Figure 3.3 Summary of COVID-19 policy response measures, with selected country examples

1. Ensuring income security in old age. Argentina advanced the payment of its old-age pension and increased its value.

2. Providing income support and access to social services for people with disabilities. Bahrain doubled its disability pension.


4. Preventing job losses and providing unemployment protection to those who lost or were at risk of losing their jobs. Jordan extended unemployment benefits to workers from crisis-affected sectors.

5. Providing child and family benefits. Mongolia increased the value of its monthly child benefit fivefold for six months.

6. Ensuring income security for vulnerable workers by adapting or introducing employment promotion measures. New Zealand established a programme focused on providing ecosystem restoration work for workers in the adversely affected tourist sector.

7. Extending provision to migrants and the forcibly displaced. Portugal temporarily regularized the status of asylum seekers, facilitating access to healthcare, social support, employment and housing.

8. Cash transfers in fragile contexts. Somalia launched the Baxnaano programme to provide – for the first time – cash transfers to 1.2 million people.

9. Extending or introducing new social assistance benefits for vulnerable persons. Spain introduced a new permanent guaranteed minimum income programme, covering 2.3 million vulnerable people.

10. Guaranteeing access to healthcare. Thailand extended financial protection against health expenses to both nationals and legal residents by granting access for COVID-19 patients to its universal coverage system for emergency patients. This enabled patients to seek treatment at a public or private hospital free of charge.

11. Protecting workers in the informal economy by extending coverage. Togo implemented the three-month long “Novissi” mobile cash transfer programme – via a phone app – for informal economy workers, reaching over half a million workers within a month.

12. Ensuring income security during sick leave through sickness benefits. The United Kingdom extended sickness benefits to all workers, including gig economy workers, required to quarantine.

13. Exceptional, society-wide generalized one-off or multiple universal payments and emergency universal basic income (UBI). The United States made three quasi-universal payments equating to around US$4,000 per head.

Sources: Gentilini, Dale, and Almenfli (2020); ILO (2020m, 2020u, 2021d, forthcoming d); Stewart, Bastagli, and Orton (2020); UK (2020); Thaiyer (2020); Gnassingbé (2020); UN (2020f, 2020h); United States CARES Act 2020; American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.