP design recommendations



Programme design

Most NSNP programmes are currently not directly addressing the needs of women and adolescent girls.

Additional

1. MoLSP Social Protection Secretariat should in 2024/25 **take action to remove basic barriers to access that affect women in particular**, such as formal identification and absence from community meetings.
2. MoLSP should **review the experience with NICHE in detail** as a cash plus programme that is gender responsive, and has started explicitly to address gendered needs. NICHE could be a strong programme to take to further scale in order to address gendered needs and support NSNP design to be more aligned with the gender-responsiveness set out in the policy framework for social protection.
3. County governments should **ensure that the composition of Beneficiary Welfare Committees (BWCs) is gender balanced.**
4. UNICEF, other development partners, and allies in government should build on existing data to **emphasise the critical role of the unpaid care economy, and to advocate for continued expansion of maternity grants, formal childcare provision, and childcare subsidies to those who cannot afford it.**

Eligibility and targeting

Women's and girls' vulnerabilities are not directly addressed.

Additional

1. MoLSP Social Protection Secretariat, supported by development partners, should **review targeting approaches to ensure that gendered vulnerabilities are adequately taken into account** by the proxy means test (PMT) if community targeting is not to be used, in time for the Inua Jamii expansion. The PMT may be effective at identifying household vulnerability, but it may not sufficiently weight girls' and women's vulnerabilities, such as adolescent pregnancy, child marriage, and school drop-out. Review the Harmonised Targeting Methodology for gender responsiveness.
2. **BWCs and local leaders should be empowered on matters of gender sensitivity**, through training for BWCs and local leaders, perhaps during their onboarding.
3. MoLSP Social Protection Secretariat should **review whether benefits are passing sufficiently to women in the household** if they are not the household head. This would need to take account of low digital literacy and financial inclusion of women, and gender norms in households, but the Secretariat could explore a more explicit targeting of benefits on women or mothers, particularly for the CT-OVC, HSNP, and PwSD-CT, on the basis that they are more likely to be carers. The PwSD-CT needs particular attention given the unequal access to benefits.
4. **MoLSP should improve the inter-operability of different MIS**, especially CCTP MIS and CP MIS. Use upcoming review to explore practical steps to do this, which might include: standardise formats, building a central exchange platform, enhancing data security, and engage technology partners.
5. NSPS to **engage with Civil Registration Services and National Registration Bureau to ease and fast track acquisition of relevant documents**, in order to make it easier for women to enrol as beneficiaries.

Payment delivery

Some women are excluded from payments because they lack access to digital finance.

Additional

1. MoLSP should work with other departments and the private sector to **ensure that women have sufficient access to digital payment options to collect payments safely**, wherever they live and whatever their circumstances. This could be expanding network of agents, partnerships with local businesses for cash out; reducing costs for transactions, financial literacy training, or working with providers to simplify interfaces further and explore voice activation and offline functionality
2. The Civil Registrar should **conduct ID registration drives in rural and remote areas**, specifically in the ASAL region. ID registration drives should use spaces that are deemed safe and frequented by women to ensure their participation. These drives/campaigns should also take note of seasonality in ASAL areas and gender care roles to determine best time in the year and in the day to implement. Drives can also use current available registration data to prioritise areas with known low ID access. Incentives for ID access can be the joint registration in social protection systems, through joint collaboration on ID registration days with other social protection programmes or other benefits in the county under different departments. Campaigns should be preceded by information campaigns using mediums available to women such as SMS, radio, and other means to ensure potential beneficiaries are aware of these campaigns. Here information campaigns can frame messaging in language to encourage both women and male household heads, highlighting the benefits of registration to women, girls and other vulnerable groups, and the family at large. Stakeholders here include the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, as well as The Department of National Registration Bureau, and county governments.

