



# GLOBAL INNOVATIONS ON SOCIAL SECURITY AND ACTIVE LABOUR MARKET POLICIES (ALMPs) IN A POST-COVID WORLD

Africa, Americas, Arab States, Asia-Pacific, and Europe

## SPI

SOCIAL POLICY INITIATIVE

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# CONTENTS

ACRONYMS .....	2
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	3
2. INTRODUCTION .....	4
1.1 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY .....	7
1.2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY .....	9
1.3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK UTILISED .....	12
1.4. ORGANISATION OF THE RESEARCH REPORT .....	12
3. SOCIAL SECURITY MEASURES AND ALMPS IN AFRICA .....	13
4. SOCIAL SECURITY MEASURES AND ALMPS IN THE AMERICAS .....	19
5. SOCIAL SECURITY MEASURES AND ALMPS IN ARAB STATES .....	21
6. SOCIAL SECURITY MEASURES AND ALMPS IN ASIA - PACIFIC.....	23
7. SOCIAL SECURITY MEASURES AND ALMPS IN EUROPE .....	31
8. UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME (UBI).....	36
9. RECOMMENDATIONS .....	37
10. CONCLUDING REMARKS .....	40
11. REFERENCE LIST .....	41
APPENDIX A .....	47

## ACRONYMS

Coronavirus Disease	COVID-19
Active Labour Market Policies	ALMP
International Labour Organisation	ILO
The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean,	ECLAC
International Monetary Fund	IMF
The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	OECD
International Social Security Association	ISSA
Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing	WIEGO
Government Wage Assistance Scheme	GWAS
United Nations	UN
Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises	SMMEs
Statistics South Africa	StatsSA
The Social Relief of Distress Grant	SRD grant
Namibian Youth Credit Scheme	NYCS
National Integrated Employment Information System	NIEIS
The National Social Security Fund	NSSF
Business Employee Support and Transfer of Cash	BEST Cash
Employment Adjustment Subsidy	EAS
Association of Southeast Asian Nations	ASEAN
Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme	CJRS
Guaranteed Minimum Income	GMI
Universal Basic Income	UBI

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 virus which was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organisation in March 2020 impacted the global community on an unprecedented scale second only to the Spanish flu of 1918-1919 and the two World Wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945. It wreaked unimaginable havoc on the socioeconomic fabric of the global arena and created a global emergency with long-term socio-economic consequences. COVID-19 caught everyone by surprise and the social protection sector was no exception.

According to the WHO and International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 2020 an estimated 6,927,365 million people died from COVID-19 and 114 million people lost their jobs. Millions were pushed into poverty, higher levels of inequality were experienced and the number of working poor increased. Women, those engaged in the informal sector, migrants and the youth bore the brunt of the COVID-19 onslaught.

Often dismissed before the pandemic as primarily for the poor social protection became recognised as a crucial tool to cushion various vulnerable groups against COVID-19 resulting in approximately 3,333

social protection measures being planned or implemented in 222 countries between March 2020 and May 2021 and strengthening of existing programmes during the post COVID-19 era, (Green,2021). Recovery patterns and social protection measures have varied significantly across regions, countries and sectors but Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) and Universal Basic Income (UBI) grants have emerged as the dominant responses. It is in this context that this report discusses the concept of social security and ALMPs examining the global innovations and responses that were developed.

Using case studies from Africa, the Americas, Europe, the Asia-Pacific and the Arab States this paper not only adds to the growing research on social protection and COVID-19 but advocates for the implementation of UBI grants as a first response in addressing the vulnerability experienced by people in not only in emergency contexts but as a general protective measure. The report calls for governments to develop more inclusive social protection systems through the linking of ALMPs with UBIs with the UBIs forming the foundation.

- *January 2020 COVID-19 emerged.*
- *March 2020 WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic.*
- *March/April 2020 the world shut down.*

## 2. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of COVID-19 represented an unprecedented challenge for governments around the world (WIEGO, 2021). Access to health services, maintenance of essential services, job security, and business continuity were all negatively affected by COVID-19. Overcoming this crisis required an integrated policy response involving fiscal, monetary, labour market, and social security policies (IMF, 2021). Social security has a structural characteristic when implemented as a national system and can be used in the event of urgent humanitarian crises such as in times of famine or pandemics. COVID-19 forced the re-examination of pre-COVID vulnerabilities and called for the development of innovative solutions. Social security systems in heterogeneous economies tend to display a variety of forms and provisions depending on the type of employment and worker contracts. This study discusses those developed for standard workers (workers engaged in a job that is continuous, full-time, with a direct relationship between employer and



- *The emergence of COVID-19 represented an unprecedented challenge for governments around the world (WIEGO, 2021)*
- *People struggled as vulnerabilities increased.*

employee), non-standard workers (workers engaged in employment arrangements that deviate from standard employment), informal workers, migrant workers, the unemployed, as well as those developed for the care economy. Examples have also been selected from various countries to highlight the differences in social security innovations and indicate ways in which this study might contribute to the existing literature on the importance of global social security innovations being linked to the labour market.

The COVID-19 pandemic took a severe toll on humanity due to the extensive economic disruptions it caused. Multiple waves of infections compelled policy and decision-makers to implement lockdowns and restrict movement to safeguard lives. This resulted in reduced economic activity and exacerbated already-present vulnerabilities.

In response to COVID-19, countries all over the world have embraced social protection instruments such as safety net programs as a means of harnessing human capital (World Bank, 2022). According to an International Labour Organization (ILO)



*COVID-19 forced the re-examination of pre-COVID vulnerabilities and called for the development of innovative solutions: the embracement of Social Protection was one such response.*

report, between 1 February and 13 October 2020, 208 countries and territories announced at least 1,496 different social protection measures (ILO, 2020h). In 2020 Gentilini et al, reported that European and Central Asian countries unveiled the largest number of specific social protection mechanisms in 2020. Most of these measures rely on contributory funding where people make contributions or take the form of instruments that directly impact the labour market. In Southern Africa South Africa led the initial response and other countries in the region followed its lead. South Africa responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant national lockdowns using a combination of social protection programmes by upgrading existing programmes and introducing new ones. This paper seeks to explore further the social security initiatives and measures developed by countries in response to COVID-19 using the regional allocations developed by the ILO, in Africa, the Americas, Arab States, Asia and Europe.



*The COVID-19 pandemic created a global emergency with long-term socio-economic consequences and highlighted the need for proactive investment in resilient social protection systems.*

## 1.1 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The COVID-19 crisis highlighted the importance of proactive investment in building comprehensive and resilient social security systems that can respond quickly and effectively to shocks when they emerge (Bowen et al., 2020). It also highlighted the importance of the state in effectively responding to the impact of COVID-19. Using empirical evidence this study presents the advantages of inclusive social security programs and Labour Market Activation Strategies. This evidence is crucial for policymakers and provides a springboard for future studies.

The pandemic greatly affected the labour market in general, resulting in a substantial loss of labour income. According to the ILO (2021: 7), “the loss of working hours in Southern Europe in 2020 was estimated to be 12.3 per cent (equivalent to 6 million full-time workers), while the loss in Eastern Europe was 7.4 per cent (equivalent to 8 million full-time workers)”. Thus, making the need to study how Europe and other parts of the world dealt with this loss of working hours imperative. A reduction in hours usually leads to a reduction in

