INSTITUTIONAL SAVINGS SERVICES FOR ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN: APPROPRIATE TARGETING STRATEGIES

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Targeting orphans and vulnerable children for Institutional Savings

Within the past decade, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has caused health, economic and social shocks worldwide. While evidence has suggested plateauing prevalence rates and decreasing incidence rates1, attention needs to be paid to the myriad side effects and complications caused by HIV/AIDS. One key concern is addressing the needs of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), "children up to 18 years of age who have lost a parent to HIV/AIDS, who are otherwise directly affected by the disease, or who live in areas of high HIV prevalence and may be vulnerable to the disease or its socioeconomic effects" (PEPFAR, 2012). In this report, we also include vulnerable youth aged 18 through 24, consistent with PEPFAR guidance regarding the importance of supporting orphans and vulnerable children as they transition into young adulthood (PEPFAR, 2012).

Economic strengthening (ES) can help mitigate the risks faced by orphans and vulnerable children by strengthening their ability to protect against economic shocks associated with HIV and mitigating economic structural barriers to prevention, testing, care and treatment. There are an array of economic strengthening options available for orphans and vulnerable children and their caregivers. This brief focuses on the potential benefits of institutional savings, or savings services available through formal financial institutions, such as banks, credit unions, and other entities legally registered as financial service providers.

[1] As of 2011, UNAIDS estimated that 17.3 million children under the age of eighteen years of age had lost one or both parents to HIV globally, 90% of these orphans live in sub-Saharan Africa. See UNAIDS (2011). Global AIDS Response Progress Reporting 2012. Guidelines. Construction of core indicators for monitoring the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. Source: Bahng, G. (2009) Collaborating to Provide Microfinance to Caregivers of Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Ethiopia, Dissertation presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School University of Southern California

This brief was produced under United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Cooperative Agreement No. AID-OAA-LA-13-00001 and was made possible by the generous support of the American people through USAID and the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. The contents are the responsibility of FHI 360, The SEEP Network and EPRI and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

Compared with informal savings-led approaches, such as savings groups, institutional savings often offer greater flexibility in a client's ability to access their savings, and greater protection against risks such as theft of funds. Ability to access institutional savings also can provide clients with greater access to the formal financial sector. An individual with a formal bank account has a financial record that may be leveraged for other financial products, such as loans. There is substantial potential benefit for orphans and vulnerable children and their caregivers in gaining access to institutional savings.

Highly vulnerable populations such as orphans and vulnerable children and their households are often unfamiliar clientele for formal financial institutions. As the text box below describes, there are complications related to serving such populations that not every financial service provider (FSP) will have the interest or will to address. However, there are potential benefits to FSPs from offering products and services to orphans and vulnerable children. Offering effective savings products to this clientele can lay the groundwork for long-term engagement with the FSP, present opportunities for cross-selling financial products, attract OVC caregivers to use financial services, and build evidence for developing a variety of other financial products that may be targeted to this and other unbanked groups.

Accessibility is a major concern when offering savings products to OVC populations, which are often socially, economically, and geographically marginalized. There are several methods through which an FSP can reach highly vulnerable populations, including exclusive and inclusive methods of categorical, community-based, and self-targeting as well as partnering with both governmental and non-governmental entities. Each method of outreach involves varied levels of effort on the part of the FSP and will have implications for both the scope and depth of penetration within an OVC population. There are a number of considerations that FSPs must recognize when developing a strategy to reach orphans and vulnerable children, and these should align with the objectives of the institution in offering this specific savings product.

Rigorous evaluations of institutional savings-led microfinance products offered to OVC populations are quite limited. Therefore, this brief uses evidence from interventions that offered savings products to similar poor and vulnerable groups, such as low-income children, in order to offer insight on how FSPs may best target orphans and vulnerable children. Evidence included comes from randomized controlled trials, reports containing baseline data for both control and treatment groups, and rigorous qualitative and observational studies.

Which institutions are well suited to offer savings products to orphans and vulnerable children?

Offering financial products to highly vulnerable populations can present complications that an FSP must be well prepared to address. Low-income clients will have low savings rates and small deposit amounts, so FSPs much carefully consider the trade-off between the financial sustainability of a product and the *depth* of poverty that a product is able to reach (Gulli 1998). Additionally, uptake of products by orphans and vulnerable children can be particularly limited if the product is not easily accessible (Annim, 2012). An FSP looking to offer products to OVC must have the capability to overcome such issues.

