Reducing child labour amongst vulnerable households:  
Can targeted cash transfers make a difference in rural Zambia?  
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Abstract
In recent months, a global debate on rising food prices has examined how long term increases in the cost of staple foodstuffs will affect the poor. At first glance, rising prices may seem to create problems for those who depend on purchasing food, whilst offering a welcome opportunity to producers, especially the very great number of small scale farmers in Africa. However, even where farmers receive a greater end-price for their produce, simultaneous significant rises in the costs of fuel and fertiliser are creating a significant shock for precarious agricultural livelihoods. Many marginal households depend on crops that are acquiring perilously high input costs, excluding many farmers and risking substantial losses in the event of low productivity or crop failure for others.

In Zambia, a large, sparsely populated and land-locked country where much production is far from urban markets, the problems of increasing costs of production are particularly marked. Diminishing access to livelihoods and increasing risk of livelihood failure and indebtedness pose a new threat to the majority of Zambia’s poor – children and their families in small scale rural households. This paper discusses how people seek alternative livelihoods and adopt common coping strategies, showing that most of the options available to the poor pose a serious risk to children, who as a consequence face increased household vulnerability and exposure to child labour.

In Zambia, responses to high agricultural costs have usually taken the form of Government participation in the agricultural market, seeking to maintain lower food prices for the politically sensitive urban market. These initiatives have generally proved expensive and ineffective, failing to secure affordable food supplies for the urban poor whilst harming the household economies of the rural poor. Without effective intervention, it is likely that both the rural and urban poor will suffer economic harm as a result of rising world food prices, with serious negative consequences for children.

This paper explores how the effects of rising prices could be cushioned. It argues that targeted cash transfers offer a means of protecting children from the harmful effects and risk of child labour posed by rising urban prices and rural livelihood shocks. Using such strategies, the urban poor could enjoy food security, whilst the poor rural majority would have the means of benefiting from rising prices.

Key words: Child labour, Zambia, Social Protection

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1. Introduction

Since early 2008, global prices for staple foods and fuel have risen sharply, creating widespread debate on the causes, likely duration and effects of these changes. Whilst the causes are far beyond the scope of this paper and the likely duration is assumed (in line with general consensus) to be at least a decade, this paper focuses on the possible effects of price rises on vulnerable children, and the most appropriate forms of response to reduce the harmful effects of change.

Commonly, a ‘food shock’ triggers a reaction that focuses on securing rural food production, ensuring supplies to urban markets, and establishing some form of response for those experiencing significant stress or inadequate access to food. This typically applies in circumstances where production has been disrupted as a result of drought or flood. However, prevailing circumstances are in some senses dissimilar, manifesting in a complex economic shock with diverse effects in a range of contexts. Many of these impacts particularly affect children, posing significant risks of exposure to hazardous child labour. In the current situation, a food-based focus on those with insufficient food is just one component of an appropriate response to protect vulnerable households. An analysis of the manifestations, likely impacts and effects of rising prices shows that a rapid strengthening of current strategies against child labour as well as the introduction of social protection interventions are necessary to protect vulnerable children and families.

2. Background

Zambia is a landlocked country, a fact which is significant in this regard. At Independence, the country was relatively rich, enjoying social and economic gains and investments until - in circumstances partly similar to the current crisis - sharp oil price rises and a simultaneous fall in copper prices in 1976 laid the foundations of economic collapse. Since the 1980s, Zambia has been amongst the poorest countries in the world, and ranks 165 out of 177 in the global human development rankings. Over the past ten years, and particularly over the last five, social and economic outcomes have shown signs of improvement. However, the unequal distribution of growth means that divergence between rich and poor and between urban and rural areas (particularly remote rural areas) has grown significantly. Historically dependent on the copper mining industry, the oft-cited agricultural potential of the reasonably fertile and relatively sparsely populated rural areas remains elusive, despite land and water resources that far exceed those of the rest of the southern African region. In contrast, record world prices for copper have supported the resurgence of newly-privatised copper mines, whilst economic growth in both the formal and informal sector has created a rapid reduction in poverty.

