

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AFRICAN UNION EXPERT CONSULTATION MEETING ON CHILDREN AND SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS IN AFRICA

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

28-30 April 2014

Introduction

The participants at the AU Expert Consultation Meeting on Children and Social Protection Systems in Africa, gathered in Cape Town from 28th to 30th April 2014, under the theme: '*Children and Social Protection Systems: Building the African Agenda*', and deliberated on the challenges facing the African child, the benefits of, and the need for social protection policies, measures and systems that are responsive to the rights of children, especially the most vulnerable.

The AU Expert Consultation Meeting was attended by representatives from 38 AU Member States and included senior officials from governments at Permanent Secretary and Director-General levels, directors of budget offices, line ministry representatives, national, regional and international social protection experts, and civil society organisations committed to the implementation of social protection programmes in Africa. The Expert Consultation was hosted by the Government of South Africa in collaboration with UNICEF.

Recommendations

The participants at the AU Expert Consultation Meeting on Children and Social Protection Systems in Africa made the following recommendations:

1. Political Commitment

- a) Ensure political will, commitment and accountability to establish the priority and fiscal space to sustain social protection programmes;
- b) Ensure that social protection goals and targets are defined and embedded in national development plans and policies, in medium and long-term expenditure frameworks, and are protected by legal instruments;
- c) Adopt a human-rights based approach, in particular, children's rights, to social protection and the development of evidence-based social and economic policies and their implementation;
- d) Call on Member States to fulfil their commitments and obligations to social protection as provided for in the various international and regional instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the African Union Social Policy Framework and the Renewed Call for Accelerated Action on the Implementation of the Plan of Action Towards Africa Fit for Children; and

- e) Promote partnerships between the public and private sectors, civil society and development partners, to mobilise capacity and financing for delivery at scale of social protection services for children.

2. A Minimum Social Protection Package

- a) Every country must, within its social, economic and political context, define through an inclusive consultative process, a social protection floor which includes the provision of benefits within a system of comprehensive social protection for all, prioritising the needs and rights of children in poverty in their implementation;
- b) Ensure that social protection policies maximize the complementarity of a range of interventions, such as for income support, employment, livelihood, health care, education, child care, nutrition, birth registration and other basic services, and are systematically informed by equity considerations; and
- c) Develop implementation plans with concrete targets, timeframes and performance indicators, and communicate them publicly, working towards universal coverage through the progressive expansion of social protection coverage and the roll out of the minimum social protection package.

3. Financing social protection for children

- a) Member states should adopt financing strategies that guarantee time-bound provision of social protection services to children progressively from domestic resources, taking into account, among others, child rights instruments such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; and Recommendation 202 of the International Labour Conference;
- b) Allocate in the national budget, resources for social protection for children and ensure that they are ring-fenced and protected in times of crises and budgetary austerity; and
- c) Develop and operationalize costed national plans for social protection based on the concepts of “minimum package” and national “social protection floor”, and identify sources of national financing over a multi-year horizon.

4. National institutional and implementation arrangements for social protection

- a) Provide for a national inter-ministerial body or agency with a clear mandate and authority for coordination and for the formulation of policy, legislation, standards and guidelines, and dedicated national structures to ensure monitoring and evaluation (including an accessible appeal and review mechanism);
- b) Member States should apply good delivery mechanisms and adopt new technologies e.g. electronic payment systems, to improve efficiency of service provision;
- c) Develop plans for investment in the required capacity for efficient and effective social protection delivery, including necessary institutional arrangements, human resources and capacity strengthening at all levels;
- d) Continue to generate, utilize, share and communicate research information with policymakers and political leaders, in countries as well as around the continent, as evidence for emerging child-sensitive social protection programmes and systems in Africa;
- e) Promote the institutionalization of regular, reliable and robust policy and programme monitoring and evaluation systems that can inform the progress made by Member States in implementing social protection measures responsive to children.

5. The African Union Commission

- a) Become a more active role player in the social protection arena and prioritise social protection for children within the agenda of the African Union policy organs;
- b) Facilitate technical expertise and support to Member States, including mobilizing regular exchanges among countries and circulation of knowledge, expertise and best practices;
- c) Map strategies for the implementation of social protection approaches in Member States to inform, harmonise and strengthen their planning, policy and programme instruments, and disseminate those strategies as continental policy guideline;
- d) Develop a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework that focuses on the development, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of social protection programmes for children; and
- e) Engage with the various organs of the African Union, such as the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, to support Member States in the social protection arena.