



Ushirika wa Maendeleo ya Elimu Barani Afrika
الرابطة لأجل تطوير التربية في إفريقيا
Association for the Development of Education in Africa
Association pour le développement de l'éducation en Afrique
Associação para o Desenvolvimento da Educação em África

**Triennale on Education and Training in Africa
(Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 12–17 February 2012)**

**Promoting critical knowledge, skills and qualifications for
sustainable development in Africa: How to design and
implement an effective response through education and
training systems**

Sub-theme 1

**Common core skills for lifelong learning
and sustainable development in Africa**

**Care and Support for Teaching and Learning:
a SADC response for ensuring the education rights of vulnerable
children and youth are realized**

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Working Document

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DOC 1.4.01

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Abbreviations

COE	Centres of Excellence
EFA	Education For All
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SCCS	Schools as Centres of Care and Support

1. ABSTRACT

1. Across the SADC Region, millions of children face challenges to realizing their right to education. SADC Ministers of Education have recognized that fundamental changes need to take place in all education systems and institutions. In response to this, they have adopted the **Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL)** initiative as a comprehensive response to the health and socio-economic challenges facing vulnerable learners, and to make schools *inclusive centers of learning, care and support*.
2. This paper explains how **CSTL** — which provides a coordinating mechanism for ministries of education to lead a multiple-sectoral response to mainstreaming care and support — can *impact positively on the education rights of vulnerable children and youth*. The initiative builds on existing care and support programs, and is being implemented incrementally across the SADC Region (initially in five Member States).
3. SADC's *Strategic Framework for OVC&Y* and the “Minimum Package” of services are described, and **CSTL**'s role in operationalizing the framework from the education sector's perspective is explained.
4. The program's potential to impact positively on education outcomes at school level is discussed. Although the program is still in its infancy, it is argued that past care and support interventions do support **CSTL**'s underlying theory of change.
5. Systematizing care and support requires an enabling policy environment. A policy review was first conducted in all SADC Member States before an overarching regional policy framework was developed, the processes, findings and recommendations of which are outlined.
6. It is concluded that **CSTL** provides a unique response to the multiplicity of challenges facing the vulnerable learner in the SADC Region.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

7. Across the SADC Region, millions of vulnerable children are confronted by a range of barriers to accessing education and to remaining *in* and achieving *at* school. SADC Ministers of Education recognize that fundamental changes are needed in all education systems if the Education For All goals are to be achieved.

8. This paper discusses how, through mainstreaming care and support, SADC's ***Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL)*** initiative can positively impact on ensuring the *education rights of vulnerable children and youth*.

9. In 2008 SADC developed a framework of comprehensive care and support for vulnerable children and youth: it provides guidance to Member States for coordinating and harmonizing efforts to fully meet the basic rights and needs of vulnerable children and youth, and by ensuring that basic services are provided in an integrated, complementary and holistic manner. ***CSTL*** seeks to operationalize SADC's "Minimum Package of Services" within the education sector. A monitoring and evaluation framework has been developed to track progress made by Member States.

10. ***CSTL*** supports both education systems and institutions to ensure that children have access to quality education *and* the basic needs essential for their development. While it is the mandate of education ministries to provide an environment where children can learn effectively, other essential services necessary for vulnerable children to achieve in school are usually provided by *other* ministries. The delivery of school-based services therefore has to be significantly multi-sectoral, although coordinated by the Ministry of Education. ***CSTL*** facilitates meeting the basic needs of vulnerable learners so that *access to education, retention and progression* are improved.

11. The principles and values of ***CSTL*** are that it: is child-centered and promotes a child-rights approach; is gender-sensitive and inclusive; embraces diversity; encourages a sector-wide approach; addresses barriers that prevent access, retention and performance in school; supports collaboration with all stakeholders; fosters commitment and support at all levels; builds on existing initiatives; prioritizes capacity development; aligns interventions to national policies and contributes to attaining international targets.

12. The goal of ***CSTL*** is that the education rights of vulnerable children are realized through schools becoming inclusive centers of learning, care and support. Strategic objectives at *regional level* are: to strengthen and harmonize care and support policies and programs to support improved education outcomes; to increase learning and knowledge on care and support strategies. At *national level* they are to improve the enrollment, retention and achievement of vulnerable learners.

13. The four components at *regional level* are: policy development and harmonization; research, monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge management; capacity development and provision of technical resources and support; management and resource mobilization.

14. *National level* components include: developing and reviewing policy, and establishing institutional arrangements; facilitating access to essential services for learners (*in* and *through* schools); enhancing the capacity of institutions, communities and families to support learners to learn effectively.

15. At *school level* the program works with schools as entry points and channels for care and support, because they provide an effective service delivery mechanism. ***CSTL***'s theory of change is based on the premise that increased care and support to vulnerable learners (delivered through multi-sectoral collaboration) *will* improve education outcomes.

16. ***CSTL*** facilitates the delivery of the following agreed-upon package of care and support elements: psychosocial support; safety and protection; social and welfare services; nutrition; curriculum support; teacher development and support; leadership and structures; health; community;

infrastructure; material support; water and sanitation. In addition, gender sensitivity and inclusive education are crosscutting issues across all elements.

17. The implementation of the *CSTL* package of care and support at school level is in its early stages and has therefore not yet been fully tested: in the first phase of the initiative there has been a strong focus on activities at regional and national levels to lay the foundation for the mainstreaming of care and support. However, in 2009 *CSTL* did begin implementation at school level: 15 baseline schools in each Phase 1 Member State were selected; a comprehensive baseline study was conducted, which assessed the state of care and support elements in each school and its readiness to implement the essential package. With the development of a regional Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting framework, the baseline schools are being closely monitored and the impact on education outcomes is currently being measured.

18. Evidence from past care and support programs supports *CSTL's* underlying theory of change. Evidence of impact on education outcomes can also be drawn from partner organizations that work under the *CSTL* “umbrella” and which are experiencing positive impacts on the wellbeing of vulnerable learners.

19. *CSTL* seeks to systematize care and support within the education sector. This requires an enabling environment. Accordingly, the SADC Secretariat commissioned a regional policy review to assess policies and programs in each Member State and which would inform the development of an overarching common regional policy framework.

20. The regional policy review examined: the appropriateness of education policies for the provision of care and support; how policies of other sectors cover the essential elements of care and support; the adequacy of services and implementation strategies of identified policies; the adequacy of structures for identified policies; care and support programs and how they are delivered; the mechanisms of integrating delivery of services by different service providers. It also included an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of identified policies and programs.

21. Policies were reviewed in all Member States and country policy reports were developed. Country level data was compared and consolidated into a regional policy report. The findings were used to inform the development of the regional policy framework.

22. Various qualitative research methods were applied in conducting the review. Data collected was tabulated and analyzed to identify gaps and to determine priorities with respect to societal, systemic, pedagogic and intrinsic barriers.

23. The research focused on the *policy environment*, so no situation analysis was undertaken regarding the *implementation* of these policies. Some difficulties were encountered. While there were certain limitations inherent in the study, the research did provide an in-depth understanding of the existing relevant policies and programs in all Member States.

24. The findings of the review are discussed under three categories. Firstly, *school provisioning*: the region *is* making progress in increasing access to basic education. However, schooling costs carried by households remains a significant barrier. Improving the quality of education requires fostering an enabling environment. What is needed too is a common, consistent definition of vulnerability across Member States.

25. Secondly, *complementary services*: there are many policies and strategies that support education outcomes that are provided by other ministries. All Member States have developed policy responses to the challenges of HIV and AIDS. Most Member States provide some form of school feeding, although the coverage across urban and rural areas varies significantly. Child labor is prevalent and does affect school attendance negatively. It is clear that children do need support to overcome the many barriers they face.

26. Thirdly, *delivery mechanisms*: the scale of barriers to learning requires a concerted multi-sectoral effort. The policy review also identified a tendency in all Member States to separate structures, rather than forming a comprehensive, integrated structure. While some countries are now establishing multi-sectoral structures, there is still the need for capacity building across the system.

27. The review showed that progress has been made towards building a foundation for care and support for teaching and learning. However, mainstreaming care and support requires a focus on policy development that will foster participation by a range of stakeholders. Further, buy-in from senior decision makers across different ministries is required.

28. During the policy review the most urgent specific barriers to education and the interventions that ought to be replicated through a harmonization of policies were identified. It is recommended that these policy gaps should be addressed urgently through appropriate policy innovations and interventions, guided by minimum standards provided in the framework.

29. The following principles to guide the development of care and support-related policies have been defined collectively by Member States: a systems approach; sustainability; the child at the center; a coordinated multi-sectoral and rights-based approach; inclusive and non-discriminatory. They are also: participatory and empowering; asset-based, appreciative and flexible; evidence-based and contextually relevant.

30. Apart from summarizing priority policy interventions, the framework recommends: (i) priorities for core education mandates that fall directly under the Ministries of Education; (ii) priorities for complementary services that do not fall under the direct mandate of Ministries of Education; (iii) priorities for institutional arrangements and delivery — i.e. that children can access integrated services in and through schools.

31. As a program of SADC, **CSTL** works directly with Ministries of Education. However, the important contribution to education by the non-formal sector is recognized. As **CSTL** is scaled-up, it is proposed that explicit recommendations for alternative streams be considered in reviews of the policy framework.