In Zambia, a simple comparison between rural and urban experiences and outcomes does not adequately reflect the growing divergence in rural outcomes. The scant data that is available in a form that supports this comparison shows a clear distinction in outcomes between the more remote and under-served rural areas (RRA), and those in close proximity to transport links,

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markets and services. In remote and poorly served areas, households suffer much greater insecurity resulting from lack of services, lack of markets and economic opportunity, which results in shortened lives. This economic distinction is echoed in differing social indicators, with RRA showing smaller households with a greater proportion of female headed households, higher child mortality, and lower life expectancy, health and education outcomes.

In the past, particularly between Independence and the early 1980s, social services were more adequate and accessible for those without cash (with drugs supplied in health centres and books in schools), and state-owned transport was subsidised. As a result, a shortage of cash was (in some senses at least) less critical than today, and subsistence livelihoods were a more viable option. However, since the introduction of user-fees and the deterioration of both general and targeted subsidies and transfers, the regular and urgent need for cash has grown. As a result, agricultural households have turned to crops with a cash market – particularly maize – as a replacement for less productive and less marketable but more reliable crops, such as millet, cassava and sorghum.

For the rural population, agricultural production and particularly maize production has long been the basis of the political settlement between state and citizens. Both during the days of the African socialist one-party state and even since the return to democracy and the pursuit of neoliberal economics in 1991, the state’s provision of free or subsidised inputs for maize production and control of maize markets throughout the country has provided those who can access agricultural services with poor but nonetheless fairly secure livelihoods. Since the economic reforms of the 1990s, however, whilst agricultural services have remained focused on maize, the ‘reach’ of both Government subsidies and private sector actors has become more limited to the more accessible provinces, whilst the more remote provinces, which were previously largely maize production areas, have become more marginal in all respects. Livelihood strategies have moved away from maize production towards lower input crops, and thus these populations derive less benefit from the subsidies and security directed towards maize production. This is not for reasons of agronomy, but rather, as a result of distance, the result of ineffectual delivery of agricultural inputs and markets. As a result, the population of Zambia’s more remote areas depend on precarious livelihood strategies, producing low input cash crops for far-distant markets, or depending on largely unregulated trade in extracted natural resources, such as fish, charcoal, bush meat, small scale mining, caterpillars, mushrooms and so on.

Thus the context for understanding rising prices is clear – Zambia is a poor country; economic reforms have created greater uncertainty, and increased the need for cash; a large proportion of urban consumers struggle to support their daily needs; rural livelihoods are far from homogenous, with better connected rural producers seeking to depend on subsidies and relationships with private sector traders, whilst those in RRA struggling to find viable livelihoods to feed into far distant markets.

3. Rising food and fuel prices
The situation on the manifestations, impact and consequences of rising prices is very much in the early stages. However, the usual post-harvest seasonal lows for maize prices have not been

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3 Central Statistics Office, Lusaka, 2005
evident, with prices climbing steadily; simultaneously, the prices of fuel and other commodities are rising sharply, with diesel already double the price of June 2007. Whilst information systems to monitor the impact and distribution of rising prices are still being put in place, the following are some key emerging facts that will shape the evolution of what appears to be a major economic shock.

i. Prices are rising for basic commodities, and are likely to rise further
The consumer price index and month-on-month inflation rates show relatively small increases in prices in recent months. However, these indicators include measures applying to clothing and footwear, rent and household energy, furniture and household goods, medical care, transport and communication, recreation and education, all of which have fallen as the currency (Zambian kwacha) strengthens. In contrast, the prices for most basic foods are rising at a time of year when they would usually be falling. A comparison of retail prices between May 2008 and June 2008, shows that the national average price of a 25 kg bag of maize meal increased by 2.7 percent; a 20 litre tin of maize grain declined slightly by 1.2 percent (a largely rural price index, declining a little at a time of year when prices would usually fall more significantly); dried fish increased by 4.1 percent; 1kg of onion increased by 4.9 percent.

Monthly figures for the cost of basic commodities in urban markets are gathered by the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (see section 3 below). The following graph clearly indicates an unseasonal rise in the price of 25kg of maize meal in Lusaka. Other commodities show similar increases.