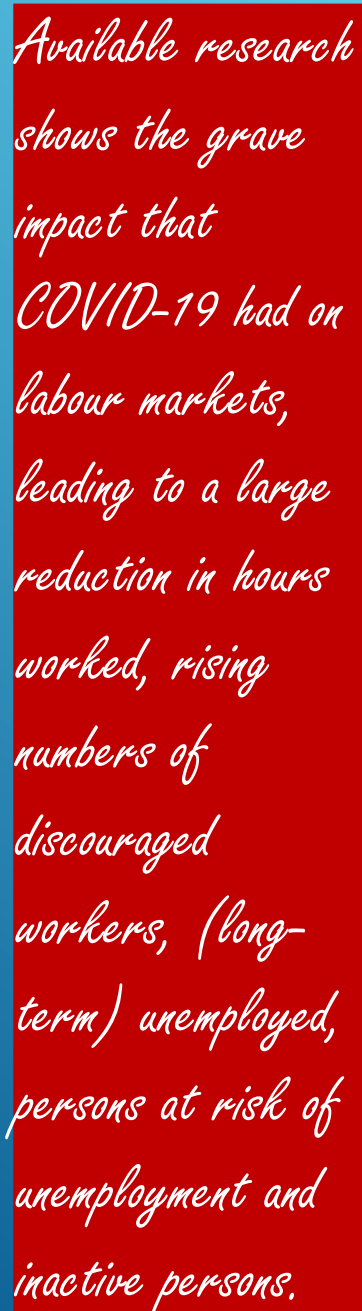




*Young people and women have been particularly hard-hit by the pandemic; the impact on women has been heightened by the extraordinary workload of unpaid caregiving tasks that they have had to shoulder within the household (ECLAC, 2021b)*

workers' income particularly for women and lower-paid workers who were disproportionately affected, thereby increasing gender and income inequalities (ILO, 2020). Young people and women have been particularly hard-hit by the pandemic; the impact on women has been heightened by the extraordinary workload of unpaid caregiving tasks that they have had to shoulder within the household (ECLAC, 2021b). It is thought that the COVID-19 crisis significantly diminished women's degree of autonomy owing to the unequal distribution of work between men and women which is characteristic of traditional gender relations globally. This imbalance has been exacerbated by the pandemic and the restrictive measures introduced in response to it (ECLAC, 2020 and 2021a). According to the McKinsey Global Institute, women make up 39 per cent of global employment but account for 54 per cent of overall job losses (2020).

Social protection systems are critical in supporting workers and enterprises in times of crisis. They remove the financial barriers to accessing healthcare; allow infected workers to comply with confinement measures without facing



*Available research shows the grave impact that COVID-19 had on labour markets, leading to a large reduction in hours worked, rising numbers of discouraged workers, (long-term) unemployed, persons at risk of unemployment and inactive persons.*

income losses; support households to afford basic needs at times of reduced economic activity and growing unemployment, prevent a major fall in living standards; help companies retain workers and retain human capital that is critical for fast reactivation of economic activity in the aftermath of the health crisis; helps to stabilise labour markets and ensure sustained aggregate demand; and helps prevent escalation of social tensions (ILO, 2020).

## **1.2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

This study aims to track and monitor policy innovations that have the catalytic potential to be transformative in reducing vulnerabilities caused by COVID-19.

Available research shows the grave impact that Covid-19 had on labour markets, leading to a large reduction in hours worked, rising numbers of discouraged workers, (long-term) unemployed, persons at risk of unemployment and inactive persons. The labour market recovery from this massive shock will take time and risks being uneven and affected by individuals' detachment from the labour market as well as skill mismatches between the jobs

## *COVID-19*

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lost during the crisis and those created as economic growth resumes (Brown & Koettl, 2012). The crisis deepened existing labour market inequalities. Sectors hit hard by the pandemic disproportionately employ certain disadvantaged groups, such as women, youth, and low-skilled workers. Moreover, even when they maintained their work, workers experienced sharp reductions in labour income and hours worked and faced increased exposure to the virus. The crisis exposed gaps in coverage of income support, especially for the self-employed, platform workers, and those in the informal economy or those with weaker contribution histories particularly women who exited the labour market either for care activities or childbirth. Women across the globe have found themselves at the frontline of COVID-19 in terms of the impact of the pandemic and the response to it. This is because women make up the majority of workers in healthcare, social services and palliative care areas which were severely affected by lockdown regulations (WIEGO, 2021). It was realised that once the immediate public health threat receded, the need to address these

### ○ COVID-19

*had a woman's face given they care roles they bore the brunt.*

○ Ensuring adequate income support for all groups affected by the crisis is essential.

issues would be at the heart of a sustainable and equitable recovery (ILO, ISSA, OECD, 2021).

In addition, ensuring adequate income support for all groups affected by the crisis is essential. However, this is only one element of the package of support that governments should develop. For example, in South Africa, the unemployment rate in the third quarter of 2022 was 32.9% (StatsSA, 2022). This means that in countries like South Africa, more comprehensive and sustainable Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) are needed. Therefore, there is a need for economies to create sustainable jobs. According to the World Bank, governments need to encourage and help people to find good quality jobs by providing effective ALMPs, such as job search assistance, upskilling and retraining programmes and employment incentives (World Bank, 2012). The ILO (2021) argues that well-articulated income support and ALMPs reinforce each other in preventing poverty while contributing to building a quick and sustained return to employment.

Governments must provide income and employment assistance for the unemployed or people in low-paid and precarious work. Reciprocally, these individuals need to be encouraged and supported to actively seek work or take up training and retraining opportunities to improve their job prospects. These mutual responsibilities are common features of most unemployment benefit schemes as well as many social assistance schemes.

Table 1: LABOUR MARKET STRATEGIES

LABOUR MARKET STRATEGIES				
CATEGORIES				
1	2	3	4	5
Incentives to retain employment	Incentives to create employment	Incentives to seek and keep a job	Incentives for human capital enhancement	Improved labour market functioning
INSTRUMENTS				
Work Sharing	Wage	In-work benefits	On-the-job	Job search assistance
Short Work	Hiring subsidies	Subsidies	Training	Employee-employer intermediation services,
Wage Subsidies	Start-up support	Tax credits		Counselling
Reduced work time		Public works		Monitoring
		Activation		
		Workfare		
		Labour regulation adjustment		

Table 1 shows the labour market strategies that were adopted by the World Bank. To identify and categorise different market programs across the world, the above framework was adopted by the World Bank. It enables us to easily understand

ALMP measures based on their intended purpose as they relate to social protection.

It is hoped that the data gathered in this study will be beneficial to policymakers in understanding the short and medium to long-term benefits of inclusive social security programmes.

### 1.3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK UTILISED

This study uses a synthesis of various existing literature. A desktop review of existing literature was conducted in combination with key informant interviews with six experts in social protection and social policy. Interviews were conducted between the 14<sup>th</sup> of July and the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2022. Case studies were also utilised.

### 1.4. ORGANISATION OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

Section one of the report discusses the concept of social security and ALMPs in light of COVID-19 whilst, section two examines case studies of global innovations on social security and ALMPs. It also provides an analysis and assessment

of how ALMPs are being linked to social security innovations, i.e., whether promotionally or conditionally. This section also problematises what is meant by 'jobs', the formal and informal economy, rural livelihoods, atypical and gig economy jobs as well as how issues of care and the care economy are addressed in current labour and social security debates. The final section outlines the recommendations based on findings from the desk research, case studies and interviews.

### **3. SOCIAL SECURITY MEASURES AND ALMPs IN AFRICA**

In the last two decades, socioeconomic growth in Africa as a whole has advanced significantly. Nevertheless, it continues to experience high rates of poverty and inequality, food insecurity and malnutrition, high rates of maternal and infant mortality, high levels of informal employment, wars, and the effects of climate change (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2021). To attain the Sustainable

Development Goals, which include eliminating poverty and decreasing inequality and vulnerability, effective and efficient measures, including social protection, are urgently needed in light of the COVID-19 epidemic and related obstacles.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for more inclusive ways of including people in social security systems and the labour market. Historically, according to the OECD (2021), specific features of standard employment include full-time continuous employment, with a single employer who sets the conditions of employment and is located at the employer's premises. This is an implicit relationship where workers often provide work and labour in return for wages and job security. The majority of social security improvements aimed at regular workers incorporate programs for job retention such as wage subsidies. Wage subsidies are mainly aimed at helping formal workers maintain and continue their employment relationships and can also in some situations encourage job creation (Gentilini, 2020).