Co-responsibilities

As caregiving roles are disproportionately borne by women and girls, we suggest that:

1. The MoLSP social protection secretariat **consider including incentives and behaviour nudging in social protection programmes to promote shared caregiver roles**. This can include

parenting sessions such as those already under the NICHE programme which has been found to be beneficial, but also insisting that both men and women attend meetings with children, encourage families to keep a time use diary to be discussed in the parenting sessions to collectively support increased equality. This task would fall on county officers, with technical guidance and support from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

Messaging

One of the barriers to equal access to or control over benefits for women is lack of information about rights.

1. **MoLSP should design a communications campaign that explicitly targets women and girls for the provision of information about their entitlements and options**, but also engages men and boys in the delivery and reinforcement of these messages. In order to ensure reach to the target audience and overcome barriers arising from gender exclusion, the campaign can use female friendly mediums of information dissemination such as radio, public awareness sessions, SMS, social media, as well as social protection and child protection physical and online service and information platforms. This should also consider the location of sessions, their timing, and the mode of communicating all with a gender lens to ensure that these are responsive to the needs of women and adolescent girls. The campaign should also include information on how the public can access services and benefits, as well as include information sensitising the public on gender norms and traditions harmful to women and girls. On the county and ward level campaigns can employ the support of community networks to increase reach, focusing on reaching vulnerable groups who have no access to public spaces such as people with disabilities, including older women and men who have movement and connectivity challenges. Ideally stakeholders involved in the actualization of this recommendation would include the Department of Gender and Affirmative Action, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, County Governments, and community networks.

Complementary services

In order to address wider household dynamics curtailing social protection impact, we suggest to:

1. Contribute to increasing women's bargaining power within the home through **linking women to other services which improve economic outcomes**, such as access to livelihood activities, protection from economic shocks, access to assets such as land or markets. This can be achieved through increased coordination within county and national programmes, and social and child protection workforce referral capabilities. One example here are drought support programmes found in Turkana County which already aim to target women and female headed households. Special attention needs to be paid that programmes do not add care responsibilities and logistical challenges for women.

4.2.3 Child protection programme improvements

Child protection programme design is typically gender sensitive at best, but programmes struggle to respond to gender needs in an organised and structured way. We recommend improvements to case management, outreach, and training:

Big ticket

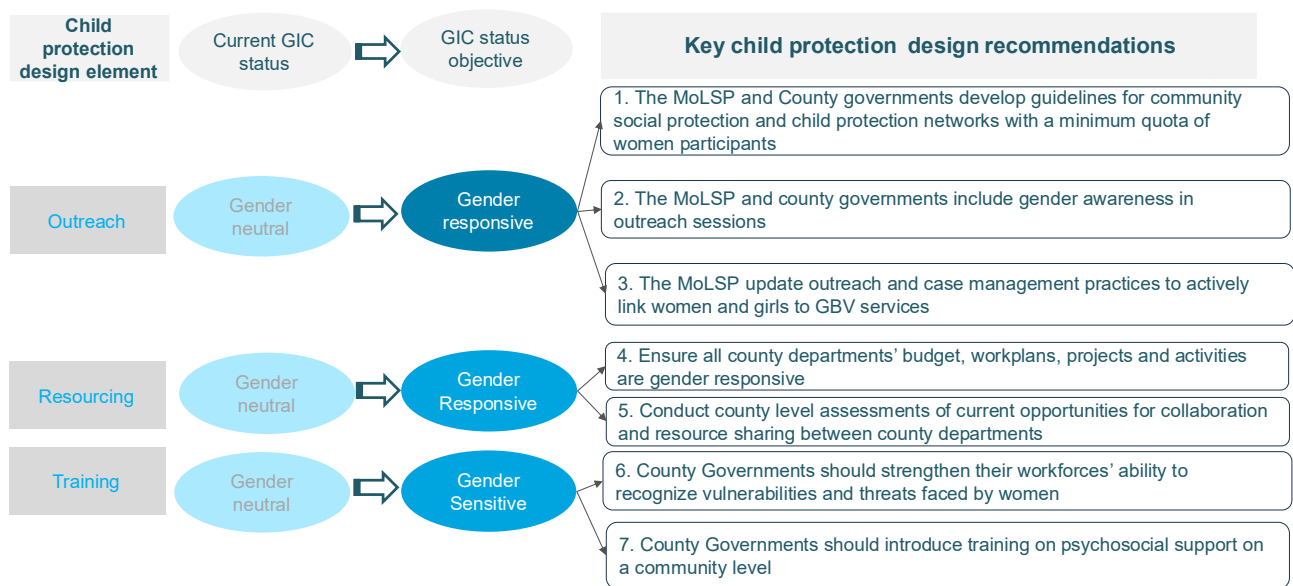
1. **GoK should start in 2025 to implement the programme design recommendations for Child Protection to enhance gender-responsiveness through:** Key priorities for design recommendations include increasing the social service workforce, providing gender-sensitive training for them, strengthening referrals and interlinkages for GBV services, psychosocial support, and social protection programmes especially for unpaid carers, national and county