There is no other explanation for these changes besides the response to international food and fuel price increases. Production costs are rising, and will rise further as fertiliser prices have doubled in the past six months. Zambia is almost entirely dependent on road transport, and some

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points of production (such as for fish) are very distant from urban markets. As a result, it is most unlikely that prices will fall in the near future.

**ii. The 2007-2008 annual agricultural harvest did not provide a maize surplus, and it is still unclear whether imports will be required**

Maize is the staple food in most of Zambia. The 2008 harvest is reported to be 10% lower than 2007, due to the impact of heavy rains / floods in some areas, and lack of agricultural inputs in others. This harvest estimate is at odds with the previous crop forecast, which suggested that just 41% of the area planted would produce a harvest – which would lead to a more considerable reduction. At present, it is not clear whether the estimated harvest of some 565,000 MT is accurate or not.

Other staple foods were less affected by the adverse conditions and make up for the production deficits in food production (very largely cassava flour, and also wheat, sorghum/millet, sweet potatoes and potatoes), and overall carbohydrate production was in surplus. However, it remains unclear whether markets and consumers will adapt to fill the gap in maize production with these commodities; it is also unclear whether the extent of the deficit could be met by private sector actors, or whether a national food importation exercise will prove necessary.

Imports of maize into Zambia are complicated by the national ban on genetically modified products. Whilst there are reportedly many transgressions to this ban, any large scale importation exercise would need to comply.

**iii. Preparations for the 2008-2009 planting season are under discussion, but actions are late particularly in view of significant increases in the fertiliser price**

In the 2008 budget (February 2008), the Minister of Finance announced a significant reduction in the fertiliser subsidy programme which had previously provided a 65% subsidy to around 50% of rural smallholders. As a result of leakages and mistargeting, and also the expense of maintaining this system, this measure was intended as a step towards its eventual phase-out. However, with the Lusaka price of fertiliser rising by more than 100% since the budget was announced, it is now clear that the anticipated cut back is being reconsidered. However, with planting due to start in two months, it is clear that fertiliser procurement and importation is an urgent necessity.

In the absence of fertiliser, farmers in different areas are able to grow sorghum, cassava, sweet potatoes and millet, which are all low input crops. Local planting material is widely available, although efforts to distribute improved seed / tubers are more patchy and should be enhanced. Whilst these crops support and secure household food security, technologies for large scale processing for urban markets and mechanisms for trade into urban areas is restricted.

Prospects for future production are the major focus of discussion to date between Government, the UN and bilateral partners, emphasising price changes in terms of the possible opportunities for rural smallholders. Whilst this is indeed the case for some smallholders in better connected areas, there are also many vulnerable rural subsistence farmers who lack the capacity to participate or to take the risk of engaging in higher-risk / higher-profit production that this implies. Others may have the necessary capacity, but are exposed to the insecurities of changing
climate conditions. The opportunities offered by rising prices are by no means a magic bullet against rural poverty.

iv. The geographical distinction in manifestation and impact of price rises will be complex, with vulnerabilities for poor households in both urban and rural areas

Zambia is a large and sparsely populated country, with great distances between areas of production and areas of consumption. Commodities move up to 1000km by road. This is not limited to the rural / urban flow of foodstuffs, but also between rural areas. For example, populations in the far north depend on selling dried fish into urban markets, but import maize from the Central province – some 500km each way.

The consequence of this situation is twofold. Firstly, it means that the impact of rising fuel prices is very significant, tending to amplify the problems of rising maize prices and result in significant rises in other commodity prices. The disadvantage of remoteness will clearly grow. Secondly, it also means that any notion that a simple urban / rural disaggregation can provide a basis for understanding or responding to price changes is incorrect. Rather, it is necessary to consider patterns of production, trade and consumption in a range of locations, and to monitor the evolving situation with regard to both.

v. Nutrition surveillance is on-going, and preliminary results show an increase in malnutrition rates

In the last three months, two community based nutrition surveys have been conducted in Zambia. The National Food and Nutrition Commission, the Ministry of Health and partners conducted nutrition surveillance in 23 districts in three provinces of Zambia (Eastern, Lusaka and Southern). A second survey was conducted under the national response to the flood emergency. Additionally, full results from the 2007 Zambia Demographic and Health Survey (ZDHS) are expected soon. Preliminary results show an increase in Global Acute Malnutrition between the nutrition surveillance exercise (global acute malnutrition 7.7%) and the ZDHS (global acute malnutrition 5.2%, severe acute malnutrition 2.2%), although no assessment of comparability between these statistics is yet available.