## **Mauritius** in line with this

introduced the 'Government Wage Assistance Scheme (GWAS) in March 2020 which was extended till September 2021. This is offered by the Mauritian government, and it consists of a pay subsidy to employers through the GWAS to ensure that all employees are paid on time for their work during confinement or as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. (Mauritius Revenue Authority, 2022). The scheme applies to businesses in the private sector and allows their employees to draw a monthly basic wage of up to Rs 50,000 (604,36 USD). Interestingly, this scheme is also applicable to self-employed individuals who are in business and trades persons operating in the informal sector. GWAS also covers expatriate employees in full-time or part-time employment in Mauritius. However, ministries and government departments, local authorities, statutory bodies, and government-owned companies' employees of the public sector were excluded. An employer benefiting from GWAS was required to provide an undertaking not to lay off any employee up

to 31 March 2022 failing which the Government may claim back the GWAS paid. This scheme is still active post-COVID. Furthermore, it has a direct link to the labour market as it attempts to keep people employed. In addition, a minimum wage was introduced through the National Minimum Wage Regulations of 2017 and this came into effect from 01 January 2018 stipulating a national minimum wage of Rs 8,140 (98,37 USD) per month for all full-time employees. This was revised to Rs 9,700 (117,22 USD) in 2020 and Rs 10,075 (121,75 USD) in 2021. In line with the payment of an additional remuneration for 2022, the amount was reviewed to Rs 10,575 (127,82 USD) a month (Mauritius Revenue Authority, 2022). The National Minimum Wage applies indiscriminately to all workers whether employed under a standard contract or in precarious employment situations or otherwise.

## **South Africa** on the other hand

in 2023 through its South Africa to Work strategy has two priorities. Firstly, to increase employment: through the creation of as many opportunities for work as possible, whether in the private sector

or publicly funded programmes. Secondly, to ensure that support is provided to those for whom work is not available, thereby increasing their opportunities for productive livelihoods and social security. It acknowledges that there needs to be a change in labour market outcomes such as enabling private-sector employment instead of over-regulating it. Participation in ALMPs is encouraged, especially by the unemployed.

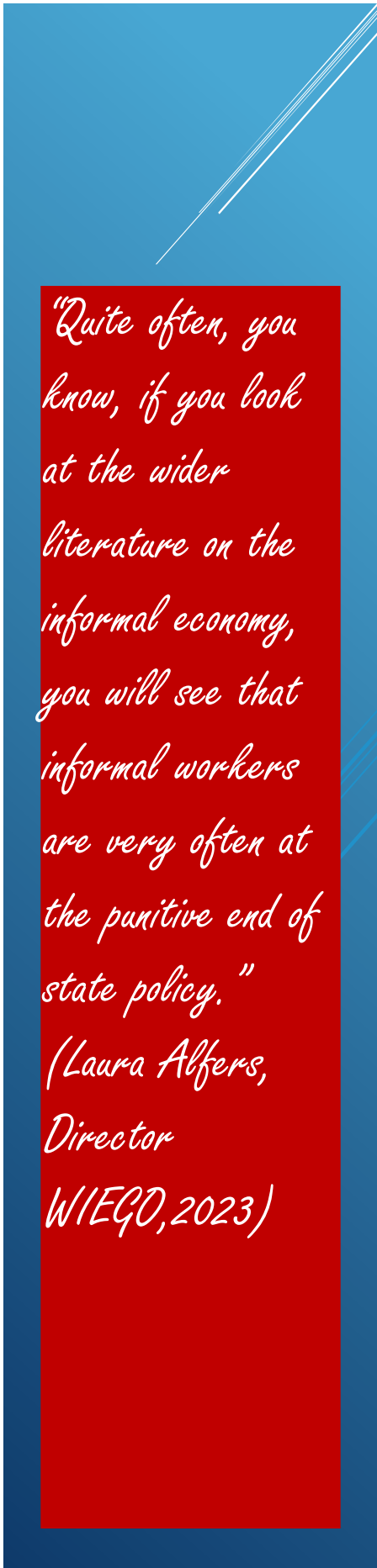
Due to government financial and capacity limitations, Africa has had the lowest level of social protection coverage on the entire globe with only a small proportion of the poor and vulnerable benefiting from social security with, on average, 18 per cent of the population being effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit (ILO, 2017). Lockdown procedures and the economic downturn significantly affected businesses, as well as the jobs and way of life of employees and their families. Sixty million full-time jobs were lost in Africa in the second quarter of 2020, including 45 million in sub-Saharan Africa. In Africa, the vast majority of workers especially women are employed in informal jobs, where they typically lack social security and earn less

on average. Social safety nets are also typically more prevalent in rural areas, where the prevalence of chronic poverty is greater, and women dominate. The existing contributory social security programs, which primarily offer old-age pensions and health insurance to the active population, cover most workers in the formal economy and their families. However, according to the International Labour Organization (2018), the informal sector employs 89.7% of women and 82.7 per cent of men in Africa, making it the continent's main source of employment.

Work in low and middle-income countries has always been diverse, fluid, and overwhelmingly informal: unobservable and beyond the reach of the state's ability to enforce the obligations and benefits of a country's social contract (World Bank Group, 2021). Up to 80% of workers in developing countries earn their living in the informal economy and cannot rely on employment-based social protection programs (The World Bank, 2021). The economic consequences of COVID-19 lockdowns severely impacted low-income informal workers, mainly in urban areas, who were unable to work from home and

- *"The domestic sector is also amongst the sectors that experienced the highest job losses, and it is the sector most dominated by women.*
- *Rural areas were also heavily affected by COVID-19.*

were not protected by existing social assistance or social insurance schemes (WIEGO, 2020). In Botswana, most small, micro, and medium enterprises (SMMEs) such as street vendors, taxi operators, sex workers, bars, gyms, clubs, and salons lost their income when workers and customers were locked down. (Mphoeng Mphoeng, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdowns and quarantines made it difficult to maintain the working arrangements that were in place before the pandemic, and many informal workers, such as domestic workers, sustained a loss of income as a result (UN-Women, 2020a). The domestic sector is also amongst the sectors that experienced the highest job losses, and it is the sector most dominated by women. The impact of COVID-19 in this sector, therefore, speaks to the sharp reduction in women's labour force participation rates to levels last recorded two decades ago (ECLAC, 2021), leaving women vulnerable and exposed. People living in the rural areas were also hard hit by the economic and social crisis. In areas where access was already constrained and internet connection was already non-existent or extremely rare, the suspension



*"Quite often, you know, if you look at the wider literature on the informal economy, you will see that informal workers are very often at the punitive end of state policy."*  
*(Laura Alferts, Director WIEGO, 2023)*

of basic health and education services had a significant negative impact.

The informal economy was another area that was negatively affected by the pandemic. An area as previously highlighted dominated by women. Alferts, (2022) contends that "quite often, you know if you look at the wider literature on the informal economy, you will see that informal workers are very often at the punitive end of state policy. It is the mass evictions, harassment from local government, confiscation of goods, these are regular occurrences in the life of informal workers because they are not recognised as workers". Furthermore, she argues that there is low coverage of the informal workers, this may be because of a mismatch between the social security being offered and the priorities of these workers. In addition, informal workers often face administrative barriers. Gerdins (2022) adds that there are fewer economic opportunities for informal workers. It is therefore important to have discussions about how to put systems in place that are accessible to those in the informal economy.

The unemployed are another group that needs urgent attention in the wake of the pandemic. Social security innovations for unemployed people are incorporated in ongoing discussions concerning the rectification of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic globally. For example, in South Africa, Statistics South Africa (2020) posits that the South African economy lost 2.2 million jobs between the first and second quarters of 2020, extending its already high unemployment from 39% to 42%. Another 1.5 million employees were furloughed, 40% of whom did not get their jobs back after the economy re-opened. Women, manual workers and the poor were significantly more likely to lose their jobs than men, professionals and the non-poor ([Jain et al., 2020](#)).

As part of the South African government's response to the adverse economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country's system of social assistance was temporarily expanded. Significantly, a special COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant was introduced for an initial period of 6 months to provide support to a large, previously unreached group – unemployed adults not earning any income and not receiving any

social grant or unemployment insurance and this initiative, therefore, addressed a notable hole in the social safety net (Kohler and Borat, 2021). It was found that the grant did not only bring millions of previously unreachable adults into the system but contrary to common concern it did not discourage work. Estimates suggest that the receipt of the COVID-19 grant increased the probability of job search by more than 25 % highlighting the grant's important role in reducing inactivity, enabling economic participation, and ultimately aiding labour market recovery.

