



STRIVE for Learning

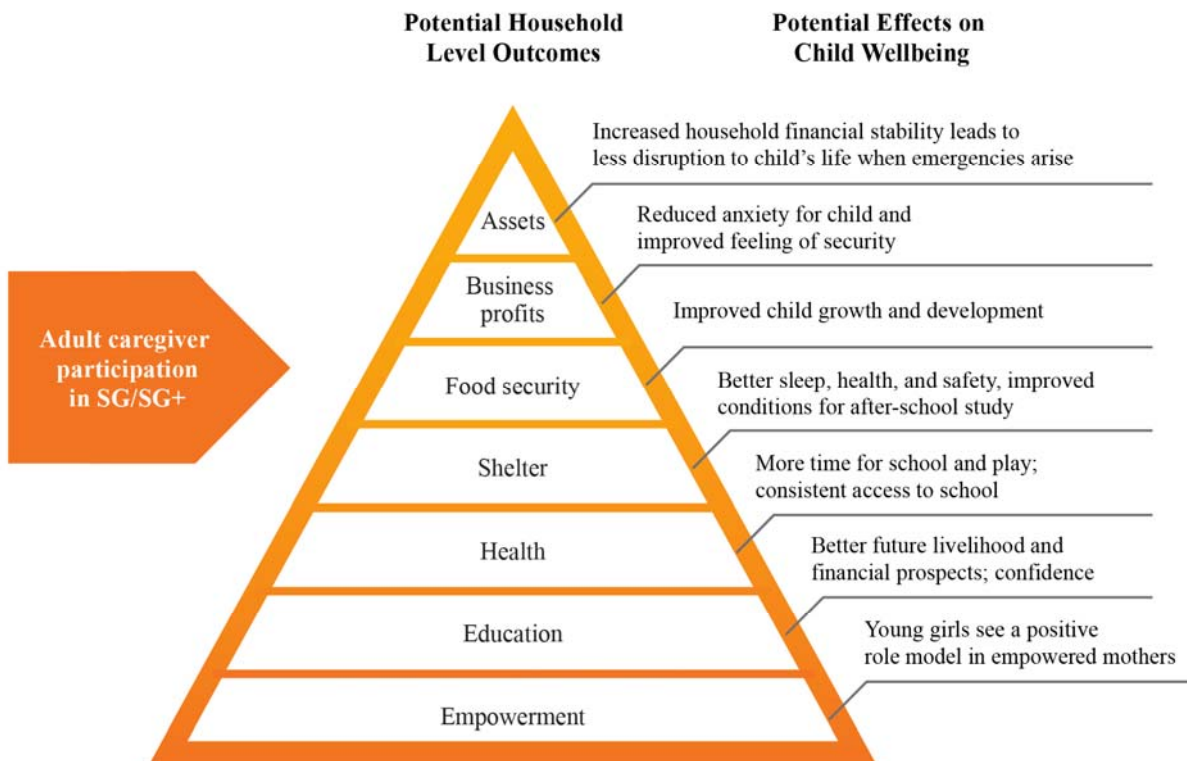
Savings Groups Brief #5

Savings Groups Plus for Child Wellbeing

The STRIVE Savings Groups Brief Series provides basic guidance on savings groups (SG) programming to donors and practitioners who are interested in utilizing the approach to achieve positive effects on child protection and wellbeing. This Brief addresses the use of savings groups plus additional services (SG+) in improving the impact of the model on vulnerable children: the causal theory, designing SG+ specifically for benefitting children, and the possible risks.

The Causal Theory Linking SGs and Child Wellbeing

It is important to understand the underlying theory that link savings groups with child wellbeing. This helps practitioners improve the design of SG and SG+ interventions to improve impact. A theoretical model for a savings group intervention with adults might look like the following graphic:



The Research to Support the Theory

There is not a substantial body of evidence about the impact of SG+ on children, but several case examples are given below of positive impact on children.

Project: The IRC New Generation project in Burundi uses an SG+ approach, combining SGs with the *Healing Families and Communities (HFC)* discussion sessions to increase caregivers' knowledge of and actions to improve their children's protection, wellbeing, and development.