Lusaka’s main hospital is reporting a recent drop in admissions for severe malnutrition on the long-term average monthly figure of 168. The cause of the fall in admissions is attributed by health authorities to poor community mobilization, poor case finding of malnourished children, and weaknesses in the referral system from the community to the health facilities. However, it is not clear why these reasons – which appear to be long term deficits in service provision - would result in falls at this time.

The National Food and Nutrition Council is implementing a community based management of acute malnutrition in Eastern Province. Initial reports suggest an increase in admissions to the programme between January to July, which is attributed to greater activity in mobilization and in the case finding system. Statistics and reports from this initiative are expected in the near future.

vi. There have been discussions about the need to address the emerging crisis, but the strong response that is needed is being undermined by the on-going political uncertainty resulting from the death of the President
In May, a meeting was held by the state President to highlight the need to recognise and respond to changing food and fuel prices. However, since he suffered a stroke in June 2008 and subsequently died on August 19th, there has been a prolonged gap in leadership over this issue. However, a full response to the current situation requires rapid decision making and substantial resource allocation to support agricultural inputs / production (for markets and for local food security), provide targeted social protection, and provide measures to address the specific issues that can be identified in different regions. The preoccupation with the forthcoming Presidential election clearly reduces the possibility that the necessary attention and leadership will be directed towards these issues.

4. The cost of coping: Looking at how livelihood insecurity affects children and women
For UNICEF and others, the objective is to focus on the needs of vulnerable households who may be harmed by rising food prices. Doing this properly, however, requires a shift in analysis from the supply-side (characterised by a focus on production, commodities and logistics), to the demand-side (the analysis of lives and livelihoods, and the impacts and vulnerabilities created by rising prices). In so doing, we aim to ensure that the response to those who are ‘losers’ in the current situation is appropriate, sufficient, effective and efficient.

Making this shift in analysis challenges the prevailing dialogue around rising food prices, which favours a simple focus on food alone – its production (assumed to include ‘rural dwellers’ as a homogenous class, the presumed ‘winners’ in the context of rising prices), distribution, and (in the far corner of the debate), the thorny issue of what to do about urban families unable to afford food. However, since we know that people do not fair the same within nations, regions, localities, communities and even families, it is important that we sensitise our means of measuring manifestations and impact to include these differences.

One way of looking for those who are losing out in the new environment is to look for people – children in particular – showing signs of extreme deprivation. UNICEF is already supporting the Government to increase local capacities around vigilance for severe malnutrition, identifying children, pregnant women and mothers whose diet has fallen below the meagre norm to catastrophically inadequate levels. By priming local health workers and supplying emergency nutrition products, we aim to save lives – surely the most important single goal in our large and complicated programme.

However, it would be wrong to suppose that this strategy will detect all those facing critical threats as a result of price increases and livelihood shocks. UNICEF and other agencies concerned with rising food prices must remember that running out of food is just one way in which the current crisis may threaten lives. Where livelihoods cannot meet the costs of buying or growing food, reducing what you eat is just one strategy. Few households do this alone, many pursuing alternative sources of income to support a diminished diet – or perhaps a similar diet.

I had a phone call from the far North-West of Zambia in mid-July, from a distressed colleague who had just visited just one of many remote copper mines. Working in pits up to six metres deep within a mine area licensed to a foreign investor, were women, many pregnant or with babies on their backs, and children. In the surrounding areas, many more women and children
were making a living through the illegal copper trade by scavenging in previously worked pits. Local head teachers complain that many pupils are dropping out to go mining, whilst the women miners claim that district leaders are amongst those who profit from the illegal copper trade.