**Namibia** like South Africa also took steps to withstand the impact of COVID-19 and curtail unemployment. Firstly, it supported youth development (Mouton, 2020) through interventions such as the establishment of the Namibia Youth Credit Scheme (NYCS) Entrepreneurship Programme in the year 2005. This scheme began before the COVID-19 pandemic; however, the pandemic highlighted the greater need for it. The NYCS is a loan guarantee programme that provides financial support to unemployed and out-of-school youth

who do not have adequate collateral to access loans from the mainstream banking system. The Scheme aims to empower youth with entrepreneurship opportunities by offering training in Basic Business Management, Access to Credit, Follow-up training, Counselling and Mentoring to beneficiaries between 18 to 35 (MSYNS, 2022). Mouton, (2020), evaluated the programme and concluded that since 2011, a total of 200 jobs have been created through the NYCS Entrepreneurship Programme. An evaluation of the programme during COVID-19 and post-COVID is yet to be carried out.

In addition, Namibia announced new labour market policy strategies for Social Protection in its new [2019-2030 social protection policy document](#). Under this policy document, the Youth Enterprise Funding schemes will be expanded with increased seed capital from the government, and sustained with loan recovery and interest income (OECD, 2020). Public procurements from women and youth-owned businesses, people with disabilities and marginalised communities are expected to be encouraged. A national

incentivised apprenticeship, entrepreneurship and internship programme will also be introduced and scaled up to address the issue of skills mismatch, psychometric testing and career guidance, and skills gap surveys will be undertaken. The National Integrated Employment Information System (NIEIS) will be streamlined to produce real-time Labour Market Information.’ Among the policy, measures are also strategies to enhance human capital such as Expanding financial assistance to students and trainees under the National Training Fund and the Namibian Students Financial Assistance Fund (Social Protection Policy, 2022).

#### **4. SOCIAL SECURITY MEASURES AND ALMPs IN THE AMERICAS**

COVID-19 had a similar impact on the Americas as it had in Africa. It brought with it economic recession and a crisis in their labour markets. Initially, the priority of governments and legislators focused on protecting the jobs of formal workers.

In the regions where cash transfers have made up the largest share of crisis relief



packages, efforts have focused on developing new income protection programmes for informal workers and their families and on expanding and increasing cash transfers for the most vulnerable households in the event of a loss of income (The World Bank, 2022). As in many other countries, in the Americas, COVID-19 highlighted the gap in social protection coverage for informal workers, who are not eligible for either social assistance (which targets non-working vulnerable groups) or social insurance (which covers registered workers with contracts). Several options have been considered for closing this gap, including establishing a National Social Security Fund (NSSF) and making contributions to it mandatory for informal as well as formal workers; and creating a voluntary social security scheme for self-employed workers with matching funds from the government to incentivise participation and formalising informal social protection mechanisms such as savings clubs and burial societies ([Devereux and Conradie, 2017](#)). Alfars (2022) highlighted that in South America they combine both a tax payment and a social security payment into one payment.

Under this programme, beneficiaries get access to health coverage and pension coverage.

## **Argentina**, the Boost Work

Programme began in 2020 (UN/ECLAC, 2020), granting access to the following groups to receive income employment support in the form of cash transfers monthly:

- Holders who have started working in the formal economy and whose income is higher than the Minimum Living and Mobile Salary.
- People who joined the formal labour force or were employed by a productive unit registered in the program but received pay that was less than 100% of the minimum wage.
- Additionally, participants in the program will continue to earn the full amount of the subsidy until the specified working conditions are maintained, even if they entered the labour force and are receiving up to 50% of the minimum wage.

## **Jamaica** responded to the impact

of the pandemic by putting in place the Business Employee Support and Transfer of Cash (BEST Cash) (JIS, 2022). The programme provides temporary cash transfers to registered businesses operating within the tourism industry who are registered with the Tourism Product Development Company (TPDCO) based on the number of workers they keep employed under the income tax threshold of \$1.5 million per annum. Businesses who apply and qualify will receive \$9,000 per fortnight for each employee retained on their payroll who has taxable income less than or equal to \$1.5 million, as confirmed by Tax Administration Jamaica.' (Ministry of Finance, 2020). The tourism sector was especially targeted given the large impact COVID-19 had on it due to it being a contact based/service sector. In line with the presented cases, it can be argued that cash transfers can indeed be appropriate and effective amid the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **5. SOCIAL SECURITY MEASURES AND ALMPS IN ARAB STATES**

In the Arab states, economic activity slowed to a crawl as a result of COVID-19. Due to the rising number of COVID-19 cases in the Arab States, the Arab governments swiftly announced strict preventive measures to stop the virus's spread. Like the majority of countries globally, they halted international air and sea travel, shut down their borders, forbade mass gatherings of the public, and implemented lockdowns, including the shutdown of businesses and schools.

As is the case in other regions, the COVID-19 pandemic created additional economic challenges in the Arab States, driven in particular by a drop in domestic and external demand, a reduction in trade, disruption of production, a fall in consumer confidence, and tightening of financial conditions. Key job-rich sectors were severely hit, affecting primarily economies that rely heavily on tourism, hospitality, and services (IMF, 2020). These sectors often dependent on season, event or

overall place attractiveness rely on tourists and the Arab countries have an array of these including a large gig economy. In the Arab States, 18.2 million individuals are employed in these most at-risk sectors, suggesting that almost one-third of the employed population in the region faced high risks of layoff, reduction of wages or hours of work (ILO, 2020). For

**Egypt** the pandemic impacted the Egyptian economy primarily due to a decline in travel and tourist activity, reduced worker remittances, capital outflows, and there was a slowdown in domestic activities as people were asked to stay home. The weaker demand in the global market also reduced Egypt's exports as well as earnings from the Suez Canal (IMF, 2020). In accordance with the Egyptian Constitution, the economic system ensures equal opportunities and fair distribution of development returns, reduces the differences among incomes and adheres to a minimum wage and pension ensuring a decent life, as well as a maximum one in State agencies for every salaried employee according to the Law. For example, Egypt both Arab and African

put in place a form of social protection in the form of the Minimum Wage Adjustment. This measure ensured that all employees were paid according to the standards set in Egypt and received a salary increase every year. All companies are expected to ensure that their employees receive no less than EGP 2,400 (78, 38 USD) per month. All companies must award employees a minimum salary increase of 3% per financial year. It is important to note that the increase does not apply to the entire salary as set out in an employee's contract. It is only applicable to the portion of the employee's salary used for social insurance purposes. Currently, the minimum salary for social insurance purposes is set at a minimum of EGP 1,200 (39, 19 USD) per month and capped at EGP 8,100 (264, 50 USD) per month (Baker McKenzie, 2021). To set the minimum wage and uplift the current minimum mandatory salary increase level thresholds is indicative of the Government's intention to ensure the welfare/adequate standards of living for its citizens and residents. This broadens the coverage of social security in Egypt.

**Morocco** is another example of

an Arab state negatively affected by the pandemic. Its key trading partners were largely affected by the pandemic, and this had an impact on Morocco's sources of income. The health-related limitations put in place to combat the pandemic have made this trend worse (Paul-Delvauc, et al, 2020). According to Paul-Delvauc, et al, 2020, the total number of jobs fell by nearly 600,000 across all sectors and regions, 477,000 in agriculture, and 34,000 in services. Despite the huge impact that COVID-19 had on Morocco it managed to put measures in place which played a crucial role in helping households and firms weather the economic shock. It introduced cash transfers and in response to the two-thirds of employees who were required to stop it offered them temporary replacement income through cash transfers, which were phased to help both formal and informal sector workers. Nearly 780,000 employees received a MAD 2,000 (195,64 USD) monthly allowance from mid-March until the end of June 2020. About MAD 6.3 billion (616 273 560,00 USD) was

expected to be the cost of the entire endeavour.