FSPs with a commitment to social and developmental impact or that wish to enhance their brand or corporate responsibility goals are well-positioned to offer savings products to orphans and vulnerable children and their caregivers. FSPs that provide a wide variety of financial products can cross-subsidize a product targeted to vulnerable children, youth or caregivers to enhance sustainability in the short and long term. FSPs looking to expand their client base over the long term could also attract life-long customers in the form of both orphans and vulnerable children and other members of their community. Offering products to orphans and vulnerable children could also help FSPs build the evidence necessary to develop financial products for other vulnerable and low-income groups. Even if an FSP does not believe it has the capabilities to reach orphans and vulnerable children, it can partner with a non-governmental organization or government programs already working with this population to support outreach.

Targeting Approach

An FSP can choose one of two targeting approaches when designing a product for orphans and vulnerable children: an exclusive approach or an inclusive approach. An FSP that chooses to employ an exclusive targeting approach will offer its product only to orphans and vulnerable children, while an inclusive targeting approach will offer products to a broader category of the population *likely to include* orphans and vulnerable children. Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages with respect to reaching the target population, as well as costs and benefits for the FSP offering the savings product.

EXCLUSIVE TARGETING

Exclusive targeting allocates services to only a population of interest, and no one else. Where resources for serving a target population are limited, such approaches can ensure that these resources are targeted solely to that population. Exclusive targeting can help FSPs build information about and knowledge of targeted populations, since client interactions will be with members of the target population only. This can aid FSPs in developing other financial services – in the case of OVC populations, for instance, focused knowledge of a population of interest might help formulate products for similar unbanked populations.

Exclusive targeting carries the risk that eligible individuals will be denied access to the savings product due to barriers such as distance or social marginalization (Ngurukie and Deshpande, 2013). Such exclusion can significantly hamper the uptake of a savings product. For OVC populations, exclusive forms of targeting have the potential to exacerbate stigma associated with HIV status, and if exclusive targeting leads to increased discrimination, decreased overall usage of the savings product is a likely result. Further, the costs of designing, marketing, and administering exclusively targeted savings products can be quite high, which may prove prohibitive for FSPs looking to develop these products.

There are limited examples of institutions offering financial services to specific vulnerable groups. *Mzansi* accounts offered in South Africa illustrate the benefits and drawbacks of exclusive targeting. The *Mzansi* accounts were implemented in 2005 with the intention of offering a low-cost bank account to the low-income, unbanked population of South Africa. After only a few years, many of the accounts were dormant or account holders were migrating to different savings products due in part to the stigma of *Mzansi* accounts "being a poor man's account" (Ntingi, 2011). The accounts are still offered but are no longer heavily marketed. Even though the *Mzansi* accounts themselves were not particularly successful, major South African banks have since used the lessons learned from the *Mzansi* account to design other financial services to better service the needs of low-income groups (Economic Policy Research Institute, forthcoming).

INCLUSIVE TARGETING

The issues posed by exclusive targeting approaches—namely, exclusion, a small pool of clientele, and high administrative costs—can be alleviated by using an inclusive targeting approach. With an inclusive targeting approach, FSPs offer products to a more broadly defined group. Inclusive methods can also significantly decrease the administrative costs associated with more restricted forms of targeting. Administrative costs will likely be lower for savings products that target inclusively because less intensive targeting allows an FSP to reach a larger population with a lower expense per client. This effect does not necessarily extend to services that may be offered to OVC populations alongside savings products, such as livelihoods, health, or educational services. These services could become prohibitively costly with a larger client base, and therefore comprehensive products linking savings with complementary services may be more sustainable when clients are targeted exclusively.

Table 1: Advantages and Disadvantages to Targeting Approaches

		Outreach	Reaching OVC populations	Cost	Stigma	Financial sustainability
Exclusive Targeting	**Advantages**	Focused outreach to the target population.	Ensures that services are being provided to those who need them most.	Higher cost than inclusive targeting, but offering complementary services will be less expensive.		While financial sustainability may be challenge, it can provide evidence and build knowledge on working with a specific client base.
	Disadvantages	If other vulnerable non-target groups could benefit from the service, its development impact will be limited.	Potential for exclusion error – eligible individuals could be denied access.	High administrative costs.	Could exacerbate stigma	May represent too small and poor of a group to support longer-term sustainability.
Inclusive Targeting	**Advantages**	Can reach a greater number of people and could have a greater development impact.	Particularly adept at reaching vulnerable groups.	Lower administrative costs.	Less likely to create stigma	Product/service more likely to reach financial sustainability, as it can serve a larger population with more resources.
	Disadvantages	Resources allocated to each participant are more constrained.	Individuals who are not part of the target population will be included.			