32. The development of the regional policy framework is a step towards making care and support a core mandate of the education sector. The framework provides a guide for Member States to strengthen *their* policies and ensure the realization of common regional care and support objectives.

33. In conclusion, **CSTL** works toward making educational institutions centers of teaching, learning and support. It is a unique response to the multiplicity of challenges facing the vulnerable learners in the SADC Region.

3. INTRODUCTION

34. In 2008, the number of orphans in the 15 Member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) was estimated to be 17 million (UNICEF, 2008). This does not include other vulnerable children and youth whose numbers are not known due to weak data collection and information management systems (SADC, 2011). Vulnerability in SADC is a result of a combination of multiple factors, primarily: poverty; HIV and AIDS and other diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis; natural disasters — commonly floods and droughts, which cause food insecurity; political and social conflict; biological factors such as disability; negative social practices, such as child marriages; cross border migration of unaccompanied children and young people; the lack of birth registration for a large number of children (James *et al.*, 2008). These vulnerabilities, whether general or more specific, present as barriers to effective teaching and learning.

35. This paper discusses how the *Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL)* initiative — SADC's response for ensuring the education rights of vulnerable children and youth — can impact positively on the *education rights of vulnerable children and youth through integration of care and support in schools*. Following this introduction, Chapter 4 describes *The Strategic Framework for OVC&Y* developed by SADC, and the “*Minimum Package*” necessary for the delivery of basic services to vulnerable children and youth. Chapter 5 provides the background and context to *CSTL*, while Chapter 6 assesses the impact of *CSTL* on education outcomes at school level. Chapter 7 discusses the regional policy review as a prelude to the development of a regional policy framework, which is dealt with in Chapter 8.

36. In 2008 SADC developed *The Strategic Framework for OVC&Y*, which is operationalized through a *Minimum Package of Services for OVC&Y* that outlines and classifies basic needs and services to be delivered. The paper explains that *CSTL* has assisted to operationalize the OVC&Y framework from the education sector's perspective.

37. Across the SADC Region millions of children do not realize their right to education because of a range of vulnerabilities, not least of which is widespread poverty, as well as the impact of HIV and AIDS. The *CSTL* initiative, launched jointly in 2008 by all SADC Ministers of Education, forms part of the response to these challenges. By mainstreaming care and support, schools become inclusive centers of learning, care and support.

38. *CSTL's* theory of change is presented as background to an assessment of the impact on education outcomes at school level. The agreed-upon elements of *CSTL's* essential package of care and support are also described briefly.

39. *CSTL* works directly with Ministries of Education, but the contributions made by alternative streams of education (through NGOs, community and faith-based organizations, etc.) must also be acknowledged. It is recommended that these are considered as the programme moves forward.

40. The process of mainstreaming care and support involves strengthening and harmonizing policies and practices in order to remove barriers to teaching and learning, and to facilitate systematic implementation of care and support in schools. Policy harmonization within, and across, Member States, is necessary to create policy environments that promote care and support for teaching and learning.

41. As a prelude to developing an overarching common policy framework for the region, the SADC Secretariat commissioned a regional policy review. The various research themes are outlined, as are the process and research methodology that were adopted. The findings are presented under three categories: (i) School provisioning; (ii) Complementary services; (iii) Delivery mechanisms.

In presenting the policy framework, the principles underlying the framework are listed. The policies priorities are organized according to: core education mandates; provisioning of complementary services; institutional arrangements and delivery.

4. OVC&Y FRAMEWORK

42. *The Strategic Framework and Programme of Action (2008-2015): Comprehensive Care and Support for Orphans and other Vulnerable Children and Youth in SADC (The Strategic Framework for OVC&Y)* was developed in 2008 as a response to the unprecedented rise in the number of orphans and other vulnerable children and youth. It seeks to address weaknesses in the service delivery system, among which are: lack of standardization of service delivery efforts for vulnerable children and youth at regional and national levels; less formalized sharing of best practices between Member States; piecemeal and vertical sectoral delivery of services; weak coordination and collaboration between sectors, which make it difficult to provide comprehensive services for vulnerable children and youth in a holistic manner (Save the Children UK, 2010; Dzirikure, 2010). The framework provides the conceptual and strategic foundation on which the **CSTL** approach in the SADC Region is based.

43. *The Strategic Framework for OVC&Y* is guided by systems theory. [In this case, a system is defined as “a complex and highly interlinked network of parts exhibiting synergistic properties [and in which] the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Flood and Jackson, 1991: 4)... coordinated to accomplish a set of goals” (Churchman, 1968: 29).] Vulnerable children and youth are considered as “whole” beings, whose basic needs must be delivered *systemically* in their totality, in order for them to realize optimum development.

44. Children and youth are defined as “vulnerable” when there is a higher chance that they will lose or not be able to access basic services (Dzirikure, 2008), or are exposed to an expected welfare loss above a socially accepted norm, and which results in risky / uncertain events, or lack of appropriate risk management instruments (Holzmann and Jørgensen, 2001; World Bank, 2003). Being vulnerable also means that the immediate care and support system for the children and youth — often the household or family unit — can no longer cope, and so they require external support to fulfill their basic needs. Optimum development for the child cannot be achieved by the partial fulfillment of basic needs or services, but the fulfillment of *all* of them.

45. *The Strategic Framework for OVC&Y* provides guidance for all Member States to coordinate and harmonize their efforts to fully meet the rights and basic needs of vulnerable children and youth, so that they can attain optimum development and realize their full human capabilities. Providing partial basic services to vulnerable children and youth often result in only *short term* gains in the overall care and support system and the development of the child or young person (Dzirikure, 2010). The services that are not provided often lead to a reduction in the efficacy, or “low net effect”, of those needs and services that *are* provided. For example, even if children’s education needs are fully provided for, they are nevertheless still not likely to attend school regularly or achieve well if they are hungry or over burdened with caring responsibilities at home. Therefore, the benefits of full education grants are unlikely to be realized if other basic needs of the child are not specifically addressed holistically and comprehensively within a continuum.

46. This “systems approach” also recognizes that the problems facing orphans and other vulnerable children continue into young adulthood beyond the age of 18, when they are no longer covered by care and support programs for children. The continuum of care and support for vulnerable *children* should therefore be sustained for vulnerable youth. *The Strategic Framework for OVC&Y* promotes “integration of vulnerable children and youth as a priority in all aspects of the development agenda of SADC at policy, legislative, strategic and service delivery levels with a focus on providing them with comprehensive services in a holistic manner” (Dzirikure, 2008: 29).

47. In order to operationalize comprehensive care and support for vulnerable children and youth across different sectors (as outlined in *The Strategic Framework for OVC&Y*), a *SADC Minimum Package of Services for OVC&Y (Minimum Package)* was developed that built on existing efforts by Member States to provide services to children and youth. In order to attain universal access to basic

needs and services (as enshrined in the MDG and other international and regional and commitments), the *Minimum Package* outlines the basic minimum services required for vulnerable children and youth to grow up to achieve their optimal development and attain their full capabilities.

48. These basic needs and services are classified under six areas: (i) education and vocational skills; (ii) health, clean water and sanitation; (iii) food security and nutrition; (iv) child and youth protection; (v) psychosocial support; (vi) social protection. Minimum basic services are defined further for each of the six basic needs or services areas. For example, specific services that fall under the education and vocational skills mandate are defined as including: basic education, which covers pre-schooling for early childhood development and primary and secondary education; tertiary education; technical and vocational training, including non-formal education for vulnerable adolescents and youth. Specific services provided for include: tuition fees; school uniforms and educational materials, i.e. stationery and instructional materials; skilled teachers; safe schools; psychosocial skills and support for all children and youth; professional, entrepreneurial and livelihood training and income-earning skills for adolescents and youth.

49. The *Minimum Package* also identifies complementary services (including aspects of all the other five basic needs and services identified above), without which effective teaching and learning for vulnerable children and youth cannot take place because they affect access to educational facilities and opportunities, enrolment, retention and achievement. These fall under the core mandate of other sectors, but should be provided holistically, in collaboration with the sector responsible for education and skills development. The *CSTL* initiative seeks to operationalize the *Minimum Package* (of services) within the Education and Skills Development Sector, by ensuring that other basic services for vulnerable children are provided in an integrated, complementary and holistic manner within a continuum of care and support that enables effective teaching and learning. In short, *CSTL* is the regional vehicle through which care and support for vulnerable children and youth will be integrated into the education policies and program of Member States.

50. In order that comprehensive services for vulnerable children and youth are delivered in a holistic manner, the different development agents that deliver services (government, civil society, and the private sector) should collaborate and coordinate their efforts. This should be done through one or a combination of the following ways: advocating within and across sectors to ensure that every sector and stakeholder fulfill their mandates and obligations towards vulnerable children and youth; developing competencies for inter-sector collaboration; establishing strong coordination and service referral systems, within and across sectors; developing relevant legal and legislative frameworks that foster comprehensive service delivery by sectors; empowering vulnerable children and youth, families and communities with self-organizing and livelihood/entrepreneurial income-generating and employment skills, so that they can access basic services at family level (Dzirikure, 2010; SADC, 2010).