Businesses temporarily idle and experiencing a reduction in turnover of more than 50% were allowed to defer social contribution payments due between March and June 2020 until September 2021 (20). While firms stopped contributing temporarily to the social security system, the government assumed all financial charges related to mandatory health insurance and family allowances, thereby ensuring that workers could continue benefiting from these services. While these measures helped households weather the economic crisis, the government provided additional incentives for firms to compensate workers for the income loss: any additional compensation paid by firms to their employees (in the limit of 50% of monthly salary) was declared tax-exempt (Paul-Delvauc, et al, 2020).

## **6. SOCIAL SECURITY MEASURES AND ALMPS IN ASIA - PACIFIC**

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruption and hardship among workers and employers in the Asia-Pacific region. Millions of livelihoods in the region were severely impacted (ILO, 2021). Although the number of working hours has drastically decreased in all of Asia and the Pacific regions, the severity of the effects varied. The Philippines experienced the highest reductions in working hours in 2020, amounting to 13.6%. In contrast, the number of hours worked decreased just slightly in places like Thailand, Brunei Darussalam, and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (4.3–4.5%). (ILO, 2021). The severity and length of the lockdown measures put in place to stop the pandemic's spread, as well as the ability to control the epidemic, are some of the elements that contribute to these variations. Additionally, a nation's economic structure matters for example, some businesses, like agriculture, were less susceptible to the pandemic than others (ILO, 2021b).

The impact of the pandemic on employment in the region was also drastic. While employment in the region had been on a steady upward trajectory before the

pandemic, largely driven by demographic trends, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a major dent in this trend (ILO, 2021b). In 2020, there were 10.6 million (or 3.2 per cent) fewer workers in employment than expected for 2020 in a no-pandemic scenario. The pandemic, however, did not affect all workers to the same extent. For example, women workers had a higher likelihood of losing employment than their male counterparts. Employment losses also affected both formal and informal workers (ILO, 2020a). Some of the workers that left employment might have either been discouraged to search for a new job and others in many cases women might have been forced to give up employment because of unpaid care responsibilities as schools closed (ILO, 2021). Likewise, young workers have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic. Youth employment losses were 6.2 per cent, compared with 2.8 per cent for adults, with many young workers moving into either unemployment or inactivity (ILO, 2021).

**Japan** offered employment retention and care support. In Japan, the Employment Adjustment Subsidy (EAS)

was the principal tool to lessen the pandemic's impact on labour markets. This scheme provides financial assistance to businesses if they maintained their employment by placing their employees on temporary leave. Firms were required to pay a leave allowance to such employees, but EAS reimburses a percentage (grant rate) of this leave allowance. Initially, EAS only applied to employees enrolled in employment insurance (those who work 20 hours or more per week) (OECD, 2022). As of March 11, 2022, the Japanese government approved a cumulative total of around 5.4 trillion Japanese yen of subsidies to businesses that were facing employment adjustment due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsidies have been granted to about six million cases since the outbreak of the disease (Statista Research Department, 2022). Moreover, EAS flexibility was increased by allowing firms to place employees in Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs instead of leave, and the subsidised amount and requirements of this VET scheme were also relaxed (OECD, 2022).

**Korea** according to Lee and Yang (2022), the Ministry of Employment and Labour provides subsidy support through the Employment Retention Subsidy policy to employers who find it problematic to adjust employment and thus implement employment retention measures such as paid leave or suspension. Such government subsidy aims to reduce the management burden of employers and prevents workers from losing their jobs. Korea puts more priority on maintaining employment in times of crisis rather than paying unemployment benefits after job dismissals' (Lee & Yang, 2022). The government raised the Employment Retention Subsidy which has been in place since 1995 and eased eligibility conditions in 2020 as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The government also expanded the Job Stabilization Fund, which was established in 2018 to support small enterprises with the minimum wage hike that year. Under the Fund, subsidies are provided to establishments with less than 30 workers to subsidize the wages of employees earning KRW 2.15 million or less (1,749.73 USD). As a result of COVID-



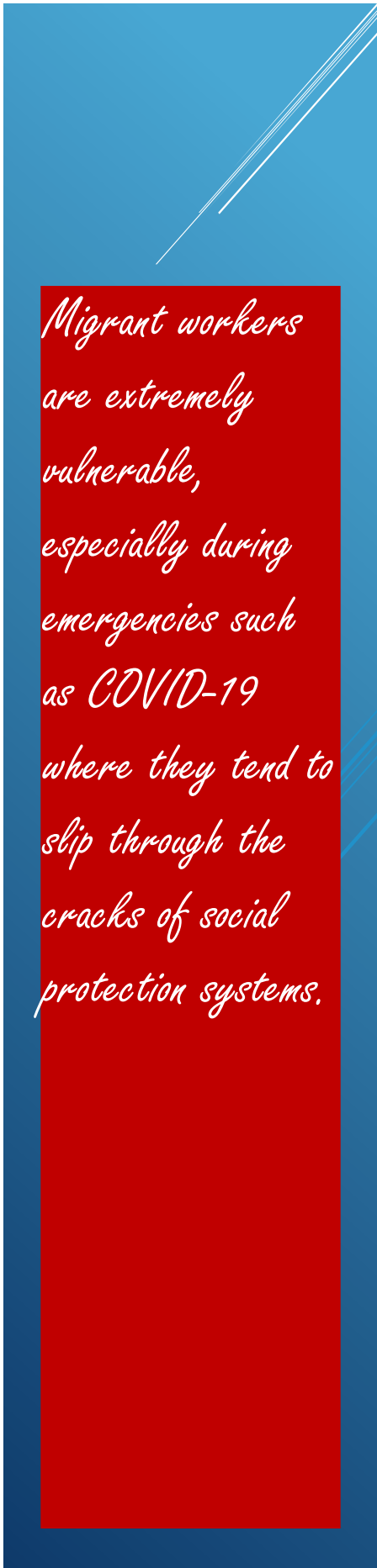
19, the ILO (2021) estimates that the subsidy amount provided to enterprises with less than 10 employees has risen by up to 64% while the amounts for enterprises with ten or more employees have increased by 44%.

Generally, care activities encompass all activities of housekeeping, such as cleaning and cooking on one hand, and direct person-oriented activities on the other, such as support in everyday-life necessities like feeding, washing, dressing, accompanying the ill, disabled and frail (Senghaas-Knobloch 2022). This is a sector that has traditionally been assigned to women in the household. ILO estimations of workers involved in these care services amounted to 249 million women and 132 million men (ILO, 2018). To ease the burden of care activities in South Korea, the government has established new public childcare centres and extended the accreditation system with a mandatory assessment to all childcare centres since 2019. Family care leave of up to 20 days per year was introduced in 2020 to improve work-life balance (OECD, 2021). This scheme is for workers who have to take time off to care for family members,

providing KRW 50,000 (39, 41 USD) per day to workers who have to take such leave on grounds related to COVID-19. (ILO, 2020).

The migrant population has been hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 crisis because such a large proportion of migrants are employed in the informal sector and many of them are at a disadvantage when it comes to gaining access to social protection entitlements (ECLAC, 2022). Their situation is complicated further by border closures, internal displacement, rising joblessness, discrimination, xenophobia, and difficulties in obtaining health care (in some cases for fear of being identified) and other related efforts to prevent the spread of the virus, which in some cases have restricted their access to drinking water and sanitation services and resulted in overcrowding (ECLAC, 2020). The pandemic deepened the inequalities and poverty of many migrants because many of them are in informal employment, poorly paid, and with precarious jobs.

While some developed countries have laws and regulations that protect the rights of migrant workers, especially about social



*Migrant workers are extremely vulnerable, especially during emergencies such as COVID-19 where they tend to slip through the cracks of social protection systems.*

protection, many do not. In the majority of the world's countries, including many Associations of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members, the legislative barriers limiting migrant workers' access to social security benefits are compounded by the fact that social security systems cover only part of the labour force (ILO, 2022). Moreover, in some countries, migrant workers are often employed in sectors of the labour market that are either not covered by social security or in which compliance with social security laws is poorly enforced. "Even when migrant workers are employed in covered sectors and social security laws are enforced, irregular migrant workers are usually disqualified from social security benefits because they are undocumented" (Tamagno, 2008, pp. 1–2). After the documentation of these migrant workers, it is important to also ensure the implementation of those laws and regulations.