Targeting Mechanisms

A targeting approach defines who can access financial products, and targeting mechanisms are the means through which an FSP can reach the target population. Targeting mechanisms include: (1) categorical targeting (2) community-based targeting and (3) self-targeting. Each of these methods requires a different level of involvement on the part of the FSP and has different implications for the scope of the population receiving services. These targeting mechanisms are not mutually exclusive and can be used simultaneously. An additional option is to partner with a governmental or non-government agency with experience serving OVC populations, in order to take advantage of a pre-established targeting infrastructure.

Table 2: Types of Targeting Mechanisms

Targeting Mechanism	Definition	Examples
Categorical Targeting	Participants selected along the lines of general characteristics, such as age, gender, geographic location, and socioeconomic status.	- Promoting Rural Integration and Security through Microfinance in Africa (PRISMA) - The SUUBI project
Community-based Targeting	Community groups and intermediate agents are involved in the selection of participants.	- AssetsAfrica - Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equality (IMAGE)
Self-targeting	Microfinance products are marketed or advertised to the target population and participants decide themselves to take part in a program or make use of a financial product.	- Xacbank and WWB ‘Aspires’ account - YouthSave Program

Categorical targeting selects individuals based on general characteristics. Characteristics typically used include age, gender, geographic location, and socioeconomic status.

Both inclusive and exclusive approaches to targeting can make use of categorical targeting. FSPs using inclusive targeting approaches will target broad categories that are likely to include orphans and vulnerable children, making this mechanism useful to FSPs looking to offer savings products to a broad client base. However, an exclusive targeting approach can use narrow classifications in categorical targeting. This was the case with the SUUBI project, which targeted AIDS orphans by first targeting certain schools in the Rakai district of Uganda, and then specifically to AIDS orphans within those schools, as described in the following case study (Ssewamala and Ismayilova, 2009).

Case Study: Exclusive targeting in the SUUBI project

The SUUBI project in the Rakai region of Uganda promotes health and social functioning of AIDS orphans and their families by offering an economic empowerment intervention that included a matched savings account and six two-hour classes on career planning, long- and short-term career goals, and financial well-being. Several layers of categorical targeting were used in the selection of children for this program. First, primary schools within the Rakai district of Uganda were targeted, and then children orphaned due to HIV/AIDS within these schools. SUUBI is an example of a community-oriented partner conducting targeting while a financial institution furnishes a savings account, which can be a successful partnership model.

Community-based targeting relies on input by community groups or intermediary agents (Conning and Kevan, 2001). The use of community-based mechanisms for targeting orphans and vulnerable children allows the service provider to adapt the targeting method to various socio-political contexts and increase targeting efficiency. This approach has often been used to identify community members who are most in need. However, community-based targeting can risk excluding the most vulnerable if local officials are corrupt or if the community is fragmented socially, politically, or ethnically (Conning and Kevan, 2001).

Another method of employing community-based targeting is using a metric based on a community's understanding of vulnerability. *Participatory Wealth Rankings* (*PWR*) have been shown to be accurate in measuring both relative and absolute poverty, though not quite as accurate in measuring absolute poverty as externally based measures (Zeller et al., 2006). Examples of participatory wealth ranking in targeting financial services to vulnerable populations include the *Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equality* (*IMAGE*) project in South Africa (Pronyk et al., 2005), and *AssetsAfrica* described in the case study below (Chowa and Ansong, 2010).

Case Study: Community-based targeting in AssetsAfrica

The Center for Social Development's *AssetsAfrica* project is a youth asset-building intervention in Masindi, Uganda. The project implemented a community-based targeting mechanism involving Local Parish Councils (LPCs). LPCs are composed of local leaders who were best able to speak to the economic need of members of their community. The LPCs were able to provide information on individuals whose households had in the past struggled to provide food or schooling and had approached the LPCs for help. The authors state that the information provided by the LPCs was an invaluable resource to the project, demonstrating how community-based targeting can benefit a program looking to contextualize its understanding of OVC and vulnerability in general.

An FSP (or partner to an FSP) looking to offer a savings product to orphans and vulnerable children using community-based mechanisms of targeting would be best served if the intended scale is small. Since this form of targeting relies on community members knowing each other, attempting to scale up the targeting process to a larger socio-geographic area would be inefficient.