budgeting for allocation and spending, and increasing the voices and agency of women and adolescents.

While this big ticket recommendation would, if implemented, improve child protection system design from neutral to responsive, to achieve a gender transformative child protection system design, the **GoK would need to redesign the child protection system more fundamentally to address structural drivers of gender inequality and gender-specific vulnerabilities.**

Detailed recommendations are set out in the graphic below and then explored subsequently.

Figure 7: Child protection design recommendations



Outreach to women

Additional:

- The MoLSP and County governments develop guidelines for community social protection and child protection networks with a minimum quota of women participants**, as well as guidelines on how to conduct activities in a manner that takes into account security, movement and care role restrictions for women. This can include meeting times and location. Once recruited and identified, women community group members can also be linked to local NGOs providing women leadership training and support. County officers can consider creating women only groups in locations where women participation in public would be limited and against traditional norms. This would also offer women more freedom to express their opinions and interact with other women and girls in the community, while ensuring to link these groups to other male and mixed groups. Areas where these groups would focus to support the functioning of social protection and child protection would be through the involvement of women in targeting and enrolment, grievance reporting and follow up, provide information regarding available services and access channels such as information regarding GBV services, as well as updates on programmes as relayed from the county officers. Conversely, inclusive community networks can also be actively engaged in the monitoring and evaluation processes, where they can provide input on implementation and proposed design adjustments. This recommendation would be implemented on the county level by county government officers through integrating this with outreach activities, with potential support from local COs and NGOs.

3. **The MoLSP and County Governments include gender awareness under outreach sessions,** focusing on impact on the family and role of different members of the household. This will require an increase in capacity of the workforce both in terms of personal and logistical capabilities. In the short run this can be achieved through coordinating resources under the county government. This is important for positive parenting and socialisation of the responsibilities of both genders.
4. **The MoLSP update outreach and case management practices to actively link women and girls to GBV services** in activities related to the management of social protection and child protection programmes and services. Here county officers can link beneficiaries to local GBV support such as shelters, and protection measures, as well as map independently COs and NGOs providing GBV services. Training on service mapping, identification of risks and vulnerabilities can be included in capacity building and strengthening activities discussed in the short, medium and long term. The capacities of DCS need to be built in order to ensure the referral pathways are complete.

County resourcing

Additional

5. **Ensure all county departments' budget, workplans, projects and activities are gender responsive** and they play advocacy roles. Ensure counties strengthen the role of County Sector working groups spearheaded by the CECM and County Commissioner.
6. Given the resource limitations necessary for case management and service delivery, we recommend **conducting county level assessments of current opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing between county departments** (and national government). The purpose here is to facilitate increased case management and outreach operations, which based on the study would benefit women and girls who face structural and individual challenges in reaching services on their own.