Labour migration is a growing reality in South-East Asia. Some countries in South-East Asia are both sending and receiving countries: it has been estimated that Thailand receives 3.5 million migrants

annually, while 150,000 Thai “contract” labourers per year work outside the country (ILO, 1999a). However, given the current state of data and data collection in ASEAN, this does not allow a realistic picture of the extent of labour migration. As has been noted, the underlying data are often too discrepant in the range of methodologies and definitions they use to be comparable across different countries. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that about 87 per cent of migrant workers in ASEAN are either unskilled or low-skilled (Nadaraj, 2015). It has also been suggested that 60 per cent of migrant workers in South-East Asia work informally.

In Japan, migrant workers who have lived in the country for a short period and contributed to the National Pension System or the Employees’ Pension Insurance system for at least 6 months can apply for a “lump sum withdrawal payment” within two years of their departure. The National Pension System provides a “basic pension” covering old age, disability, and death (Japan, 2020).

To assist labour migrants to adjust with relative ease in their destination countries,

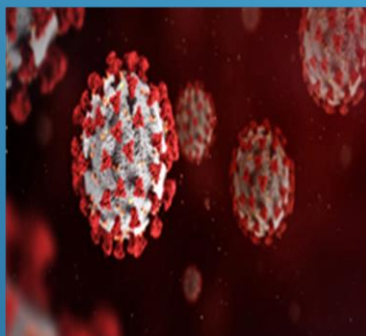
many countries provide pre-departure orientation (PDO) programs that deliver vital information about life, culture, language, and laws in the destination countries. It also informs migrants of their rights and responsibilities and services provided by governments (both origin and destination countries) and civil society organizations (CSOs) (Yamano et al, 2021). The Asian Development Bank (2020) asserts that the PDO programs often include pre-migration decision-making programs, pre-employment programs and awareness-raising programs on safe migration in the form of community-based pre-employment programs and/or nationwide campaigns. Pre-departure programs may also include migration loan facilities, skills training, and language training (Asian Development Bank, 2020). Some long-established good practices on PDOs are found in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka. However, these programs are relevant to those who have gone through the legal channels but normally not so for illegal migrants.

In addition, many returning migrants have trouble finding a suitable job due to the



*Despite their significant contributions to the destination country's economies, a large number of migrant workers do not benefit from their host's social protection systems.*

poor employment opportunities in their home country and because the skills acquired abroad are either not relevant to the labour market or not acknowledged. The Asian Development Bank continues to sensitise that many migrants return home with skills acquired abroad; however, either there is no need for that specific skill set or there is very little option for skill recognition. In Tajikistan for example, in the area of ALMPs, the Government made efforts to 'Create employment opportunities and conditions for entrepreneurship for returning migrants through the organization of short-term courses in professions that are in demand in the labour market.' (Gentilini & others, 2022). The project integrates former migrant workers as mentors to assist other labour migrants in entering the labour market or in starting up businesses of their own. In so doing, migrant workers can develop their networks with each other and establish new contacts that may prove useful in terms of their professional integration (ILO, 2022). The Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment population of the Republic of Tajikistan alleges that the principal goal of the project



is to expand effective employment in any National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period up to 2030, and the result of the project is to improve professional skills and employment opportunities for youth, women, and migrant workers in the domestic and foreign labour markets. It was also an effective response to COVID-19.

It is essential to extend the coverage of social protection to migrant workers as they fill labour shortages, particularly in economies with ageing workforces, and can improve the demographics of a country's labour force and the sustainability of its social security system (ILO, 2021). Furthermore, extending social protection coverage to migrant workers can facilitate the formalisation of the labour market and the regularisation of migrant workers. Conversely, formalisation and regularisation also facilitate the extension of social protection to migrant workers, which in turn gives them an incentive to work in the formal economy.

## 7. SOCIAL SECURITY MEASURES AND ALMPS IN EUROPE

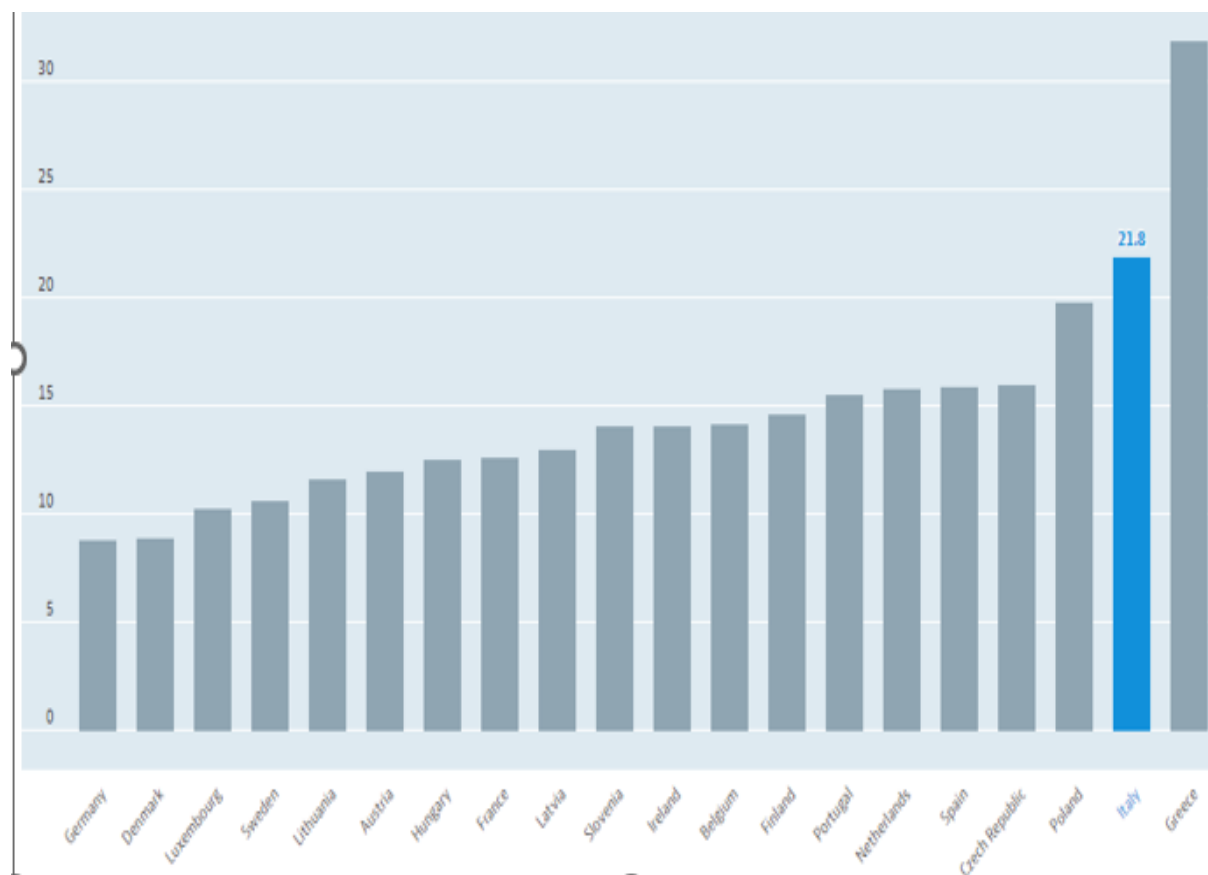
In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic caused the largest shock to European economies since World War II (Ando et al, 2022). The United Kingdom introduced a temporary wage compensation programme the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). Under this, employers could apply for compensation of 80% of monthly salary costs for furloughed employees (Wielgoszewska, 2022). This scheme has helped to pay the wages of people in 11.7 million jobs and 1.3 million businesses.