Outcome: HFC participation led to a 30% reduction in the use of harsh discipline.

Project: Salvation Army World Service Office (SAWSO) program in Uganda with caregivers for OVC, implementing Pact's WORTH program, plus literacy and numeracy training, as well as added training to help caregivers better provide for the nutritional, educational, health, and psychosocial needs of OVC.

Outcome: The program seemed to lead to increases in savings and business income, better nutrition for children, expenditures on school materials and tutoring fees, use of better quality of health-care services for children, use of treated water, and a heightened awareness of HIV.

Project: The CARE Burundi Ishaka program, funded by the Nike Foundation, included girls and young women aged 14 to 22 years in SGs and provided sessions on financial literacy, sexual and reproductive health, human rights and life skills training, and raising awareness.

Outcome: Evidence suggests that participants had increased savings and income, more control over these assets, and increased self-esteem and better leadership skills.

Designing SG+ Interventions to Benefit Children

Despite a shortage of clear findings in research, practitioners can still design practical SG+ interventions that are likely to improve impact on children:

Most Vulnerable Children (MVC) or Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) funds – a pot of money to which members contribute at each meeting, used to purchase food, supplies or school uniforms for vulnerable children in the wider community.

SGs educational activities that directly relate to children's welfare – With themes such as educating caregivers about parenting, nutrition, and legal rights, to help members to better nurture and protect their children.

SGs as interactive community platforms – For learning sessions and community dialogues about child protection, social support services, and psychosocial counseling.

Youth SGs with other services – Including education, health care, psychosocial support, nutrition training on gardening techniques, vocational training, and business skills training.

Adult Caregiver and Youth SG – With a parent, a youth will learn money management, financial responsibility, entrepreneurship, and collaboration, and will be able to start saving for educational expenses.

Donors can support innovations in this area of add-on services, as long as the innovations do no harm and are demand-led.

Risks

The *potential* risks to children's wellbeing, from either parents' participation in SGs or their own, are varied, and *may* include, among others:

- an increase in child labor;
- an increase in school absenteeism; and
- an increase in gender-based violence.

There is a limited amount of research on the risks to children. Notwithstanding, practitioners **must** monitor child-level impacts and reduce the potential for harm to children and youth.

Questions for Future Research

The following questions touch on the some of the unknowns in improving child wellbeing via savings groups and SG+:

- What are the benefits to children from the participation of adult household members in SGs, and how can these be enhanced?
- How can we improve the measurement of child-level impacts?
- How do intra-household resource allocation dynamics affect benefits for children's wellbeing?
- What factors constrain benefits for children, and how do geographic or societal differences play into them?
- What are the impacts for youth of youth-focused and youth-inclusive SGs?
- What are the risks for youth in youth-focused SGs, if the parents control the money used for the savings contribution?
- What is the cost effectiveness of the adult, youth-focused, and youth-inclusive models? Are there trade-offs in cost versus impact?

We hope that donors will consider these questions to be important enough to fund research for obtaining the answers.

To learn more about designing savings group and savings group plus projects to improve child wellbeing, please see the STRIVE Technical Guide, [Savings Groups and their Role in Child Wellbeing: A Primer for Donors](#), on which this and the other STRIVE SG Briefs are based.

The other series consists of the following SG Briefs:

#1: Savings Groups - Core Principles

#2: Savings Groups for Child Wellbeing - the Risks

#3: Designing Savings Groups to Benefit Vulnerable Children

#4: Introduction to Savings Groups Plus

#5: Savings Groups Plus for Child Wellbeing

This brief is produced by the Supporting Transformation by Reducing Insecurity and Vulnerability with Economic Strengthening (STRIVE) Program. Managed by FHI 360, under the FIELD-Support LWA, STRIVE represents a consortium of leading organizations committed to advancing the state-of-the-practice of economic strengthening to improve the wellbeing of vulnerable children. For more information, please visit www.seepnetwork.org/strive or www.microlinks.org/strive

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