Training

Additional

7. **County Governments should strengthen their workforce's ability to recognize vulnerabilities and threats faced by women,** as well as boys and girls during economic, environmental, and conflict-induced crises through gender-sensitive training. Department of Gender, Children, Social development should conduct gender sensitive training for frontline staff to recognise vulnerabilities. To maximise the effectiveness of the training, incorporate actionable steps to integrate it into programme implementation. For instance, training should cover the correlation between climate disasters and the rise in gender-based violence (GBV) incidents, which can then be implemented into case management strategies, resource distribution plans, and other operational aspects.
8. **County Governments should introduce training on psychosocial support on a community level** and for the workforce to ensure a comprehensive response to mental health challenges related to child abuse and gender-based violence and ensure a comprehensive case management.

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Annex 1 | Legislation and policy framework

Table 5: The Legislative and Policy Framework for Social Protection and Child protection (Development Pathways, 2021)

Policy/Strategy	Year	Overview
Kenya Vision 2030	2008	A long-term development plan with an aim to raise the average standard of living in Kenya to middle income by 2030.
Kenya Constitution	2010	Enshrines social protection into law for all Kenyans. Outlines the three pillars of social protection and recommends several institutional changes.
The National Social Protection Policy (NSPP)	2011	Sets out a direction for social protection as well as establishing the three pillars for the national social protection system. These were defined as social assistance, social security, and health insurance.
The Public Service Superannuation Scheme Act	2012	The main objective was to bring about a transition to a funded basis of the old-age provision for national civil servants.
Social Assistance Act	2013	Stipulated the establishment of a National Social Assistance Authority which would identify and provide social assistance to persons in need of social assistance. However, it is not deemed to be that useful as it was never backed by the Executive Branch of the government.
National Social Security Fund	2013	Promulgated to bring about key reforms within the NSSF. These included laying out changes to make the NSSF more efficient such as, increasing access for those living and working in the informal economy and the provision of old-age benefits in the form of regular pensions rather than a lump sum.

The Children Act	2022	is an Act of parliament that gave effect to Article 53 of the Constitution, to make provision for children's rights including parental responsibility, alternative care of children, foster care, protection for children in conflict with the law etc.
Social Protection Investment Plan	in Development	The aim of this is to set out the vision of the government, and the sector, up to 2030.
National Social Protection Strategy	In development	is being created to design a roadmap for the next five years to map out expanding and reforming Kenya's social protection sector.

Table 6: The Legislative and Policy Framework for Gender Equality (Ministry of Public Service and Gender, 2021)

Policy/Strategy	Year	Overview
Sessional Paper No. 2 on Gender Equality and Development	2006	The paper captures and reiterates the Government's commitment to revamping economic growth while addressing the socio-economic agenda and equality concerns.
Kenya Vision 2033	2008	A long-term development plan with an aim to raise the average standard of living in Kenya to middle-income by 2030. Gender equality is viewed as a key development challenge.
Kenya Constitution	2010	The constitution promotes gender equality and women's empowerment. It also enhances the institutional systems for the respect, protection and promotion of human rights.
National Gender and Equality Commission	2010	This was established by the constitution with the aim to promote gender equality and freedom from all forms of discrimination.
The National Policy for the Prevention and	2014	Provides a framework and plan for dealing with gender-based violence.

Response to GBV		
The Protection Against Domestic Violence Act	2015	The legislation offers protection and relief for female victims of gender-based violence.
The 2018-2022 Strategic Plan of the State Department of Gender Affairs	2018	Provides a blueprint to coordinate gender mainstreaming in national development planning and to promote equitable political and socio-economic development.
The National Policy on Gender and Development	2019	The aim of the policy is to provide a framework for equal gender participation and to ensure women's empowerment and the specific needs of women, men, girls and boys are mainstreamed throughout development sectors.
Achieving Sustainable Development Goal No. 5 on Gender Equality and Empowerment of All Women and Girls	2021	The strategy builds on the lessons learnt and the experience of the country in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goal 3 on promoting gender equality and empowering women. Illustrates an implementation overview for achieving SDG 5.