Seeman et al, 2021, state that measures for non-standard workers were largely ad hoc payments, intended to compensate for hardships suffered during select months only, rather than bringing about any structural changes within the welfare state. One important exception to this is the case of Italy: where short-time work benefit was introduced for two specific groups of self-employed workers. It is expected to run until 2023 and may become a permanent feature of the Italian



welfare state (Seeman et al, 2021).

**FIGURE 1: SELF EMPLOYMENT RATE IN EUROPE (% DISTRIBUTION)**



The graph above presents countries in Europe and their rates of self-employment. Italy has the second highest rate of self-employment (21.8%) followed by Greece with around 33 %. Thus, in dealing with the

COVID-19 pandemic, measures that address social protection for workers included efforts to increase social protection for the self-employed.

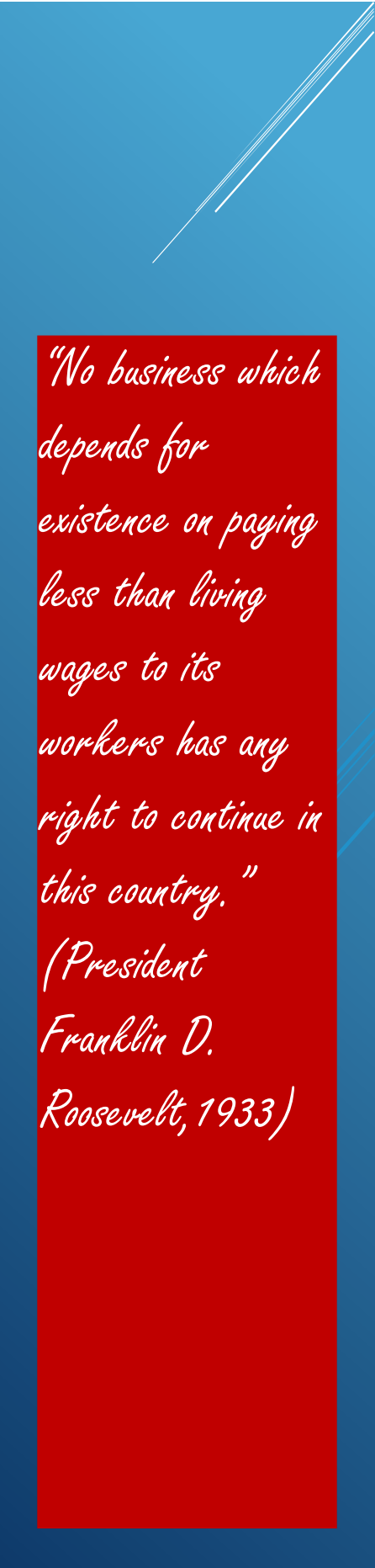


**Germany's** response is also noteworthy as it removed means-testing for social assistance as part of the Social Protection Package. The main aim was to provide benefits as quickly and unbureaucratically as possible so that 'no one has to face existential hardship due to the economic effects of this crisis' (Deutscher Bundestag, 2020: 24). Under the amended rules, social assistance was paid for 6 to 9 months without a means test, with a retroactive review conducted under certain conditions only. The measures were adopted with the individuals who fall outside ordinary social security in mind e.g., unemployment insurance, including marginal part-time workers and the self-employed. Although one official reason for this was the administrative burden associated with such a test, the regulations went beyond a mere administrative simplification: they turned social assistance into a new temporary unconditional minimum income benefit (Seeman et al, 2021). Social assistance thereby became a social compensation benefit not that dissimilar from the extraordinary payments issued to

'non-standard' workers in other European countries.


The Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) is currently the principal mechanism for fighting poverty and achieving social inclusion among a plethora of social policies in the European Union (EU). In GMI, education and vocational training hold a major role in fighting social exclusion and promoting social cohesion. GMI constitutes an important component of social protection systems in European countries. Some of the worst affected groups are women (22.3 per cent) and households with children, especially in East and South Europe (Rodríguez-Fernández & Themelis, 2021). For example, Romania has the highest rate, 33.9 per cent, of households with children under the poverty line, followed by Greece, 33.5 per cent. On the other hand, in Slovenia, this stood at 11.9 per cent and in Czechia at 11.4 per cent (Eurostat, 2019).

However, GMI schemes have been criticised for their stigmatising nature, as they focus on the poor as an individual, rather than on all citizens as a whole. For



*"No business which depends for existence on paying less than living wages to its workers has any right to continue in this country."*  
*(President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1933)*

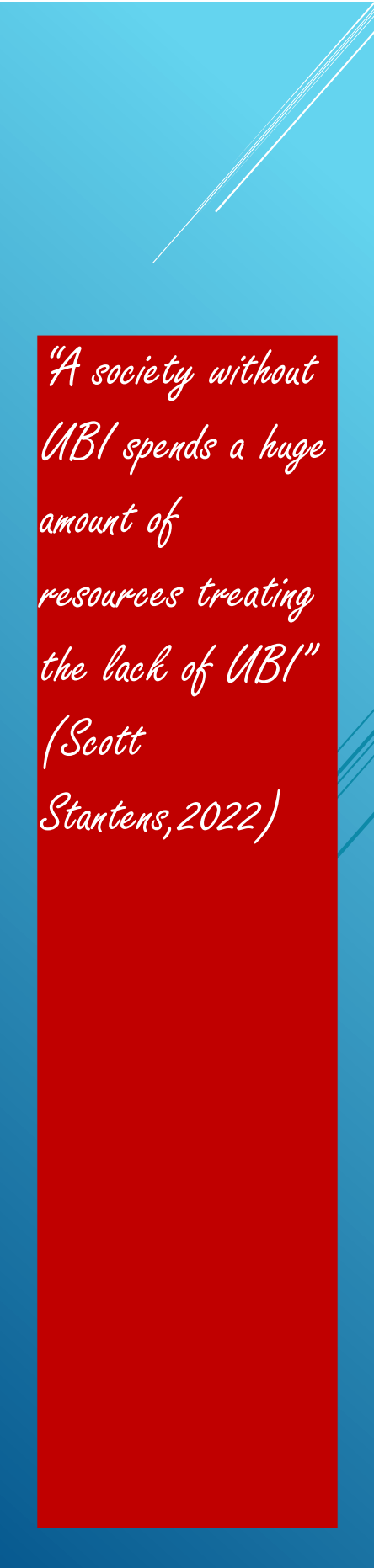
instance, a study conducted in 2015 (Eurofund, 2015) showed that potential beneficiaries from countries such as Bulgaria, Germany, Finland, Norway, Spain, and Portugal among others, did not apply for the scheme because of the social stigma attached to these programs and the loss of privacy linked to the process of application. GMIs also rest on complex bureaucratic and administrative procedures dedicated to assessing the financial, familial, and social circumstances of their applicants. This assessment is aimed at checking the resources applicants possess and their compliance with the requirements attached to the scheme. It is administratively demanding and requires both complex initial decision-making and frequent updating of benefits received and recertification of eligibility (Gentilini et al., 2020). As a result, it is common to experience delays of up to 10 to 12 months until the recipient starts receiving the first payment (Malgesini, 2017). Moreover, an attendant repercussion of this complex administrative process is the potential risk of intrusion into applicants' lives as well as the compromising position these places them by having administrators passing



*Unlike GMI the Universal Basic Income (UBI) is rights-based. UBI challenges the foundations of poverty by eliminating it.*

judgment on the way they live (Haag & Rohregger, 2019).

The reliance on an individualised route map to inclusion reinforces deficit assumptions about the GMI recipients and encourages a culture of ‘poverty porn’: ‘Poverty porn produces a symbolic divide between the ‘worker’ and the ‘loafer’ and encourages viewers to scorn the lifestyles of those featured in the programs. Structural inequalities stemming from deindustrialisation and the precarity of the contemporary labour market are obscured, and instead, poverty is represented as a lifestyle choice, with benefits claimants depicted as living it up at taxpayers’ expense – further undermining welfare provisions.’ (Pattison & Warren, 2020: 16). Even with a great need for social security, especially for women, GMIs involve a valuation of, and check upon the income and individual situation of their beneficiaries, leading to the creation of a complex bureaucratic and administrative system. Furthermore, GMIs do not necessarily move their recipients above the poverty threshold and hence do not always allow them to cover their basic social needs. On the other hand, Universal



*"A society without UBI spends a huge amount of resources treating the lack of UBI"  
(Scott Stantens, 2022)*

Basic Income (UBI) challenges the foundations of poverty by eliminating it. Thus, various organisations such as Social Policy Initiative (SPI) advocate for the UBI i.e., the Basic Income Grant (BIG).

