

SOCIAL PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS TARGETING CHILDREN

Cases of selected countries



Chipo* wears a face mask in class to prevent the spread of Corona virus. PHOTO | Malama Mwila, Save the Children

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Regarding hygiene, both information and actual supplies have been provided. For example, hygiene kits were distributed in South Sudan. In addition, hand-washing interventions, including in some instances the actual provision of soap, have been implemented widely in some East Africa Countries.

In preparation for re-opening of schools in South Sudan, school management committees undertook intensive back-to-school campaigns. These committees also provided menstrual hygiene support by providing re-usable sanitary pads to adolescent girls.

The study established that at least 23.7 percent of children in East and Southern Africa reported experiencing violence at home during the pandemic. Schools acted as safe spaces for children and their closure meant limited access to trusted adult figures who could detect early signs of abuse and get the affected children help. The study recognises efforts by the states and child agencies in East Africa

that strengthened the existing child help distress call mechanisms like the additional roll out of 24/7 helpline for child protection and gender based violence referral system.

The loss of livelihoods and incomes during the pandemic forced children into child labour. To address this problem in Uganda, the government and UN agencies developed plans to prevent and end child labour.

The study found that even with the expansion of the population requiring social protection interventions, spending on social protection was much lower than what countries spent on fiscal stimulus packages. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the case study countries allocated additional spending on the health sector and non-health sector, and accelerated spending in the form of equity injections, loans, asset purchase, or debt assumptions. Kenya, increased its spending on stimulus packages to at least 1.5 per cent of gross domestic product. Kenya's funds were from austerity measures effected at both national and

county government levels and Uganda offered substantial support in the form of equity injections, loans, asset purchase, or debt assumptions. Tax relief measures were also used extensively to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. Kenya, for example, offered 100 percent tax relief for low-income earners. Countries organised additional resources in response to the economic and health crisis.

However, the study indicated that earlier crises showed that stimulus packages are often followed by austerity measures or budget cuts. If countries in the region implement austerity measures, they will claw back gains made in relation to educational, nutritional, health, and protection needs of children.

The study indicated that countries in the region faced fiscal challenges regarding their ability to initiate or expand existing social protection interventions. As such, a significant proportion of interventions was financed by donors, with countries providing off-budget support for their expanded social protection programmes. The considerable reliance on development partners does not guarantee sustainability of social protection programmes.

The study noted that the emergency interventions targeted households and not individuals directly. Previous research shows that schemes targeting households are more likely to benefit men especially in the rural settings because of gender power imbalance at the household level. On the other hand, the emergency relief targeting urban areas was appropriate because these locations bore the brunt of the lockdown and curfew measures. The absence of conditionalities in the emergency interventions was an improvement from previous social protection schemes. However, this was limited in geographical coverage due to resources.

The study indicated that alternative methods of teaching have created in-

equalities in access to education. Most school-going children in the region have no access to the internet at home to enable distance learning. Estimates by UNICEF show that only 12 percent of school-age children aged between 3 and 17 have access to the internet. Worse still, children in urban areas are three times more likely to have internet than rural children. Beyond disparities due to location, the study noted substantial gaps in access to the internet owing to social class. At least 40 percent of children from the top quintile in the region have internet access compared with only 2 percent for the bottom quintile. The study recommends adequate financing for social protection and emphasised the need for the expansion or establishment of social registries and databases for future responses. In addition, the study noted that several countries could not start delivering interventions due to inadequate capacity and logistical challenges. There were commendable efforts to use technology to reach population groups that were left out by previous social protection schemes. As such, the study recommended that mobile money and digital enrolment platforms be used beyond the Covid-19-emergency response period.

According to the study, there is a need to significantly expand the population covered by social protection interventions because of the exceptionally low coverage rates. In addition, there should be increased targeting of informal sector workers and the working poor in urban areas.

The study called for continuous support for the most vulnerable children and adolescents to access education. This support should include children who fell pregnant during Covid-19 school closures.

Full study report on Social Protection Interventions Targeting Children in East and Southern Africa: Cases of selected countries can be accessed at www.africapsp.org



Health Worker with a patient at the Health Unit run by Save the Children...PHOTO | Mustafa Saeed- Save the Children



Nalishebo and Namonje enjoying their High Energy Protein supplement provided by Save the Children through the school feeding programme. PHOTO | Malama Mwila, Save the Children