51. Another pre-requisite for ensuring that comprehensive services are delivered in a holistic manner is that service providers in the different sectors, including Education and Skills Development, should adhere to a set of non-negotiable principles. These include: focusing on holistic development of the child or young person; ensuring that interventions consider the developmental needs of children at different age groups and contexts; considering and addressing the gender-driven causes of deprivation and vulnerability; guaranteeing the participation of children and young people in their own development, in a way consistent with their evolving capabilities; ensuring that interventions are sustainable, consistent, long term and free from negative effects — either in the short or long term, whether intended or not; being centered on promoting, fulfilling and nurturing the rights and responsibilities of children and young people (SADC, 2010).

52. A monitoring and evaluation framework has been developed to track and measure the extent to which Member States will make progress towards fulfilling the systemic, comprehensive and holistic service delivery requirements of *The Strategic Framework for OVC&Y*. The M&E Framework requires different sectors — including the Education and Skills Development Sector, through the *CSTL* program — to report on the extent to which their service delivery efforts are specifically targeted at vulnerable children and youth. The existing challenges associated with

monitoring and evaluation of vulnerable children and youth-interventions in different development sectors are acknowledged — in most cases monitoring and evaluation does not exist. A SADC regional capacity building plan for monitoring and evaluation of vulnerable children and youth across sectors has therefore been developed.

53. To conclude, SADC acknowledges past weaknesses in service delivery to vulnerable children and youth. *The Strategic Framework for OVC&Y* and Minimum Package were developed specifically to address these. In turn, **CSTL** — which is described more fully in the following sections — is SADC’s mechanism for operationalizing SADC’s Minimum Package of care and support within the education sector.

5. Background to *CSTL*

5.1 Regional context

54. The importance of education is widely recognized and understood. It is the foundation for “lifelong learning and human development” (UNESCO, 1990) and is also an essential ingredient in the fight against poverty. Children have the right to quality education that has relevance to their day-to-day lives and developmental needs. Yet across the SADC Region, millions of children do not realize this right as a result of the vulnerabilities that characterize their lives. These children are confronted by a range of barriers — barriers to accessing education, to remaining in school, and to achieving at school. As these barriers are common across the majority of SADC Member States, these countries are at risk of not achieving their Education for All (EFA) targets and Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

55. In accordance with the Communiqué issued by the Ministers of Education of all SADC Member States in September 2005, fundamental changes need to take place in all education systems and institutions to secure the education rights of learners (SADC, “Swaziland Communiqué”, 2005: Appendix 5). In particular, care and support for teaching and learning needs to be mainstreamed in all systems and across all education institutions. In July 2007, the SADC Ministers of Education reiterated the need for a comprehensive approach to the promotion of health in the education sector and on 4 July 2008, the *CSTL* initiative was approved by the Ministers. This because it was seen to provide a comprehensive response to the health and socio-economic challenges facing vulnerable learners (SADC “Lusaka Communiqué”, 2008).

56. Thus *CSTL*, implemented as a SADC-wide initiative, takes its emphasis from these directives for a comprehensive approach to addressing health and socioeconomic barriers in the education sector. *CSTL* supports education ministries to fulfill the commitments and intentions of providing quality education to all children.

5.2 Rationale for *CSTL*

57. Access to quality education and the basic need of freedom from disease, hunger, violence and abuse, as well for emotional security, care and support, are all essential ingredients for children’s development if they are to participate meaningfully in society.

58. Providing an environment where children can learn effectively is the mandate of education ministries. However, the essential services (such as health and welfare services) necessary for children to learn effectively usually fall within the mandates of related ministries. It is therefore critical that any initiative to deliver a comprehensive range of services to children be significantly multi-sectoral, but should be led and coordinated by the Ministry of Education. The model here is one where the school is transformed into a center for real and meaningful learning, and a place where every child wants to be. Hence the school becomes a multi-sectoral focal point for community action and for community care and support for vulnerable children.

59. Schools such as these are at the service of children in a holistic way that engages their communities and fosters reciprocity. Strong school-community bodies are well-placed to identify school-aged children who are in need — children who are orphans, are susceptible to violence, have disabilities, are HIV infected / affected, are malnourished, are especially poor, etc. — to determine the community’s own response to these needs, and to access agencies (NGOs, government departments, faith-based organizations, etc.) that can support their response to the identified needs.

60. To achieve this ideal situation there is much to be done. The *CSTL* initiative was conceived to support education institutions and systems in Member States to progress towards realizing children’s

right to education, as well as having their physical, psychological, social, spiritual and emotional needs met, so that serious and significant progress is made toward the achievement of the goals of EFA and the MDG, as well as increasing overall development.

5.3 Dimensions of care and support in the education sector

61. The elements of care and support in the education sector differ in every country and every context. There are however, some commonalities, including:

- a vision, or ideal situation, that is country-specific and will guide strategies and plans;
- national, sub-national and education institution level entry points and interventions;
- a “minimum set” of care and support elements that can be applied across a range of settings.

62. The following diagram illustrates the essential elements adopted by the **CSTL** program that will be present in a caring and supportive school. (For fuller discussion of these elements, see, [6.3.1 Elements of the essential package, below.](#))

Figure 1: Essential elements in a caring and supportive school



63. Through the **CSTL** initiative, policies, structures and systems are developed or reviewed at national and sub-national levels, so that they facilitate and support interventions that:

- alleviate the economic burden of education on poor families;
- involve broader development initiatives that enable families to send their children *to*, and keep them *in*, school;
- provide schooling in places and in forms that can easily be accessed by learners who would otherwise be deprived of access to education;
- improve coordination and communication between essential service sectors;
- strengthen data collection and utilization by the education ministries in order to inform planning, policy development and implementation of care and support interventions.

64. At education institution level **CSTL** facilitates the development of processes that:

- identify and assess vulnerable learners, then meet certain of their material and basic survival needs (which would otherwise constitute barriers to them remaining in school), and monitor these learners over time;
- make systems more effective to facilitate access to education and improve retention;
- build capacity in teachers, caregivers and children to cope with, and respond effectively to, a range of challenges;
- provide HIV prevention support and services to vulnerable children who have an increased exposure to risk;
- promote greater community involvement and partnerships that assist and strengthen school communities;
- improve coordination and communication;
- establish systems for referrals;
- create learning environments that are gender-sensitive, and are free from stigma, discrimination and abuse.

65. Importantly, the primary role of education in the region does not change; instead, through re-aligning, strengthening and enhancing education systems, schools become *inclusive centers of learning, care and support*.

5.4 Principles of CSTL

66. The **CSTL** initiative is implemented in accordance with the following principles and values:
- a child-centered and child-rights approach is promoted and pursued: in particular, no child is discriminated against in regard to access to learning or the provision of care and support;
 - gender-sensitivity and inclusiveness are emphasized, although the program recognizes and address the different needs of girls and boys;
 - approaches embrace diversity and strive at all times to be culturally, ethically and contextually appropriate;
 - a sector-wide approach is encouraged;
 - barriers to learning that prevent children from enrolling in school, staying in school and performing well, are addressed;
 - strategic partnerships are formed, and collaboration with all stakeholders is supported;
 - commitment and support are fostered at all levels;
 - all interventions are aligned to national policies and plans, and contribute to the attainment of regional and international targets (EFA and MDG);
 - interventions build on local expertise and existing initiatives;
 - capacity development, through mentoring, training and technical support, is a priority.

5.5 Program description

5.5.1 Program goal

67. The goal of the **CSTL** program is: “The education rights of vulnerable children in the SADC Region being realized through schools becoming inclusive centers of learning, care and support”.

5.5.2 Program objectives

68. Strategic objectives have been defined at both regional and Member State level.

69. At the *regional* level, the objectives are: (i) to strengthen and harmonize care and support policies and programs to support improved education outcomes in SADC Member States; and (ii) to increase learning and knowledge on care and support strategies across the Region.
70. At *Member State* level, the objectives are (i) to improve the enrollment, retention and achievement of vulnerable learners through strengthened responsiveness of education systems; (ii) to improve the enrollment, retention and achievement of vulnerable learners through the mobilization of school communities to provide care and support; and (iii) to improve the enrollment, retention and achievement of vulnerable learners through integrated service delivery.

5.5.3 Program strategies

71. At the *regional* level, the program has four components:
- (i) **Policy development and harmonization**
The aim is to facilitate a common approach to addressing barriers to teaching and learning that are related to health and societal challenges, by harmonizing existing policies and programs. To this end, regional policy framework has been developed.
 - (ii) **Research, monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge management**
It is critical that the impact of mainstreaming care and support in the education sector is monitored. A Regional Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting framework has been developed, and Ministries of Education are required to monitor and report on progress at the annual Education Ministers' meetings. A regional *CSTL* research agenda has been developed, based on a scoping study that identified knowledge gaps in the area of care and support.
 - (iii) **Capacity development and provision of technical resources and support**
Tools and materials have been developed; capacity building for systematically mainstreaming care and support for teaching and learning is being implemented.
 - (iv) **Management and resource mobilization**
This includes the provision of technical assistance at the SADC Secretariat to coordinate the program, coordinate all regional partners and donors, and to mobilize resources for all the phases of the program.
72. At the *national level*, the components implemented vary from country to country, depending on where Member States are in developing policies and programs on mainstreaming care and support. Importantly however, *CSTL* builds on existing programs, initiatives or plans for mainstreaming care and support. At national level, the main components include the following:
- (i) **Policy review and development, and establishment of institutional arrangements**
This facilitates the systematic planning and implementation of care and support in schools.
 - (ii) **Facilitating access to essential services for learners**
This focuses on piloting or scaling up the provision of essential care and support services in and through schools.
 - (iii) **Enhancing the capacity of institutions, communities and families to support learners to learn effectively**
This focuses on mobilizing communities, families and schools to support learners to access essential care and support services.