Two days later, the same colleague interviewed women and children in Zambia’s urban Copperbelt, dragging rocks from mine dumps for sale to the construction industry. At one stage, the owners of the mine – a global mining corporation – had told them to leave the area, but relented seeing that local women, many of whose husbands are working elsewhere on the Copperbelt on such poor terms that they are unable to send money home on a regular basis, had no other possible source of income.

These stories illustrate the point that when shocks occur, the only responses available to many people involve engaging in activities that will harm them, particularly children and women. As a consequence, whilst we may not detect them as we look for those who have not eaten, they most certainly deserve our attention and our response to prevent harm, suffering and denial of the most basic of human rights.

5. Shaky Livings Threaten Children
The foregoing stories suggest that it is necessary to look closely at the lives of the poor, and at the changes that rising prices may make. By identifying likely manifestations of harm other than extreme lack of nutrition, it will be possible to detect and respond to household vulnerability in a timely manner, averting or mitigating the harm to children and women that may result from harmful coping strategies.

This analysis requires the development of an analysis of livelihoods that goes beyond simple generalisations. This needs to look at how livelihoods are constructed, and to consider how family members contribute in a number of common scenarios. In each case, critical vulnerability and exposure to shocks should also be considered, and the specific threats of price rises considered.

Urban Workers
Some 65% of the urban labour force work in the informal sector. This commonly involves unskilled small scale trading / manufacturing, commonly in charcoal, foodstuff, clothing, household goods or around the construction industry. Lusaka has a higher proportion of skilled work and established / capital intensive businesses in the informal sector than other towns (such as hairdressing, shops, restaurants and bars etc), but the majority of informal sector workers are in unskilled work. The least profitable and most arduous common informal occupation is stone breaking, largely the work of women and children from the poorest female headed households.

Many of the more profitable unskilled jobs depend upon maintaining social networks that control those areas of business. For street vendors, car-minders, beggars, casual workers, road-side businesses, informal marketers and even petty thieves – all largely men and boys – the best pitches are controlled through well organised networks with complex links to local authorities,

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political power and criminal networks\textsuperscript{6}. These networks control entry into the market, whilst in some form ‘taxing’ informal workers for this ‘protection’.

Women and girls are more commonly found at the lower end of the informal sector, however, trading and working in the least profitable informal occupations. The lowest paid domestic work may merely provide a scant meal worth no more than 20c; stone breaking or selling the cheapest foodstuffs providing little more. Such occupations are already crowded and competitive, and complaints are growing over the number of Zimbabwean women and girls trying to live by vending biscuits, sweets and single cigarettes. Poor households with no adult men may be solely dependent on such extremely marginalised activities.

Besides the usual manifestations of commercial sex work, women and girls in the lower end of the informal sector may have to incorporate sex work into other livelihood strategies. Those engaged in fish trading and others who find themselves at odds with authority also find themselves subject to sexual abuse and exploitation in order to continue with their trade.

Any form of economic stress reduces trade in the informal sector, with falls in sales of goods and services affecting many. Rising prices of food and fuel are very likely to trigger a similar squeeze, with informal sector workers earning less and needing more to meet their daily household needs. In this situation, there are three common responses – the shifting of occupations down the economic scale, the broadening of family participation in economic activities, and the reduction in household expenditure (with the high costs of school often an early casualty). These responses clearly affect children, threatening their rights and increasing vulnerability to child labour. In situations of stress, children are more likely to work at home and in the informal sector, managing the household as all adults work longer hours, contributing their labour to increase the incomes of their parents, or accessing opportunities not open to their parents – particularly those on the streets, by day and by night.

These strategies are pernicious not least because they are, in the immediate sense, effective. Children’s earnings offer an additional stream of income, and in some instances access opportunities and even earnings that are not available to adults. The average earnings of a child on the street in Lusaka is two to three times the casual labour rate available to men, or the daily income from women’s small scale trading\textsuperscript{7}. Whilst many parents and caregivers may realise and indeed be concerned about the dangers inherent in children’s work, they may feel that it offers the only means of survival.