With a **self-targeting** mechanism, an FSP markets a financial product to clients, who self-select to become users. Marketing can occur through advertising on mass media platforms or through more direct methods within schools and other community centers. Using a self-targeting mechanism calls for extensive research in order to devise proper product design and marketing approaches. Self-targeting was employed by Women's World Banking and Xacbank in rolling out the *Aspire* account geared at adolescent girls aged 14-24. Advertising the product involved direct marketing within schools as well as in-branch signage, television commercials and interviews, and press releases and other forms of public outreach (Tower and McGuinness, 2011). Similarly, the FSPs that partnered with the Population Council and MicroSave Consulting, Ltd to implement the *Safe and Smart Savings Product for Adolescent Girls* project incorporated a branding tagline and marketing materials in their product design and were able to attract participants to their program through existing clients, schools, religious institutions, word of mouth, and door-to-door marketing (Austrian and Wambugu, 2009).

Self-targeting has drawbacks in that it relies on the ability and willingness of clients to choose to use the program or product. It may require more involved forms of outreach than ordinary marketing to reach highly vulnerable populations, like orphans and vulnerable children. In some cases, the poorest and most vulnerable portions of society are discouraged from using a financial product because of issues such as stigma, discrimination, or lack of self-esteem (Mathie, 2001). Also, OVC populations may be systematically hard to reach with any form of media or marketing. The Xacbank *Aspire* account fell short of its target uptake rates when only offering the product to adolescent girls aged 14 to 17. Even after extending access to girls up to 24 years of age and adolescent boys, uptake rates were still lower than expected (Tower and McGuinness, 2011). The YouthStart program found that outreach efforts through program "ambassadors," existing clients, and community networks were particularly adept at reaching low-income children for their financial and non-financial services (Pearson et al., 2013). FSPs aiming to reach OVC populations may need to commit more resources to outreach than simply using ordinary marketing campaigns.

Joining into Partnerships

As seen in most of the case studies above, productive partnerships between FSPs and non-financial partners are entirely possible. If an FSP is interested in reaching OVC populations, but not positioned to do targeting to them itself, partnership with another organization may help address the barriers.

PARTNERING WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS:

FSPs can partner with local or international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with an existing targeting platform to reach orphans and vulnerable children. NGOs will use the same general targeting approaches outlined above, but will add value by leveraging their established networks and access to vulnerable populations to more effectively disseminate information about products. Orphans and vulnerable children who have participated in social protection or livelihoods development programs run by NGOs may be a particularly advantageous target population, since these programs can build participants' capacity to plan for the future and handle their own finances, improving long term sustainability of the product (Khandker et al., 1995). Partnering with an NGO can also significantly lower the administrative costs of targeting, as an FSP can take advantage of a pre-selected pool of individuals or pre-existing targeting practices.

For example, World Vision Ethiopia (WVE) and WISDOM, a microfinance institution, partnered under the *Promoting Rural Integration and Security through Microfinance in Africa* (PRISMA) program. PRISMA combined economic development assistance with HIV interventions, targeting very poor women affected by or at risk of HIV in several East African countries. In Ethiopia, economic development took the form of access to microfinance. The microfinance program was instituted in conjunction with WVE's Area Development Projects, effectively leveraging WVE's infrastructure to reach OVC households. WVE HIV/AIDS staff collaborated with MFI loan officers to improve their ability to target economically active OVC caregivers through WISDOM's normal product lines (Bahng, 2009).

One drawback of partnering with an NGO to provide savings products is the potentially limited population that will use the product. NGOs may have limited mandates as to whom they can offer their services to, and it may be difficult for an FSP to expand their client base past this pre-determined group. However, there is a possibility than an FSP could overcome this limitation by establishing a foothold in a region or among a population may provide a base from which to expand their services.

PARTNERING WITH NATIONAL MINISTRIES OR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS:

Another form of partnership that can help to reach OVC populations is with national ministries or international funders. FSPs can offer savings products in conjunction with cash transfers offered by national governments and development partner pilots targeted at orphans and vulnerable children. For example, the Mexican government's *Oportunidades* cash transfer program for low-income families offered an optional savings account through its partnering FSP, BANSFEI. Beneficiaries could elect to have portion of their cash transfer deposited in the account. Beneficiaries were also able to use this account as a personal savings account, and this increased the number of families using banking services. *Oportunidades* later added a youth education benefit, which opens a saving account at BANSFEI for youth entering secondary education and deposits “points” for each year of education, which are converted to a cash deposit on graduation. Youth may also use this account as a personal savings account, although they do not have access to the transfer funds until graduation. This program led to large numbers of youth opening personal saving accounts (Zimmerman and Moury, 2009).