5.5.4 Program phases

73. *CSTL* is being implemented incrementally, initially in five Member States for the period 2008 to 2012, and in the remaining SADC Member States from 2013 to 2015. However, all Member States across both these phases participate in annual regional sharing meetings.

6. IMPACT ON EDUCATION OUTCOMES AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL

6.1 Rationale for schools as centers of care and support

74. The **CSTL** program operates at three levels: at the *regional level* within the SADC Secretariat, the *national level* with Ministries of Education, and at the *school level* in **CSTL** pilot schools.

75. The program works with schools as entry points and channels for care and support, because they provide an effective service delivery mechanism for integrated and comprehensive services. In terms of location, schools are generally accessible, which makes them intrinsically capable of addressing certain service delivery barriers common to the SADC Region — such as distance, lack of infrastructure (especially in rural areas), and sustainability. In many parts of Southern Africa, especially in rural areas, the number and density of schools are much higher than other sites of service delivery, such as hospitals and health-service providers. In short, schools have a much wider reach into vulnerable communities. Schools can also provide age-appropriate targeted services, given their arrangement of age cohorts by grade. They already have existing infrastructure, provide long term opportunities and are sustainable. They are also one of the first services to be resumed in emergency situations (UNESCO, 2008: 8–9).

76. More fundamentally however, facilitating access to complementary or supportive services — over and above immediate education services — is necessary for the realization of the education system's core mandate, which is ensuring educational access, retention and achievement of all learners.

6.2 Theory of change

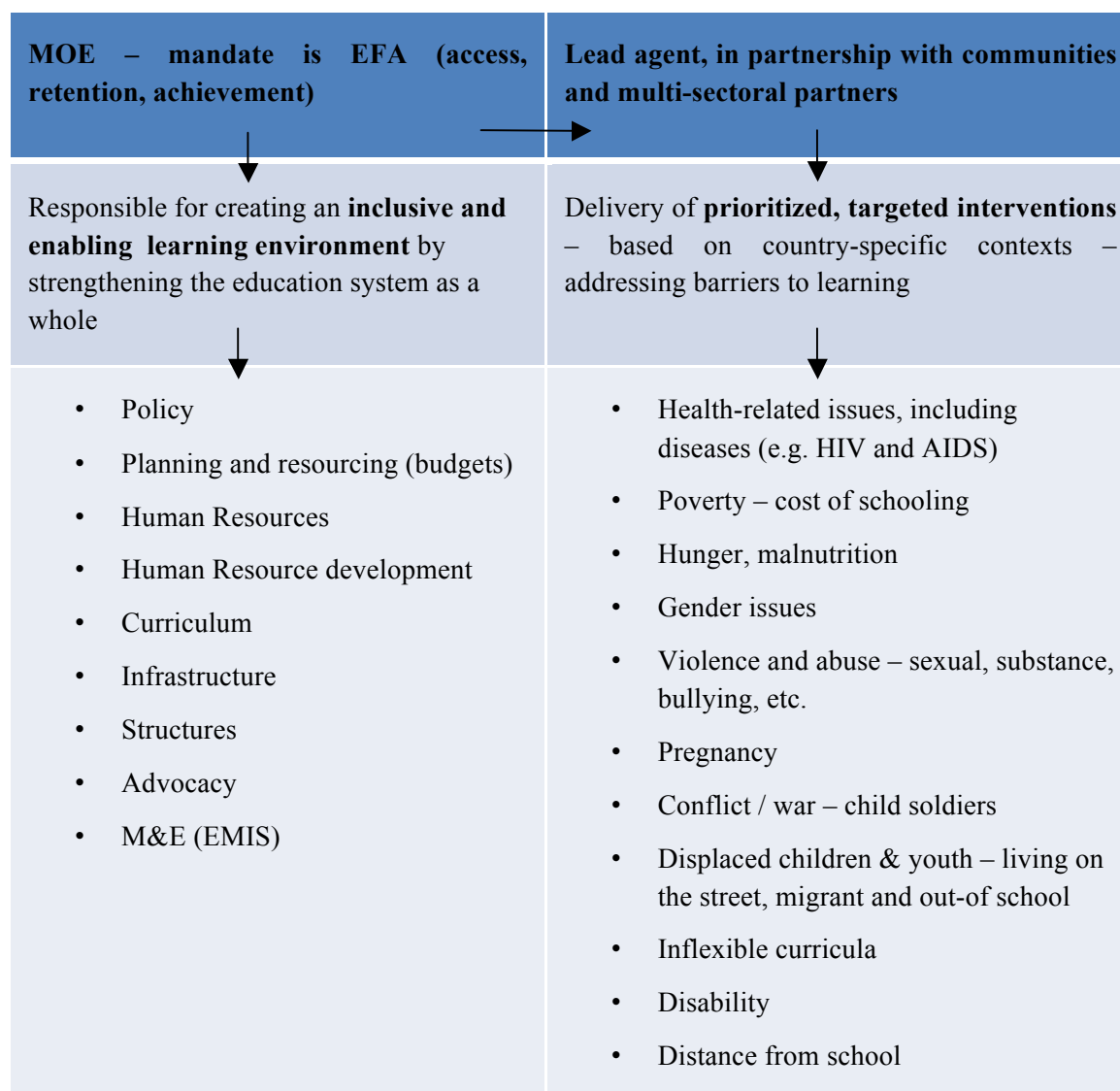
77. **CSTL** is based on the fundamental hypothesis that increased care and support to vulnerable learners, delivered through multi-sectoral collaboration, will improve education outcomes. The program's theory of change, or results chain, is summarized and illustrated in the two figures below.

Figure 2: CSTL theory of change (1)

If children's basic needs are met **by** communities, government and others stakeholders working together to provide relevant care and support at/via schools, children will be better able to enroll, attend and remain in school and perform to the best of their ability.

If education care and support for vulnerable children is mainstreamed into the following aspects of the education system — policy, planning and budgeting, human resources, human resource development, curriculum, infrastructure, monitoring and evaluation — **and** a national conceptual framework / model and package of school-based care and support programs and services are developed **and** partnerships are developed to implement the framework/model and package, **then** rates of school enrollment, retention and performance will improve and **CSTL** will contribute towards realizing the EFA and MDG targets and goals.

Figure 3: CSTL theory of change (2)



6.3 Essential package of care and support

78. Experience in implementing care and support for teaching and learning in the SADC Region has shown that the specific elements of care and support required in the education sector differ by country and local context. However, despite local variations, many commonalities were identified. These form the key elements of the **CSTL** essential package of care and support (see [5.3 Dimensions of care and support in the education sector](#), above).

6.3.1 Elements of the essential package

79. **CSTL** is premised on the delivery of the following range of services that constitute the elements of this essential package of care and support. (These are illustrated in [Figure 1: Essential elements in a caring and supportive school](#), chapter 5).

- *Psychosocial support* refers to the continuum of care and support that addresses the social, emotional, spiritual and psychological wellbeing of learners and teachers.

- *Safety and protection* means that schools should be free of all forms of violence, abuse and bullying. Safety and protection concerns are not limited to the physical infrastructure of the school, but also refer to the psychological and emotional safety and wellbeing of learners and teachers.
- *Social and welfare services* refer to the role of schools and teachers in the implementation of child care and protection legislation and in promoting access to social welfare services.
- *Nutrition* refers to school or facility-based nutrition programs, also called school feeding schemes. The provision of nutrition to vulnerable learners addresses child hunger, provides an incentive for children to attend school, and enhances children's active learning capacity, and thereby positively impacting education outcomes.
- *Curriculum support* includes efforts to ensure that diversity and the range of different learning needs are accommodated within the efficient and effective delivery of the curriculum to all learners by appropriately skilled and supported teachers who have the necessary teaching and learning materials. It also promotes social and physical wellbeing through life skills, art, music and physical education or sport.
- *Teacher development and support* refers to both pre-service and in-service teacher training. It includes the professional growth that teachers achieve from increased experience, as well as through systematic examination of their teaching.
- *Leadership and structures* refers to effective and committed governance and management at all levels, from national down to school level.
- *Health* refers to the process of enabling teachers and learners to increase control over their health by addressing risk and protective factors (and thereby promoting their overall health and wellbeing).
- *Community* refers to fostering community involvement and local partnerships to assist and strengthen schools in the provision or facilitation of care and support to vulnerable learners.
- *Infrastructure* involves the provision and maintenance of habitable and appropriate physical school structures that are designed to meet the needs of all learners.
- *Material support* refers to the provision of resources or services (including school fees, uniforms and transport) that address material or financial barriers to education.
- *Water and sanitation* involves the provision and maintenance of appropriate physical school structures designed to meet all of the water and sanitation requirements of school communities. It also includes sanitation education.

80. In addition, gender sensitivity and responsiveness to disabilities are crosscutting issues that are mainstreamed across all elements of the **CSL** essential package of care and support.

