

Provide HIV-Sensitive Social Protection Services

The potential for existing social protection programmes to contribute to a comprehensive HIV response is increasingly recognized. Social protection measures, therefore, need to be HIV-sensitive, including children, adolescents, families and carers who are at risk of infection, living with HIV, or susceptible to its consequences. HIV-sensitive social protection (HSSP) measures — such as social assistance and social insurance, home-based care, education, and equity and rights-based interventions — can reduce vulnerability to infection, improve and extend the lives of people living with HIV and support individuals and households. The positive impact of these measures on children and adolescents is well recognized.

Though all components of HSSP are crucial, financial protection and cash transfers help meet basic needs and enable access to health and social services. There is growing evidence that cash transfers, in particular to girls and young women, have the potential to prevent HIV, especially sexual transmission of the disease, in certain contexts, by influencing underlying structural conditions, which, in turn, shape sexual behaviour and risk of HIV infection.¹

In addition, adding on care and support interventions — making it “cash plus care” — may have a greater influence than cash alone. Efforts including positive parenting and teacher social support have been shown to greatly decrease the incidence of adolescent risk behaviour for both girls and boys.²

KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED

- **Scale-up cash transfer programmes for poor households, including those affected by HIV and AIDS.**
- **Implement integrated cash plus care interventions, such as positive parenting, school counselling, and food gardens.**
- **Increase the awareness and effectiveness of health and social service providers to the severe impacts of HIV on children, adolescents, families/carers.**
- **Provide information to families/carers on how to access HIV services and social entitlements, including psychosocial support for children/adolescents under their care.**
- **Ensure adolescents have access to HIV sensitive social protection interventions, particularly cash transfers, care and psychosocial support.**
- **Strengthen the legal protection of children, adolescents, families and carers pertaining to land and its inheritance – including by supporting access to paralegal and legal service and by providing information on human rights.**

1. UNDP “Discussion Paper: Cash Transfers and HIV Prevention.” Geneva. October 2014.

2. Cluver et al. “Child-focused state cash transfers and adolescent HIV-infection risks: A prospective multi-site study in South Africa.” The Lancet Global Health, Dec. 2013. 1:e362–70