Governments and development funders can also offer additional financing to FSPs to encourage the development and promotion of savings products for OVC clients. The YouthStart program, financed by the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the MasterCard Foundation, encourages FSPs in a number of countries to expand low-income youth access to financial and non-financial services (Pearson et al., 2013). The size of governments’ and international funders’ programs alleviate the limitations of scale associated with partnering with NGOs, although these funders still tend to target a particular population. An FSP who wishes to partner with a large-scale program will need to have well-established systems and procedures capable of coping with a potentially large influx of vulnerable clients.

Conclusion

Developing financial services for orphans and vulnerable children can be beneficial for an FSP. Benefits may take the form of a stronger commitment to social and developmental impact, an enhanced brand or reputation, achieving corporate social responsibility goals, and opportunities to expand their client base and lay the groundwork for long-term client relationships. OVC populations then have the potential to benefit from sustained access to a secure place to save and the opportunity to build a relationship with an FSP that could lead to access to other financial products in the future.

In order to establish this relationship, some form of targeting will be necessary. Each targeting method presents trade-offs concerning the breadth and depth of outreach, as well as amount of time and resources that an FSP must commit to design and delivery. The choice of targeting approaches (offering products exclusively to the target group or to the broader group) and targeting mechanisms (the method of outreach) ultimately depends on what an FSP hopes to achieve by offering these services to orphans and vulnerable children.

Annex A: The impact evaluations used and the methods of targeting employed

Program	Institution(s) Involved	Target Audience	Targeting Method
Safe and Smart Savings Products for Adolescent Girls	The Population Council; MicroSave Consulting, Ltd.; K-Rep Bank (Kenya); Faulu Kenya, DTM; FINCA-Uganda; and Finance Trust (Uganda)	Vulnerable girls aged 10-19	Offered group savings accounts, mentorship program, and health education to girls aged 10-19 in Kibera slum in Nairobi, Kenya and Katwe, Kawempe and Kalerwe slums of Kampala, Uganda. The product was marketed and designed to attract girls of the target age group.
Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equity (IMAGE)	Small Enterprise Foundation (MFI)	Low-income women infected with or vulnerable to HIV/AIDS	Explored the interaction of microfinance, gender inequalities and HIV prevention by offering poverty-focused microfinance through a group lending model to low income women in South Africa's Limpopo province. The study employed the use of participatory wealth rankings to identify the most economically disadvantaged individuals within its target area.
Promoting Rural Integration and Security through Microfinance in Africa (PRISMA)	World Vision Ethiopia; WISDOM MFI	OVC households	Offered microfinance to OVC households to raise their capacity in the Guraghe and Wonchi Area Development Programs. Participants were chosen according to a proxy means index, which considered measures of financial security, socioeconomic status, social network, income generating activities, and food/health support.
AssetsAfrica	Center for Social Development; International Care and Relief (ICR) Uganda	Low-income youth	Participants for this asset building intervention were chosen with a form of community-based targeting which employed the assistance of Local Parish Councils to help identify those with the greatest economic need within their local communities.
YouthSave Youth Savings Accounts	The YouthSave Consortium (Save the Children; Center for Social Development at Washington University in St. Louis, the New America Foundation, CGAP)	Youth	This project developed youth savings accounts in Colombia, Ghana, Kenya, and Nepal, employing an extensive marketing campaign to reach youth. The marketing approach used innovative solutions such as school-based marketing and delivery systems in order to more effectively reach youth.

Program	Institution(s) Involved	Target Audience	Targeting Method
The Building Youth Inclusive Sectors in Sub-Saharan Africa Program (YouthStart)	UN Capital Development Fund	Low income youth	The program employed a marketing approach to reach youth, including more involved methods of outreach, such as working through community networks to reach youth.
The Savings Innovation and Expansion for Adolescent Girls and Young Women	Women's World Banking; Xacbank (Mongolia)	Girls aged 7-14	*Aspire* youth savings account was designed for and marketed to girls and accessible to those aged 7-14. Marketing occurred through mass media, as well as through schools and community-based groups.
The SUUBI Project	Columbia University	HIV/AIDS orphans in the Rakai district of Uganda	The SUUBI project offers child savings accounts for post-primary education and microenterprise development to address the health risks and poor educational outcomes that are typical of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. The project offers services to HIV/AIDS orphans enrolled in selected schools in the Rakai district of Uganda.

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