6.3.2 Recognizing alternative education streams

81. **CSL** acknowledges that a wide range of alternative forms of basic education — such as non-formal education, distance education and private education institutions run by NGOs, community- and faith-based organizations and other civil society entities — do exist. It recognizes the invaluable contributions made by these alternative education streams that provide flexible education solutions for children and youth who might otherwise “slip through the cracks” of formal education institutions. This is especially true in remote rural areas with low enrolment percentages.

82. **CSL** is built on the principle of multi-sectoral collaboration at all levels: this includes collaboration between public and private, formal and non-formal education institutions at the community level, which have the potential to complement and mutually support each other in the common goal of providing education for all vulnerable children and youth, irrespective of their gender, socio-economic status, ethnic and cultural background, mother tongue, religious affiliation or geographical location. Examples of successful multi-sectoral collaboration that provide alternative basic education include: radio education initiatives reaching out to children in remote areas; Zambian community schools (schools that were founded by communities themselves in the absence of formal education institutions, and which are now being formalized by the Ministry of Education); “catch-up

education centers” in the DRC that allow out-of school children to catch up with their peers’ education levels before being reintegrated into mainstream education.

6.4 Impact on learners to date

83. The results-chain based on the **CSTL** package of care and support (described above) has as yet not been tested because the defined essential elements have not yet been fully implemented. The nature of the **CSTL** initiative necessitated a strong focus on regional and national level program activities in the first implementing phase (2009–2011), to establish a firm foundation for the coordinated and integrated delivery of services in Member States.

84. However, there has been a lower level of activity at school level. In 2009, **CSTL** began implementing in schools: 15 baseline schools in each Phase 1 Member State were selected, and a comprehensive baseline study was conducted. This study assessed the state of care and support elements in each baseline school, as well as its readiness to implement the essential package of care and support to vulnerable learners.

85. Because **CSTL** implementation at school level has not been fully rolled out, this makes it difficult to draw a direct correlation between **CSTL** interventions and results noted at the school level. However, as part of the development of a regional Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting framework for **CSTL**, the baseline schools identified in each Member State are now being closely monitored: it will therefore be possible in the near future to measure impact in terms of education outcomes.

86. However, there is evidence from past care and support programs in the education sector that supports **CSTL**’s underlying theory of change. A summative evaluation of the regional Schools as Centres of Care and Support (SCCS) program, which was implemented by MIET Africa in Swaziland, Zambia and South Africa between 2006 and 2008, highlighted its success in terms of education outcomes (Nottawasaga, 2008:). SCCS, which was the predecessor to the **CSTL** program, implemented a comprehensive and integrated school-based model of care and support, based on local coordinating structures that involved public, private and civil society role-players. The evaluation confirmed that the SCCS resulted in a marked increase in community participation and inter-sectoral collaboration at the local level, which in turn resulted in the following school level outcomes:

- increased assistance for vulnerable children;
- improved nutrition;
- increased reporting of sexual abuse;
- reduction in teenage pregnancies (particularly in the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal);
- increased awareness of HIV and AIDS issues among learners;
- improved access to documentation, health, social welfare and other services by vulnerable children and communities.

87. In combination, these achievements impacted on the education outcomes of vulnerable learners. The summative evaluation revealed an increase in school enrollment in the SCCS schools; school attendance improved with a decrease in drop-out rates, which was attributed largely to services and resources accessed through schools.

88. Further evidence of the impact on education outcomes can be drawn from partner organizations that are members of the National Coordinating Units — the **CSTL** “umbrella” or overarching coordinating structure for care and support interventions in SADC Member States. Throughout the region, NGOs are implementing care and support elements in and through schools: these impact positively on the health and wellbeing of vulnerable learners, and as a result improve their education outcomes.

89. As an example, the Forum for African Woman Educationalists (FAWE) is an active member of the **CSTL** national coordinating unit in Zambia. It contributes to providing care and support to vulnerable learners through its Centres of Excellence (COE) model, which transforms ordinary schools into gender-responsive schools that offer quality education and provide for the physical,

academic and social dimensions of both girls' and boys' education. COE demonstrate that girls' retention and performance can be enhanced if they are provided with a school environment that is fair and conducive to learning. Education impacts of COE include:

- improved academic performance and achievement for girls;
- greater participation by girls in classroom processes;
- higher retention rates;
- reduction in teenage pregnancies.

To conclude, while **CSTL** will provide empirical evidence of its impact on education outcomes once the essential package of care and support has been fully implemented in the baseline schools, other tested and proven school-based care and support interventions in the SADC Region provide strong evidence for the effectiveness of **CSTL's** underlying theory of change.

7. REGIONAL POLICY REVIEW

7.1 Rationale

90. Education is at the center of SADC's development agenda, and can be seen as both a challenge and an opportunity to social and economic development in the region. The obligations of Member States' have been articulated in various statements, protocols and instruments, including those already mentioned (the EFA goals and MDGs), as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. At a regional level, Member States ratified an Indicative Strategic Development Plan, the Protocol on Education and Training, the Protocol on Health, and the Maseru Declaration call to address HIV and AIDS through a multi-sectoral approach. All of these address the multiplicity of barriers to education in the region.

91. The obligations imposed on Member States seek not only to realize and protect children's rights, but also to achieve this in a holistic manner through the provision of comprehensive programs. The *CSTL* initiative seeks to ensure that education sectors are better positioned to be able to support institutions to be inclusive centers of learning, care and support by re-aligning, strengthening and enhancing education policies, structures and systems. Achieving this objective requires mainstreaming the development, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of comprehensive, coordinated, multi-sectoral services for care and support into all education policies, structures, budgets, processes and programs. In short, care and support must be *systematized* within the education sector.

92. But systematizing care and support requires an enabling policy environment. To promote and guide the development of such an environment for *CSTL*, the SADC Secretariat commissioned a regional policy review, the aim of which was to assess care and support policies and programs in each Member State, and to inform the development of an overarching common policy framework for the region.

7.2 Purpose

93. The purpose of the regional policy framework is to guide Member States to strengthen and develop their education policies while responding to their unique contextual circumstances and stage of development. At the same time it provides guidance by articulating common SADC care and support objectives and desired outcomes, as well as the principles, essential elements and institutional arrangements central for realizing these. The framework identifies priority policies that strengthen care and support responses within the education system, with reference to examples of policies that have been successfully pioneered within SADC Member States.

94. The policy review covered the following research themes:

- an examination of the appropriateness and adequacy of education policies for the provision of care and support for effective teaching and learning, and the extent to which they reflect inter-linkages with other sectors;
- an examination of how policies of other government sectors cover the essential elements of care and support;
- an examination of the adequacy of services and implementation strategies of identified policies;
- an examination of the adequacy of management and service delivery structures for identified policies, and both their the capacity to do so and the resources allocated for doing it;
- an examination of care and support programs and their different modes of delivery, and the appropriateness / benefits thereof;

- an examination of the mechanisms of integrating delivery of services by different service providers, both within and outside the education sector;
- an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, gaps, opportunities, threats and innovative approaches of identified policies and programs (including monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and processes of other countries that are relevant to **CSTL**).

7.3 Process

95. The regional policy review was undertaken in three stages, between October 2010 and November 2011, which are portrayed schematically (to the right).

96. The process began with the review of policies in all SADC Member States and the development of 14 country policy reports. (South Africa had already undertaken a policy review in 2010; this data was integrated to form a comprehensive policy review of all SADC Member States.)

97. The second step involved the comparison and consolidation of the country level data into a regional policy report.

98. Finally, the findings and recommendations of the regional policy report informed the development of the regional policy framework.



7.4 Research design and methodology

99. A combination of various qualitative research methods was applied to conduct the review. A preliminary literature review informed both the research design and the theoretical and conceptual analysis that was applied to interpret the findings and design the policy framework.

7.4.1 Data collection methods

100. Qualitative data was collected from five main sources.

- *A desk-top review of relevant international and regional literature* on care and support for teaching and learning practices and processes: this review identified, a) the legal obligations of Member States to address barriers to learning, to ensure children's access, retention and achievement at schools, and b) international and continental care and support practices and processes related to the education sector that have responded to these barriers and legal obligations.
- *A desk-top review of policies* relevant to **CSTL** in the SADC Region: existing education policies, programs and services, national strategic plans and other government sectors' policies that relate to care and support were reviewed. Policy documents were obtained through a combination of internet-based desk top review and a policy questionnaire that was administered to policy experts in 13 SADC Member States.
- *A comprehensive policy questionnaire* sent to **CSTL** focal point persons and policy experts in each Member State: the questionnaire was designed with a "rights-based lens" that focused on the range of systemic, societal, pedagogic and intrinsic barriers that impact on the right to education and other rights on which the right to education depends. A range of policy experts across different sectors were consulted in each country.
- *Field research visits*: four **CSTL** Phase 1 Member States (the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Swaziland and Zambia) were purposefully selected for these visits. Key informant interviews (approximately 15 per country), focus groups and validation meetings (approximately 25 participants per country) were conducted to triangulate, enrich and contextualize the information gathered through the policy desk-review.

- *Regional consultative meetings*: delegates from all SADC Member States, mainly from Ministries of Education, were consulted at two regional consultative meetings. The aim was to review, enrich and validate the research findings; in particular delegates identified gaps and inadequacies in the findings and prioritized policy recommendations to be included in the regional policy framework.

