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**EXPERT CONSULTATION MEETING
ON CHILDREN AND SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS IN AFRICA
CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA
28-30 April 2014**

Theme: “Children and Social Protection Systems: Building the African Agenda”

CONCEPT NOTE

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**AFRICAN UNION EXPERT CONSULTATION MEETING ON CHILDREN AND SOCIAL
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I. BACKGROUND

1. Since the launching of the African Union Social Policy Framework (SPF), the momentum for social protection has grown stronger in Africa. Hence, the growing number and widening coverage of social protection programmes in an increasing number of African countries has played an important part in promoting the vision of the SPF. The well-established national programmes in the southern part of the continent have gradually been enlarged and advanced. Over the last few years, there has also been a rapid expansion of child grants and social cash transfers in Africa. Today, virtually every country in Eastern and Southern Africa has some form of government cash transfer programme to benefit children, and an increasing number of countries in West, Central and Northern Africa are also embarking on or strengthening social protection interventions.
2. Several interventions have been accompanied by government-led rigorous impact evaluations, often with support from UNICEF and other partners. However, despite mounting evidence and political will, many countries are still challenged by fragmentation, low coverage, limited linkages with existing services, as well as capacity and institutional constraints. Political commitment as well as agreement on the most effective institutional and financing options for scaling up social protection programmes can help address these challenges.
3. Building on the solid evidence and lessons learned from the experience of recent years, it is appropriate to define an agenda that will set the foundations for scaling up and sustaining national integrated systems of social protection as part of the post-2015 development framework in Africa.

a. State of the evidence

4. There is a robust body of evidence from a large number of government-owned programmes in Africa showing that social protection works for children and their families, and that they are affordable. The evidence comes from programmes as large as the Productive Safety Net Programme of Ethiopia, which reaches over 7 million beneficiaries, the Child Support Grant in South Africa, which reaches over 11 million children, as well as from smaller, but significant programmes, such as the Kenyan Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children, which delivers assistance to over half a million children or Ghana's Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Programme (LEAP), which benefits around a quarter million children in over 70,000 households.

5. Existing evaluations consistently show the positive impact of social protection, mainly social cash transfers, on multiple dimensions. Significant improvements in food consumption and dietary diversity have been reported from Kenya, Malawi and Zambia; improved access to HIV outcomes has been found in Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa; increase in curative and preventive care is apparent in Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi and Zambia. Similarly, impact on education and Early Childhood Development (ECD) outcomes are seen in Kenya, Ghana, Malawi and Zambia. Evaluations have also found positive outcomes at the household level. Impacts on poverty and food consumption are consistent in all evaluations. Significant impacts have been realised on household economic productive and local economy dynamics in Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi and Zambia, as well as impacts on re-engagement of social networks and community activities (Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Zimbabwe).
6. South Africa's Child Support Grant, which has been in operation for a longer time than most other social cash programs in Africa, shows positive outcomes in early childhood development, health, schooling, growth stunting, and child labour. Importantly, impacts are also seen on reduction in sexual activity and number of partners, decrease in the incidence of early pregnancy and use of drugs and alcohol among adolescents. .

b. Lessons from Implementation

7. The benefits of social protection programmes are also determined by the implementation process. Evidence from country experiences have highlighted key factors that help improve programme effectiveness including transfer size, institutional capacity, targeting, community involvement, and coordination. How they contribute to programme effectiveness will depend on context, programme objectives and national goals.
 - a. Objective and Targeting Approach: There is a broad consensus that social protection should benefit first and foremost the poorest and most vulnerable. What are the most effective targeting methods in low-income African contexts where vulnerabilities constantly change? How ambitious can African countries be in terms of coverage of social protection systems?
 - b. Institutional capacity: Political will, capacity building, governance, as well as strong management information systems (MIS) have demonstrated to be key elements for effective programmes. How can national and sub-national institutional capacities be strengthened? What does experience from long-established national African programs show?
 - c. Size of transfer: Recent evidence shows that impacts can be expected when the size transfer is at least 15-20% or more than household food consumption. Is this threshold applicable to all programs? What are the benefits and trade-offs of prioritizing increasing size of transfer vis-à-vis expansion of coverage?

- d. Community involvement: Many African countries have prioritized the role of the community in the implementation of programs, including in the identification and registration of beneficiaries, and in social accountability. What are the challenges, particularly in terms of objectivity, equity, politicization of processes and/or elite capture?
- e. Coordination: Limited coordination and collaboration between the Government and donors has been identified as a practice that leads to short-term rather than medium to long-term interventions, with limited impacts. How to ensure effective coordination and how to strengthen a programme or systems' reach and effectiveness?

c. Scaling up and integration of Social protection systems

8. As countries have embarked on scaling up programmes and laying the foundations for the establishment of social protection systems, lessons are emerging on key requirements for successful expansion, and the associated choices and trade-offs open to Member States. Important considerations include: affordability and fiscal space; institutional arrangements for management and coordination; as well as models for scaling-up.