Children living in poverty are clearly the most vulnerable to child labour. As prices rise, households that depend on both formal and informal sector incomes will be exposed to greater levels of poverty. As this occurs, children’s labour is increasingly likely to be part of the coping strategy. Further, with nearly one-third of children losing either one or both parents by the age of 16 and hence more likely to play a greater role in household livelihoods, this risk is heightened by the continued epidemic of HIV and AIDS.


**Rural work**

Rural livelihoods are in many senses more similar to urban counterparts than is often understood. With the exception of the rich professional and business classes, the profile of work amongst the poor is very much the same. A fairly small low paid workforce exists in the formal sector (such as commercial farms and fisheries, agro- and timber processing, tourism enterprises and so on), with a much larger number of employees seeking informal, casual work. The majority of rural dwellers are self-employed in family businesses in the informal sector, including small scale farming, fishing, poaching, artisinal mining, charcoal burning, collecting mushrooms and honey, and so on. A smaller number of people – often estimated at 10%\(^8\) - are unable to participate in labour markets, depending on informal social protection for survival.

One key difference between rural and urban work is the spatial and temporal distinction in what people are able to do. In urban areas, most occupations are available year round, within the same locality. In contrast, rural livelihoods are often distinctive to particular places, and most are strictly seasonal. The significance of this difference is that it serves to reduce the coping strategies that are available in the rural context at any particular context, meaning that any disruption or additional pressure forces people to adopt very much more drastic coping mechanisms. For women and children, who are usually only able to access a narrower range of livelihood options, the impact of stress is greater as the options are fewer.

Where rising prices offer an opportunity for improving livelihoods to a reasonable number of smallholders, it can be hoped that these benefits are also accessible to those who cannot participate directly. Increased demand for casual labour, improved penetration of markets, increased travel and transport may all create some dynamism in specific localities that offer some opportunities for the wider participation of the communities. The threat of climatic unpredictability nonetheless creates a significant question mark here.

However, in many RRAs, the rising prices create more threats than opportunities. With long distances and scant productivity rendering maize either risky or non-viable (either in the eyes of producers, or in those of service providers and markets who simply do not reach these places), these populations will need to strengthen or diversify livelihoods in order to cope with the increasing prices of basic commodities, transport and services.

The two most common means of coping in this context are livelihood diversification and reorganisation of household membership and labour. However, both create specific vulnerabilities for children. Livelihood diversification very often depends on natural resource extraction, which may be hazardous, dependent on child labour, and destructive to the environment. Other opportunities that arise can be just as dangerous – one new activity along the eastern border with Mozambique is the extraction of red mercury from the detonators of (live) land mines, for sale to buyers from Lusaka. Reorganisation of household membership and labour is diverse, but includes seasonal migration (with new accounts of parents moving for

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work leaving children remaining alone\textsuperscript{9}), school drop-outs, sending children to work in urban areas, and early marriages. Both girl- and boy-children are exposed to risks in this context, less likely to attend school or to receive appropriate caregiving, and more likely to be exposed to multiple hazards of neglect, danger, abuse, and exploitation.

HIV and AIDS have increased the number of rural households with low or no access to labour. Small female-headed households, households where adults are gravely ill, or where grandparents support orphaned grandchildren all have even fewer options for coping with the economic shock of rising prices. In these cases, as relatives and neighbours are less able to offer support, severe deprivation and the threat of household dissolution exposes children to even greater risk of exploitative labour, domestic trafficking, and early marriage.

Thus many rural households will not be the ‘winners’ in the context of rising prices, and indeed face a significant economic shock as a result of rising prices. As in urban areas, many coping strategies place children at significant risk, in a manner that seriously undermines their education, health, well-being and prospects.

6. Sharing the load: How intervention can alleviate price shocks for the urban and rural poor
The above discussion shows the complex interaction between rising prices and possible manifestations of impact and response. For different people in different places, the range of risks that result are far more diverse than a simple lack of access food. Indeed, there are coping mechanisms that will provide food for many albeit at the price of child labour and exposure to hazard, hence removing them from any narrow form of surveillance or assessment.

As a result, the question of how to intervene effectively requires careful consideration. The World Bank social risk management framework prompts thinking at three levels – how to reduce the chance of the shock occurring, how to mitigate the impact of the shock, and how to help people to cope with the impact of the shock.