7.4.2 Data analysis and interpretation

101. All data collected was analyzed according to categories drawn from the research themes and on the basis of key concepts from the literature review. The data was tabulated so that: each policy could be systematically classified and analyzed; overt gaps could be indentified; priorities for inclusion could be determined in relation to the four categories of barriers to learning — i.e. societal, systemic, pedagogic and intrinsic. Under each policy domain, policies were compared and analyzed across the region to identify innovations and gaps, and to assess the implications of the current policies, programs and delivery mechanisms in terms of effective care and support for teaching and learning.

7.4.3 Scope and limitations

102. The research focused on the *policy environment*, so no situation analysis was undertaken regarding the implementation of the policies under review. Consequently, while some anomalies between policy and practice are discussed, no valid assessment could be made about the *quality* of implementation.

103. The researchers encountered some difficulties in enlisting assistance from relevant policy experts in each Member State, and in identifying and accessing relevant policy documents. The analysis revealed the limitations in the reliability of current data in some Member States, as well as the difficulty in understanding the gap between stated policy and reality. Given those limitations, it was not always possible to establish whether a policy gap exists because a policy *does not exist*, or because it exists but could *not be identified or accessed* during the preparation of the report.

104. While the scope of the policy review research did not allow for a systematic identification of *all* available policies and programs,¹ it did nevertheless provide a rich picture of the policy terrain and an in-depth understanding of the existing relevant policies and programs in all Member States. The regional policy report provided a strong foundation for dialogue and positive action through the development of a comprehensive regional policy framework.

7.5 Findings of the Regional Policy Report

105. The findings of the regional policy report are discussed under three categories: firstly, “School provisioning” presents findings in relation to the core education mandates of Member States; secondly, “Complementary services” covers findings with regard to additional services beyond the education sector that are required to ensure access, retention and optimal learner achievement; thirdly, “Delivery mechanisms” presents findings on structures and systems for the coordination of multi-sectoral interventions for care and support through the education sector.

7.5.1 School provisioning

106. The primary challenge in analyzing the findings on school provisioning is the need for *comparable data* across the region. From the available data it is clear that the region is making significant progress in increasing access to basic education. Member States have allocated substantial amounts of public resources to the education sector since the launch of EFA in 2000. The number of

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¹ The scope of the study also did not extend to alternative streams of education (i.e. non-formal provision of education by NGOs, community- and faith-based organizations, etc.).

years of basic education provided and the quality thereof varies considerably across Member States. All countries are striving to provide free basic education. However, there are different understandings of the terms *free*, *primary / basic* and *compulsory* education. (For example, it is not always clear whether *free education* means only the removal of tuition fees, or whether it includes other expenses related to the provision of education — such as uniforms, textbooks and stationary, school levies and transport).

107. The level of schooling costs carried by households remains a significant barrier to access. Low retention, high rates of repetition and dropout remain a major problem. The formulation of policy for the allocation of public resources to education *is* a priority, together with strategies to improve quality and expand secondary education. However, *flexible* provisioning to accommodate children with responsibilities in the household, especially in the context of HIV and AIDS, is still lacking.

108. Improving the quality of education requires fostering an enabling environment, as well as teacher development, support and wellbeing. The range of curriculum priorities includes improved language policy and strategies for teaching early literacy and numeracy. Schools and families require education and support to replace the culture of *punishment, shaming and blaming* with one of appreciation and positive discipline that supports psychosocial wellbeing and improved resilience and learning.

109. The policy research identified a lack of a common, consistent definition of vulnerability applied across SADC Member States. This poses an obstacle to the comparison and harmonization of education policies and programs for vulnerable learners in the region.

7.5.2 Complementary services

110. The SADC Region offers a rich variety of comprehensive policies and strategies that support education outcomes that are provided by ministries other than Education. Key health promotion interventions include provision of basic health care services in schools and health promotion education (for example, a “health-promoting schools” approach, which is a useful innovation found in several Member States). Comprehensive and integrated school health services must however be complemented by good public health policies for the provision of health services beyond schools.

111. All countries in the region have developed policy responses to the challenges that HIV and AIDS poses to education. HIV prevention is a priority in national HIV and AIDS policies of nearly all 14 Member States. Voluntary HIV testing and counseling is a key component of all national HIV and AIDS policies; however, only a few countries specifically mention HIV testing and pre-and post-counseling for children.

112. The primary strategy for HIV prevention through schools is teaching life-skills to promote behavior change and protect children from abuse. Some countries require Education Ministries to mainstream HIV and AIDS into all policies and programs to foster behavior change in order to reduce HIV incidence. Condoms play a vital role in national policies for HIV prevention; however, the reviewed policies are mostly silent on the provision of condoms in schools. Aligning school and community responses could strengthen the effectiveness of HIV prevention.

113. Several Member States have policies addressing children’s access to Antiretroviral Therapy. Although strategies for the school-based provision of Antiretroviral Therapy to children do exist, their implementation is not apparent. While the integration of HIV and AIDS in education is evident in the SADC Region, mainstreaming HIV and AIDS in the school system is extremely challenging as it requires integrated systemic reform.

114. Most Member States provide some form of school feeding, yet the coverage and outreach to vulnerable learners across urban and rural areas varies significantly. Some countries were found to promote innovative strategies, including integrated food security policies, which are most effective under conditions of poverty. Most of the school feeding policies that were identified focused on providing meals through canteens or school kitchens. However, detailed strategic school nutrition plans should address the provision of space and equipment for preparing food at school, including effective school gardening programs.

115. A range of social and welfare services in the region were found to support education outcomes. Despite strong child protection policy frameworks evident in most countries, there is insufficient emphasis on prevention measures, which would be likely to reduce the cost of specialist and statutory service provision.

116. Most Member States have non-discriminatory provisions in their constitutions or education and/or welfare policies; most have policies and programs to protect specific groups of children from marginalization or discrimination that impact directly on the education sector. Girl children and children with disabilities featured strongly in the provisions, as do school drop-outs and school-aged children not attending school. Innovative non-discriminatory practice includes the use of school level coordination teams.

117. Several Member States have developed policies or programs that provide for a safe, secure school environment. Diverse and innovative methods are used to achieve this, including child participatory interventions. Most countries have some form of policy or program promoting psychosocial support interventions. Particularly innovative strategies include interventions supporting caregivers and especially vulnerable children, and utilizing community structures and organizations to provide psychosocial support.

118. Child labor is prevalent in the SADC Region, negatively affecting school attendance, retention and achievement. Most Member States have specific policies and programs that promote protection of under-aged children from economic labor practices and employment that is harmful to their education and development. However, policies and programs addressing the educational consequences of onerous domestic responsibilities are less well developed.

119. Children need support to overcome the many barriers to accessing education, to continuing education and to performing well at school. Social cash transfer programs have been piloted in a number of countries in Southern Africa, with initial positive outcomes.

120. Most Member States have some form of early childhood development policy that addresses young children's welfare and developmental needs.

7.5.3 Delivery mechanisms

121. The scale of barriers to learning and development requires a concerted effort from a range of different role-players. Institutional arrangements vary considerably across the region, yet there are many good examples of structures that bring government and civil society role-players together at different levels. While commitment to forming multi-sectoral partnerships is strong, there is scope for strengthening their integration and effectiveness. The policy research identified a tendency across all Member States to set up large numbers of separate structures to focus on different sectors and issues, rather than forming comprehensive integrated structures that could form sub-committees for special emphasis.

122. Schools are already playing an important role in identifying children with barriers to learning and assisting to removing them. Examples of policies that support this expanded role for schools exist in all Member States, and many have developed policies to promote inclusive education. The quality of school leadership, management and governance plays an important role in building effective partnerships and mobilizing the support of families and other role-players outside of schools. All countries have policies for school governance structures that bring together school management, teachers and families. Naturally, these structures differ across Member States.

123. Several Member States have started to harmonize their national laws relating to children by enacting a single act, as well as establishing multi-sectoral structures to protect the rights of children. There is however an urgent need for capacity building across the system (including of school management, teachers, families, civil society organizations and government officials from other ministries), especially in developing facilitation skills for dialogue and building partnerships. In particular, policy to establish and strengthen referral systems, to identify the specific needs of each child, and to link children to the required services, is lacking. Information needs to be handled sensitively, confidentially and effectively so that progress of individual children can be tracked.

7.6 Conclusions regarding the regional policy review

124. The policy review provides evidence that much progress has already been made towards building a foundation for care and support for teaching and learning in the region. Many policies already exist in Member States: it is now a matter of “pulling the threads together” in order to ensure greatest synergy. Most countries have introduced policies towards building an inclusive system of education and promising progress is being made in all Member States to build multi-sectoral partnerships, which are the starting point for **CSTL** delivery mechanisms.

125. The allocation of public resources to education is a priority, as are strategies to improve education quality and expand secondary education. Program-based budgeting built upon medium to long term plans helps to focus on choices among competing policies (UNESCO, 2011: 93).

126. Mainstreaming **CSTL** requires a focus on the policy development process as a whole, beyond promoting specific innovations that may or may not be appropriate when transferred to another context. Innovative processes are needed to foster meaningful dialogue and participation by a wide range of stakeholders in the policy development process.