- a. Affordability and fiscal space: There is growing recognition that realizing the vision of ensuring the right to social security to African citizens will require the mobilization of domestic resources over the medium to long term. Can social protection programs be domestically funded? How can African countries define a medium to long-term financing trajectory involving rising shares of domestic financing? And how can aid-dependent countries increase their leverage in defining the vision for social protection in their respective countries?
- b. Institutional arrangements for management and coordination: The degree of both horizontal and vertical coordination across government departments as well as between different spheres of government varies widely from country to country. This creates ample space for exploring how various institutional can contribute to or hamper the expansion and consolidation of social protection systems.
- c. Institutional models for scaling up: There is a range of models for scaling social protection interventions, for integrating them into a coherent system and for financing them. As Member States move towards the expansion of social protection programs and their progressive consolidation into a national system, they will need to choose between different models. These choices are bound to have implications on a country's prospects for achieving adequate scale, effectiveness and sustainability.

II. EXPERT CONSULTATION MEETING

9. In preparation for the Fourth African Union Conference of Ministers of Social Development (CAMSD4), which will be held from 26-30 May 2014, in Addis, Abba,

Ethiopia, the African Union Commission will convene an Experts Consultation Meeting, under the theme, “*Children and Social Protection Systems: Building the African Agenda.*” The meeting is organised by the Department of Social Affairs of the African Union Commission, in collaboration with the Government of South Africa and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), from 28-30 April, 2014, in Cape Town, South Africa.

III. MAIN OBJECTIVES

10. The main objectives are:

- i) To discuss key achievements on social protection in Africa;
- ii) To define and identify opportunities and strategies for scaling up, broadening the coverage and embedding sustainable social protection systems within the national policy structure of countries across Africa;
- iii) To seek political commitment on the expansion of social protection programmes geared at improving development and child outcomes in Africa.

IV. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

11. The expected outcomes are:

- i) AU Member States would have strengthened their understanding on the impact of social protection on poverty, child outcomes and development, as well as explored key strategies for scaling-up effective and sustainable systems.
- ii) AU Member States will have enhanced their commitments to the expansion of comprehensive social protection systems on the continent, building on the Livingston Accord and the AU Social Policy Framework.
- iii) Recommendations and a Report of the Experts Consultation Meeting.

V. FORMAT OF THE MEETING

12. This process will be implemented in three phases:

- i) *Expert Consultation Meeting: 28-30 April 2014:* The meeting will be structured around three main blocks of issues:
 - a. State of evidence on the impact of social protection programmes;
 - b. Experience on design and implementation;
 - c. Choices for programme scale-up and systems development.
- ii) *Experts Meeting: 26-28 May 2014:* During the first two days of the CAMSD, experts from AU Member States will discuss the Recommendations from the Expert Consultation to be held on 28-30 April 2014, and make further Recommendations for the Ministers’ consideration.
- iii) *Ministerial Meeting: 29-30 May 2014:* The Ministers will take decisions on the way forward after considering the Recommendations of the Expert Consultation from 28-30 April 2014, and the CAMSD4 Expert Meeting from 26-28 May 2014.

VI. THE REFERENCE DOCUMENTS FOR THE MEETING ARE:

- a. The Social Policy Framework for Africa;
- b. Technical Paper on Social Protection and Children in Africa
- c. HIV Sensitive Social Protection: State of the Evidence in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNICEF/EPRI, 2012)
- d. The Concept Note, Agenda, and documents to be considered at the meeting will be posted on the AU Website (www.au.int) and other relevant documentations will be circulated during the meeting.

VII. PARTICIPANTS

13. The Expert Consultation Meeting will bring together high level representatives from all AU Member States, in particular senior officials from governments at Permanent Secretary and Director-General level, directors of budget offices, line ministry representatives, national, regional and international experts, United Nations agencies, and civil society champions with involvement and expertise in the implementation of social protection programmes in Africa.

VIII. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

14. The AUC will be responsible for the invitations to AU Member States and Partners, as well as the preparation of all related documents, in close collaboration with UNICEF. Translation and interpretation services, as well as secretarial support, will be available at the meeting.

IX. BUDGET AND OTHER RESOURCES

15. The Government of South Africa will support the organisation of the meeting, while UNICEF will sponsor selected delegates from across Africa.

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