The temptation in public policy in previous times of agricultural stress in Zambia has been to try to act solely at a macro-level to reduce the exposure to shock through price controls, export bans and state-run marketing. Whilst there is still a notional producer price for maize, a continued ban on exports, and fuel excise duty has already been halved in an attempt to control prices, there has been little talk about trying to contain price shocks through public intervention. With significant existing demands on public resources – and an unanticipated Presidential election now imminent – there is little chance that there will be any significant attempt to contain rising prices.

As a consequence, it is likely that appropriate interventions will need to be identified on the level of mitigation and coping. Whilst nutritional supplements will provide the last line of coping support, a full response that will protect the rights of vulnerable children requires a more diverse

\textsuperscript{9} Recent accounts include parents moving away from villages in Mumbwa district to farm in more productive areas, leaving children at home to continue school in line with the instructions of the Education authorities. This resulted in an annual total of 461 school-girl pregnancies largely amongst children left alone by their parents. In other cases, single mothers migrate with younger children to mine in Kasempa district, leaving other children at home.
set of responses, directed at the specific needs in different localities, communities and households.

The table that follows illustrates a range of possible responses to some of the rural and urban manifestations of shock that have been discussed above. By analysing the issues to be addressed further than the food-shock focus on commodity production and supply, the table illustrates clearly that necessary interventions go far beyond a purely food-oriented response, instead providing for a comprehensive set of programmes to strengthen and secure household incomes, and to prevent child labour. These programmes use established instruments including the labour withdrawal, school promotion and strengthening of livelihoods already common in child labour programmes, complemented by newer approaches including social transfers. Other strategies familiar to the ILO in particular are also identified, particularly those that strengthen and enforce basic employment conditions and safe working practices.
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<th>Location / manifestation of shock</th>
<th>Mitigate impact</th>
<th>Cope with shock</th>
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| Rural – children migrate to town (trafficking, domestic work, street children) | • Increase the ‘pull’ factor of school / reduce costs of school – school feeding, improved service delivery, bursaries and cost-support at all levels  
• Provide social transfers for basic household income security for those at greatest risk / without viable coping mechanisms – could be targeted at households with children  
• Improve public knowledge on child trafficking | • Improve surveillance of transport routes and entry points to detect cases of child trafficking in transit and on arrival  
• Increase effective interventions to detect / rehabilitate street children, children in domestic labour, children at risk |
| Rural – household members migrate for work, leaving children alone | • Educate parents on need to make adequate provision for the supervision and care of children  
• Provide supervised boarding facilities in schools | • Increase teacher / community awareness / capacity to intervene in ensuring appropriate arrangements for child care  
• Increase life-skils amongst children at risk of abuse, particularly girls  
• Improve response to cases of abuse |
| Rural – increasing need for cash pushes people into risky livelihoods, hazardous (child) labour | • Improve labour inspection and regulation of mining and other rural industries  
• Provide support for the development of safe rural livelihoods, including incentives for private sector participation in RRAs  
• Promote improved low-input household subsistence crops | • Detect and respond to cases of child labour and exploitation, dangerous livelihoods and environmental degradation  
• Expand community based knowledge on child labour and exploitation, dangerous livelihoods and environmental degradation  
• Provide social transfers for basic household income security for those at greatest risk / without viable coping mechanisms – could be conditional on non-participation in hazardous child labour |
| Rural – increasing risk of production (input costs, climate change) threatens households with catastrophic failure | • Provide appropriate extension and production services, encouraging improved agronomy and crop diversification  
• Develop affordable small scale crop insurance packages | • Monitor crop performance and provide support for post-harvest recovery in the event of crop failure arising from adverse climate events |
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<th>Location / manifestation of shock</th>
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| Urban – low wage earners increasingly unable to meet basic needs; increasing competition lowers incomes in informal sector (trading, casual labour, manufacturing, services) | • Improve efforts to enforce labour and wage legislation; strengthen employee bargaining; ensure fair working conditions in formal and informal sector  
• Increase access to affordable safe fuel sources, housing, water, education  
• Increase access to affordable / non-exploitative credit  
• Increase access to business development training  
• Provide social transfers for basic household income security for those at greatest risk / without viable coping mechanisms | • Provide alternative / supplementary income opportunities including food for work or similar programmes  
• Remove urban health fees (free service and drugs at tertiary level and for referral as in rural areas)  
• Reduce costs of school – school feeding, improved service delivery, bursaries (social transfers) and cost-support at all levels |
| Urban and rural – children drop out of school | • Increase the ‘pull’ factor of school / reduce costs of school – school feeding, improved service delivery, bursaries (social transfers) and cost-support at all levels | • Improve community based care and rehabilitation for children out of school  
• Increase delivery of life-skills education for children out of school |
| Urban and rural – girls exposed to early marriages | • Increase public education on child marriages, early pregnancy and the importance of girl-child education  
• Reduce costs of school – school feeding, improved service delivery, bursaries (social transfers) and cost-support at all levels | • Extend community and teacher awareness on ‘re-entry policy’, entitling girls and young women to return to school after delivery |
7. Conclusion: Reaping the benefits and cushioning the shocks
Zambia is just one country affected by the current rising prices for food, fuel and other commodities. Whilst the immediate manifestation of change created by rising prices are likely to be different from others, there are clear lessons that can be drawn from this analysis, and should be applied to other circumstances.