127. It is not always feasible to do everything at once. A phased approach can deliver greatest success if careful attention is given to small strategic interventions that can provide evidence of success and motivation to take on more complex changes that are needed. Effective policy should be *evidence-based,² open, participatory, inclusive and ongoing*. The harmonization of policies within and across Member States will require constant review, monitoring and evaluation.

128. Both the factors that enable — and are barriers to — regional policy harmonization, need to be considered. There is a strong commitment from Ministries of Education. However, barriers are caused by the diversity of the region, the gap between policy and implementation, and the need for consistent terminology and comparable qualifications.

129. The policy review process suggests that education data gathering and analysis is weak in many Member States. Strengthening EMIS (Education Management Information Systems), as well as monitoring and evaluation capacity, systems and implementation, should therefore be a priority.

130. Effective assessment is needed at many levels. This includes identifying individual barriers to learning; assessing teaching and learning within the classroom and school, as well as across the system; determining the impact of community driven care and support initiatives; assessing the effectiveness of existing policy and policy implementation. The proposed systems approach requires an evaluation that accommodates complexity, as well as institutionalized monitoring mechanisms that are established by law, and which are appropriately resourced.

131. Mainstreaming care and support in the education sector requires buy-in and ownership by senior decision makers across different ministries. It is therefore advisable to engage high level mandated decision makers as early as possible in policy revision processes, so that they can help set the agenda and “provide space” for dialogue to build consensus. Each Member State should engage with the proposed regional policy framework in terms of the specific circumstances in that country.

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² Evidence-based policy making refers to a process that helps planners make better-informed decisions by putting the best available evidence at the center of the process.

8. The Regional Policy framework

8.1 Development of regional policy priorities

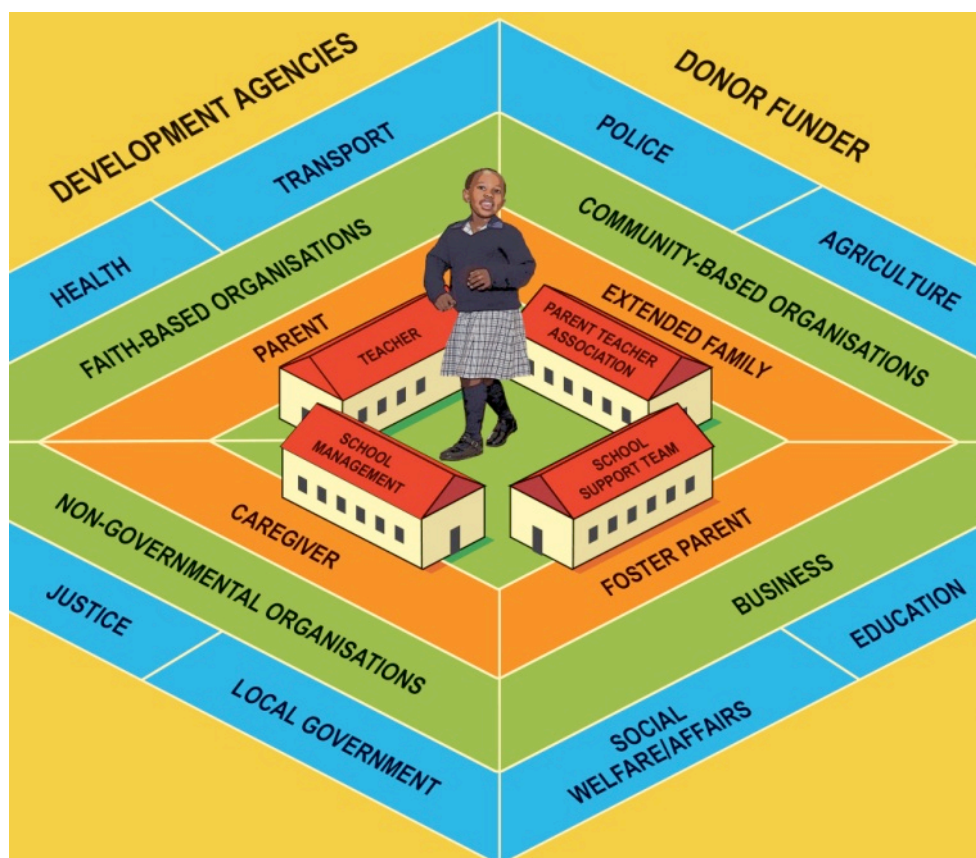
132. The in-depth review of existing formal and non-formal education policies and other government sectors' policies revealed that the range of policy interventions required by governing legal frameworks is very wide. In order to prioritize these, the findings of the initial legal analysis and literature review were subjected to consultative processes that brought to surface the most contextually relevant and urgent policy interventions. Member States confirmed the following: the most pressing contextually specific barriers to education; the most successful interventions that ought as far as possible to be replicated through a process of harmonization of policies across the region; the remaining policy gaps. The identified policy gaps should be addressed as a matter of urgency through appropriate policy innovations and interventions by Member States, guided by minimum standards provided in the regional policy framework.

8.2 Principles

133. A set of principles to guide the development of care and support-related education policies in Member States was defined collectively. Adherence to the following underlying principles will strengthen the development of a harmonized enabling policy environment for **CSTL**.

- *A systems approach*: policies ought to mainstream the delivery of essential education services. They should also facilitate the coordination, referrals and partnerships essential to the delivery of complementary services in all education policies, programs, budgets and monitoring and evaluation systems.
- *Sustainability*: mainstreaming and integrating policy ensure continuity and effectiveness in relation to overcoming long term barriers.
- *The child at the center*: the child is at the center of a range of individual, societal and political levels of care and protection. The child should be supported and protected by the family and household, but also by widening circles that include the school, key institutions (such as clinics, police) and the community (see Figure 4, below). **CSTL** is premised on this full collective playing a role to ensure access to services and support in and through schools, necessary to realize educational outcomes.
- *A coordinated multi-sectoral approach*: this perspective of the child — at the center of complex societal and political sources of care and support — recognizes that no single sector, structure or role-player can deliver the comprehensive services necessary for the child's educational wellbeing and development. **CSTL** provides the Ministry of Education with a coordinating mechanism to lead this approach through schools.
- *Rights-based*: all children are holders of inalienable universal rights that are interdependent and that must be protected, promoted and fulfilled.
- *Inclusive and non-discriminatory*: policies should ensure that rights and services are realized for all children, regardless of their personal circumstances.
- *Participatory and empowering*: the policy development process should facilitate optimal participation by role-players including government ministries, civil society, parents and teachers, as well as children themselves.
- *Asset-based, appreciative and flexible*: policies should build on, and learn from, existing care and support initiatives and programs.
- *Evidence-based and contextually relevant*: policies should be contextually relevant and based on accurate local data.

Figure 4: “The child at the center”



8.3 Policy priorities

134. In line with the three categories of findings in the regional policy report (i.e. *school provisioning*, *complementary services* and *delivery mechanisms findings*), the regional policy framework presents a list of comprehensive policy recommendations in three broad categories: (i) policy priorities for core education mandates; (ii) policy priorities for complementary services; (iii) policy priorities for coordinated institutional arrangements and delivery mechanisms. A rationale is provided for each proposed policy, and identifies the policy issue and explains why it needs to be addressed. To illustrate the proposed policy intervention in a practical and tangible manner, the framework gives examples of concrete and successful policy implementation strategies in different Member States.

135. A summary of the policy interventions for prioritization by Ministries of Education to ensure care and support for teaching and learning, is also presented. Examples of policy recommendations from the regional policy framework are listed per category below. (See Appendix 1, which provides an outline of the regional policy framework.)

8.3.1 Policy priorities for core education mandates

136. The following policies — which promote access to school, learner retention, and learner achievement — fall directly within the mandate of the Ministries of Education.

Promoting learner access to school

137. Policies should ensure that all children, regardless of personal circumstances, have an opportunity to enroll at school, and — once enrolled — can make full use of all school facilities. The realization of this objective requires *inter alia*: the imposition of a legal obligation on all parents to enroll their children at an appropriate age, and a corresponding obligation on schools to accept and enroll all children. In other words, education should be made compulsory, and admission policies

should be inclusive and non-discriminatory. It is essential that compulsory education be accompanied by policies that address the direct and indirect costs of education that make it difficult or impossible for parents to meet their relevant obligations.

138. In addition, enough schools and teachers should be provided to accommodate the number of learners eligible for enrollment. Moreover, sufficient and appropriate learning infrastructure and materials should be provided to meet the access needs of all children, regardless of their health, disability, gender or other status.

Examples of proposed policy interventions promoting learner access to school

Free education

Ministries of Education are encouraged to identify and address the full spectrum of direct and indirect access costs which inhibit the enrollment of children at schools, such as registration fees, tuition fees, school uniforms, the cost of transport, stationery and related costs. Member States are urged, in addition, to develop or strengthen appropriate financing policy to fund both direct and indirect costs.

Equitable distribution

Ministries of Education are encouraged to ensure that education provisions are equitably distributed throughout the Member State in urban, peri-urban and rural areas, bearing in mind that equity may require the dedication of more resources to highly vulnerable areas, such as rural areas marked by high levels of poverty and poor levels of educational infrastructure.

