Economic Strengthening for Orphans and Vulnerable Children

Orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), and the households caring for them, face a multitude of obstacles to achieving sustainable food and economic security. OVC place additional economic burdens on often already over-stretched households that can have detrimental effects on their health and well-being.

Children, especially those under age five, are particularly vulnerable to the effects of malnutrition, which can have life-long impacts on their physical and cognitive development. In addition to nutritional support, other important OVC needs include access to education and health services due to the high costs of fees and stigma. Children who ‘age out’ of OVC programs may not have the financial resources to continue their education, yet also may not have appropriate skills to enter the workforce.

Increasingly, OVC providers see the need to include economic strengthening and food security support along with the range of services they provide, as a way to offset the cost of supporting OVC, as well as to protect and build household assets that can lead to future economic growth. Each household requires different types of support based on their vulnerabilities and assets, including physical assets, skills and financial resources. The table below highlights LIFT’s approach to appropriately target economic strengthening services for OVC households based on their vulnerability and needs.

Households supporting OVC may benefit from the provision of cash and non-cash transfers as a way to sustain consumption patterns when OVC join a household. Transfers help to protect household assets by reducing the pressure to sell assets to meet household needs, such as food and healthcare. This support may also foster equitable treatment of OVC within a household.

Households with a regular income, even if small, may benefit from engaging in livelihood protection strategies, such as household gardens or community managed savings and loan groups. Protection strategies help households supporting OVC to meet unexpected or significant household expenses, like school fees. Training and diversifying livelihoods activities can help to protect income streams when traditional livelihood opportunities are not sufficient.

Older OVC may benefit from promotion activities such as vocational training, market-linked income generating activities, apprenticeship and mentoring programs, entrepreneurship and business skills training, as well as training in life skills.

<table>
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<th>Household Livelihood Phase</th>
<th>Economic Strengthening Strategy</th>
<th>Types of Programs</th>
<th>Anticipated Outcome</th>
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<td>PROMOTION</td>
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The LIFT project provides technical assistance to USAID missions and their implementing partners to improve their economic strengthening and livelihoods programs, as well as help implementers target services that reach OVC and supporting households.

- LIFT conducts rapid assessments of OVC partners and their household economic strengthening interventions and delivers tailored technical assistance in economic strengthening, livelihoods and food security (ES/L/FS) programming to address gaps or challenges identified in the assessment.
- LIFT provides training and support for OVC partners to implement savings and lending groups to support households with OVC.
- LIFT designs consolidated economic life skills programs, including basic financial literacy, workforce development, apprenticeships, entrepreneurship, and mentoring, in addition to HIV information and activities that support self-efficacy.
- LIFT builds the capacity of OVC implementers in:
  - Client and beneficiary selection for economic strengthening interventions
  - Assessing household vulnerability and assets
  - Market analysis
  - Monitoring, evaluation & impact assessment of economic strengthening interventions
  - Creating linkages to other complimentary services

The Livelihood and Food Security Technical Assistance (LIFT) project was launched in 2009 by USAID to strengthen the capacity of USAID missions, implementing organizations and host governments to design and implement livelihood and food security interventions that sustainably improve the economic status and health of vulnerable households. LIFT’s primary goal is to build the continuum of care for people living with HIV and other vulnerable households by increasing their access to high quality, context appropriate, market-led economic strengthening, livelihood and food security (ES/L/FS) opportunities that improve their economic resilience and lead to better health. An essential component of LIFT’s approach is establishing linkages to integrate economic strengthening and food security activities within HIV/AIDS Nutrition, Assessment, Counseling and Support (NACS) programs and health systems.

To access the capabilities of LIFT, USAID missions and bureaus can invest in the LIFT associate award or issue their own associate awards.

LIFT is led by FHI 360, in collaboration with Save the Children US and CARE International.

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