The possible responses to rising prices indicated by this analysis are by no means exhaustive. However, three key points emerge.

- Firstly, any set of necessary interventions to protect the rights and needs of children extends beyond the immediate concern with food production and consumption. Instead, it is essential that many interventions that currently exist – albeit often on a pilot or limited scale – are rapidly strengthened. These include a range of school- and community-based actions that strengthen household incomes directly and through social transfers, whilst ensuring a quality education for all. Whilst maize production might provide the best opportunity for improved incomes in some households, this can by no means be assumed to include all rural households. The underlying rationale is clear – strong, secure and less poor households are better able to withstand shocks, including current price shocks; success in this regard in future depends on rapid improvements in quality and participation in education. The price-shock currently unfolding requires the intensification of current interventions, and this must be emphasised as central to the national response.

- Secondly, an examination of the table above suggests that helping those most affected to cope with shock without also strengthening responses at the mitigation level will not address underlying weaknesses, and will hence perpetuate the incidence of coping strategies that increase children’s vulnerability and children’s work. A comprehensive response at all levels, sensitised to specific needs and contexts within different localities, is needed.

- Thirdly, social transfers can clearly play an important role, appearing not just as a coping strategy of last resort, but as a key part of impact mitigation. Social transfers can help to mitigate manifestations of shock, and prevent many undesirable consequences. Transfers can both support household income security (with diverse benefits besides supporting consumption), and also be directed to achieving specific goals including ensuring school participation. As the economic pressures on poor households increase yet further, a national agenda for social protection is increasingly important. Where Governments remain sceptical, partners must consider whether to direct support for social transfers to the most critically affected through NGOs and other actors.

Whilst these conclusions are reached through the analysis of circumstances in Zambia, the conclusions are clearly applicable in other places. Where rising prices are creating additional economic stress in poor families and communities, there is a significant risk that without appropriate support, children’s labour and other forms of deprivation and danger will form a significant part of many coping strategies.
In responding to crises pertaining to food, a specific dialogue around food supplies and consideration of its impact purely in terms of an absolute shortage of food often emerges. This may often be restricted to ministries of agriculture and finance, and to agencies such as WFP and FAO. Whilst this is necessary, it is not sufficient to address the needs of a substantial proportion of those greatly affected and indeed irreversibly harmed by the current crisis. Rather, a more comprehensive analysis, sensitised to the specific impacts and risks created by rising prices, is required. This analysis has shown that existing programmes, particularly those that address child labour, strengthen household incomes, and provide targeted social protection, are critical to building resilience in vulnerable families, and reducing exposure to harm, particularly for children. Those working to promote the rights and prospects of vulnerable children must engage in the development of national responses to rising prices (even if the merits of their participation is not immediately obvious to others), using evidence and analysis to demonstrate the need for a strong, comprehensive response.