139. Acknowledging that there is an under-supply of schools in many remote rural areas, the regional policy framework includes a recommendation on the equitable distribution of education provisions in urban, peri-urban and rural areas: Ministries of Education are asked to bear in mind that to achieve equity it may be necessary to allocate more resources to highly vulnerable areas — such as rural areas marked by poor levels of educational infrastructure. However, non-formal education solutions (which are often found in under-resourced rural areas) did not fall within the scope of the policy review; the **CSTL** regional policy framework therefore does not yet make explicit policy recommendations relating to alternative education streams. Through **CSTL**, SADC works *directly* with Ministries of Education; in Phase 1, there was a stronger focus on creating an enabling policy environment for mainstreaming care and support into the *formal* education sector. However, in light of a growing international policy discourse on “diversified but equitable basic education” — which calls on education ministries to embrace alternative education streams — **CSTL** plans to address this in Phases 2 and 3: the possibility of developing explicit recommendations in the regional policy framework to recognize and support alternative forms of basic education will be considered.

Promoting learner retention

140. Ensuring regular attendance, retention until the end of the primary cycle and the transition of learners into secondary school (and their retention therein), calls for priority policy interventions. Systems ought to be in place to monitor attendance; to identify children at risk of dropping out; to facilitate the delivery of support services to address the factors creating these risks. Some of these risks that should be addressed directly within the education system include:

- the prohibition and prevention of abuse and exploitation of children within the school setting;
- the provision of additional educational and learning support to learners who are frequently absent due to ill health or the need to work;
- the provision of school infrastructure, such as water and sanitation, to prevent girls from dropping out of school;
- the provision of additional support to children who have dropped out (for examples girls who have fallen pregnant or children in conflict situations) to enable them to re-enter school and catch up.

Examples of proposed policy interventions promoting learner retention

Monitoring attendance

Ministries of Education are urged to make attendance and completion of basic education compulsory. This requires the introduction and strengthening of systems to monitor attendance, identify children that are frequently absent, or at risk of dropping out, requiring engagement with caregivers as to the causes of poor attendance and creating opportunities for the referral of parents, caregivers and children to complementary service providers to address these underlying factors.

Child marriage

Education policies and programs should be strengthened to protect girls from early marriages and encourage their return to school even if married.

Re-entry

Ministries of Education should assist learners who have dropped out to re-enter the school system and provide any necessary additional support to assist them to catch up and deal with additional burdens and responsibilities that may impact on their continued retention and performance once they have re-entered the system.

Promoting learner achievement

141. Learner achievement is affected by many inter-linked factors that also impact on attendance and retention. Examples include health, water and sanitation and child labor. In addition, learner achievement is affected by the quality of the education provided. This is in turn determined by the quantity and quality of educational facilities and resources; the relevance and inclusivity of the curriculum; the quality of teaching; teacher training, development and support; progress monitoring and assessment.

Examples of proposed policy interventions promoting learner achievement

Teacher training

Ministries of Education are urged to provide pre-service and in-service training and capacity-building to enable teachers to provide sufficiently high quality education; to enable them to identify learners at risk of poor achievement and provide them with the necessary educational support and link them with complementary support service providers.

After-school education

Member States should strive to facilitate the establishment of links between schools, communities and families to allow for the provision of teacher-led after-school educational support.

Language of instruction

Ministries of Education are encouraged to develop a language of instruction policy that promotes learning in the foundation phase in the child's home language.

8.3.2 Policy priorities for provision of complementary services

142. The delivery of a number of complementary services that do not fall within the direct mandate, authority or budgets of the Ministries of Education must also be prioritized in order to ensure access, retention, and optimal learner achievement. These services include accessing birth certificates; healthcare; food and nutrition; water and sanitation in the community and home environment; protection from abuse and neglect beyond the school setting; protection from exploitative and harmful labor practices; social assistance (cash transfers); early childhood development and education for children aged 0–4.

Examples of proposed policy interventions for provision of complementary services

Health support to schools

Ministries of Education should advocate for Member States to ensure that community-based health strategies, usually implemented through primary health care, directly serve and support school communities.

HIV and AIDS

Ministries of Education should advocate for Member States to strengthen alignment between school, community and health service prevention, treatment and care and support for children and teachers affected by HIV and AIDS by:

- facilitating the creation of a safe and caring school environment to support children and teachers infected or affected by HIV and AIDS;
 - addressing stigma and discrimination and ensuring that no child is excluded from relevant prevention, treatment and care interventions;
- promoting HIV prevention through a range of educational and behavior change strategies.

School feeding

Ministries of Education should, in partnership with complementary service providers such as the Ministries of Health and Agriculture, ensure that all learners are provided with daily sufficient nutritious food in order to stay healthy, learn well and develop to their full potential.

Child protection

Ministries of Education should advocate for Member States to ensure a national comprehensive and integrated child protection system that promotes children's rights to protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation; to family care and protection; and to alternative care, and should participate in the development and implementation of such a system. This calls for the recognition and promotion of the participation of all sectoral role-players, including those in the education sector, to address the safety and security of all children at home, at school and in the community, and requires that children enjoy adult care and support.

Psychosocial support

Ministries of Education should ensure the provision of psychosocial support for children at school and in the community, ensuring that emotional support, relevant treatment, counseling and guidance are offered to children who have experienced any form of trauma.

Water and sanitation

Ministries of Education should advocate for Member States to ensure that all children have access to safe water and sanitation at home, at school and in the community.

8.3.3 Policy priorities for institutional arrangements and delivery

143. While it is not the mandate of Ministries of Education *to deliver* complementary services, they *are* responsible for facilitating the necessary partnerships and support networks between the education and other sectors. They are also responsible for coordinating institutional arrangements that ensure that children access these services through schools acting as integrated vehicles of service delivery.

144. The provision of care and support in schools does not depend on school staff delivering complementary services; rather it depends on them *identifying* and *referring* vulnerable children to these service providers. This means that effective referral systems are at the heart of **CSTL**. Thus it is necessary to build the capacity of education sector staff to identify children who need help, and to ensure that the necessary referral support systems are in place.

Examples of proposed policy interventions promoting service delivery

Policy development process

Member States should strengthen their national systems of care and support for children through comprehensive legislation that is able to respond effectively to the constantly changing context and that includes a diversity of role-players in the development and implementation process. Attention should be directed to the policy development process, ensuring that policy is not developed in isolation but that different departments and Ministries work together in an integrated manner.

Partnerships

The Ministries of Education are encouraged to promote well-defined partnerships between the departments of education, other relevant ministries, civil society and development partners. Such partnerships should clearly articulate common objectives, parameters, expectations, roles and responsibilities, and mechanisms for joint planning and accountability.

Child referral

Member States should ensure effective support for teachers and other school staff to enable them to identify vulnerable learners; and Member States should develop effective, coordinated referral networks and mechanisms to provide comprehensive support to children.

- Member States shall further ensure that relevant stakeholders, including authorities, schools, parents and learners are aware of and have access to reporting channels and referral systems.
- Follow-up mechanisms should be in place to track progress in the delivery of care and support services to individual children.
- Information shall be coordinated and analyzed to inform policy development, resourcing and action.

8.4 Conclusions regarding the regional policy framework

The development of the regional policy framework is the first step towards realizing the commitment by the Ministries of Education in the SADC Region to make care and support for teaching and learning a core mandate of the sector — and in so doing, make it sustainable, ensure that it is scaled up so that it reaches all vulnerable children through all schools, and ensure that it is adequately resourced. The policy framework provides a “road-map” for Member States to move forward by engaging in a robust process of strengthening policy and development, in order to realize the common regional care and support objectives.

9. CONCLUSION

145. The **CSTL** initiative is a response by SADC Ministers of Education to the multiple challenges that vulnerable learners in the region face in realizing their right to education. **CSTL** builds on existing policy, programs and structures at country and regional level, and provides Ministries of Education with a coordinating mechanism to mainstream care and support into their education systems. **CSTL** works towards creating an enabling policy environment that supports schools to become *inclusive centers of teaching, learning and support*. An essential package of care and support, identified through **CSTL**, is currently being implemented in the baseline schools of the five Phase 1 Member States. Through the multi-sectoral delivery of this package, children will be able to access the required services and support that are necessary to improve their access to school, retention and performance.

146. The regional policy review revealed that since 2008 Member States have made progress in policy development and strengthening and have introduced innovative care and support-related policies and programs. It also identified significant policy gaps and contradictions, and Ministries of Education have acknowledged the need to work in collaboration with other ministries to further develop and strengthen policies.

147. Informed by the policy review, a comprehensive regional policy framework was developed in 2011, and provides policy recommendations for mainstreaming, harmonizing and aligning care and support for teaching and learning related policies within and across Member States. The policy framework spells out concrete policy recommendations for Ministries of Education for (i) the core education mandates; (ii) complementary services pertaining to other sectors (but which impact on education); (iii) service delivery mechanisms. Member States will use the framework to strengthen their country policies and address the identified gaps and contradictions.

148. **CSTL** is a unique response to the multiplicity of challenges — including the impact of HIV and AIDS — facing vulnerable learners in the SADC Region. The **CSTL** regional policy review and framework supports the regional strategy of addressing the care and support needs of orphans and vulnerable children and youth - it is the vehicle for operationalizing the SADC's *Strategic Framework for OVC&Y* in the education sector. Ultimately it works towards achieving access to school, retention and performance for all orphans and vulnerable children in the region.

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10. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: CSTL Regional Policy Framework ~ Summary

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