## **8. UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME (UBI)**

In contrast to the GMI the Universal Basic Income (UBI) is premised on the right to social protection catering for one from the cradle to the grave whether they are young or old migrants, people who experience discrimination due to their ethnicity, poverty, or caste, or whether they are disabled or not. According to one of its major proponents, UBI "at the least, means an amount that would enable someone to survive in extremis, in the society they live in, and it would be paid to each individual, regardless of marital, family or household status." (Standing, 2017: 8). The Social Policy Initiative (SPI) has commissioned papers by Gqubule (2022) that has modelled the employment multiplier of cash grants independent of any job scheme condition attached to a grant.

According to Raventos (2007), UBI has the following structural characteristics: it is individual as it is granted to a single person, not to a family unit. Second, it is universal, covering all citizens and it is recognised as a social right. Third, UBI is unconditional as it does not consider the situation and conditions of the person receiving the payment. Fourth, UBI is sufficient to cover basic social needs and living expenses, as its amount is fixed above the poverty threshold.

**Kenya**- an experiment was performed using a pilot study of the UBI during COVID-19. Banerjee et al, 2020, examined the effects of this experiment and contended that transfers significantly improved well-being on common measures such as hunger, sickness, and depression despite the pandemic. This finding was expropriated during the study from data collected from a household survey conducted in May to June 2020, amid the strictest phase of Kenya's lockdown to date and focused only on issues related to the pandemic. The results of the Kenya study spoke to the importance of UBI and its ability to leave

no one behind based on its universal tenant.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

COVID-19 exposed the weaknesses and gaps in existing social protection systems globally and the urgent need to address these through sustainable means and adequate ALMPs. The pandemic had a disproportionately huge negative impact on the youth, women, low-skilled workers, informal economy workers and migrants bringing to the fore the unequal playing field that these categories of people are existing in, especially regarding social protection. This study has shown that targeted, comprehensive, and sustainable policies help to some extent to cater for vulnerable employees. This can be achieved by sustainable social protection and ALMPs that are tailor-made to the specific needs of the vulnerable. In addition, many of the jobs generated during the pandemic are in the gig economy or informal workers, where they frequently lack access to social protection safety nets and benefits as regular workers (e.g., in e-commerce, the creation of digital platforms, and delivery drivers). There is

therefore a need to develop safety nets that speak to these groups of people. To ensure that no one is left behind, it is crucial to ensure that the social safety nets and social protection institutions appropriately cover these vulnerable, including migrant workers and women in the care economy, young, temporary, low-skilled, and informal workers. When deciding on policy options for extending social security, it is therefore important to consider the specificities and needs of different groups and to prioritise or adapt the various policy options accordingly.

Notably, the vulnerable are not only those that are within the confines of employment. Some societies, such as South Africa, have a high unemployment rate due to the lack of jobs. Therefore, social security measures should not be attached to one having a job. Even with some form of employment, the salary received is not always sufficient. GMI schemes utilised in some countries in Europe revealed that targeting can be a source of stigmatisation and is often not enough to cover one's basic needs. Furthermore, targeting often creates administrative barriers that hinder the

receipt of money by those that need it the most. Therefore, this study recommends the implementation of UBI. Many people are unable to receive the assistance they require as a result of a variety of factors such as stigma, lack of knowledge, system complexity etc. Hence by making assistance universal and a basic right under UBI, these issues fall away. The provision of an adequate and consistent benefit in the form of UBI ensures that everyone has the resources to meet basic standards of living, preventing poverty or destitution.

The effects of the previously highlighted pilot study in Kenya proved to be a success as it enhanced the well-being of people even amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Several English cities are eager to test it out, the Welsh Government has committed to testing it, the Scottish Government has invested in the viability of pilots, and several political parties have included UBI trials in their manifestos (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2021). As a result, SPI believes that the UBI should be any nation's first response and a constitutional right. All other social security initiatives should be built on the backbone of UBI.

- *SPI advocates for UBI as the first point of entry in the development of an effective social protection system.*
- *"SPI contends that we need to see and behold the small miracle that is UBI".*

According to Gerdin, 2022, growth starts with people, if you do not invest in people, you do not realise future gains. It is therefore imperative to view people as assets and not liabilities. Taking this into consideration countries must ensure that they shift away from a policy of mere rhetoric to actual implementation. There is, therefore, a need to look at social protection as the most effective and sustainable means of getting more and more people into the labour market and as an effective tool against socio-economic shocks and their resultant poverty. Every COVID-19 response plan and every recovery package also need to address the gender impacts of this pandemic. This means (1) including women and women's organisations at the heart of the COVID-19 response; (2) transforming the inequities of unpaid care work into a new, inclusive care economy that works for everyone; and (3) designing socio-economic plans with an intentional focus on the lives and futures of women and girls. Putting the vulnerable especially women and girls at the centre of economies will fundamentally drive better and more sustainable development outcomes for all,



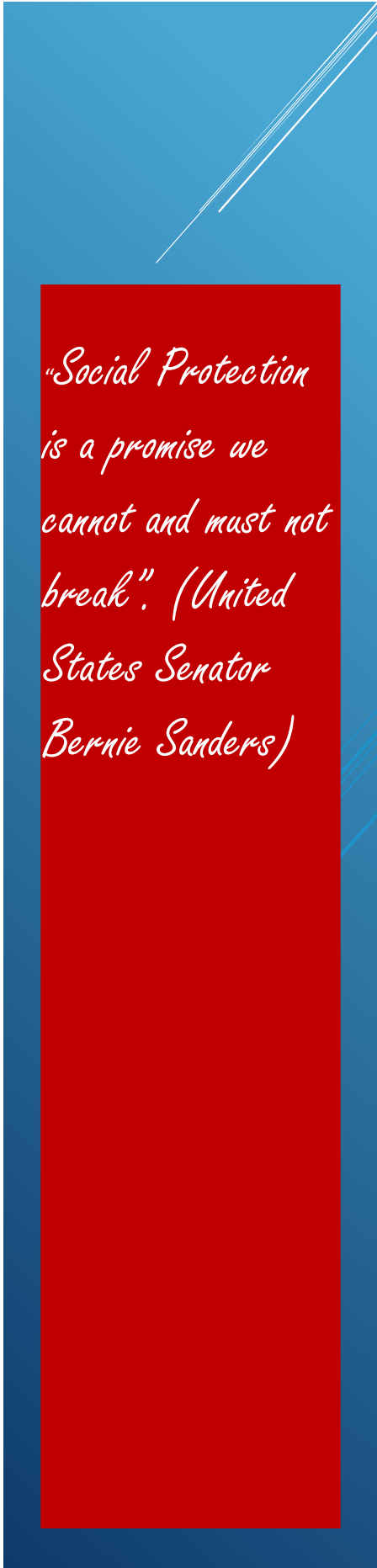
support a more rapid recovery, and place countries back on a footing to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The use of cash transfers proved to be successful in helping people in different types of employment contracts and at different levels of vulnerability deal with the socio-economic disruptions that came with COVID-19. They also proved to provide incentives and support participation in the labour market. These cash transfers should be universal to avoid administrative barriers that could hinder the receipt of a cash transfer by someone who desperately needs it. Countries need to build on this success in cash transfers to develop more comprehensive and sustainable social protection responses.

Further research is needed to inspect more countries within these specified regions, looking at social security measures implemented in each and their impacts. Because most of these measures have not yet been evaluated, knowledge about their effectiveness is still very limited. Monitoring and evaluation of these measures in conjunction with ALMPs is therefore necessary.

## 10. CONCLUDING REMARKS

COVID-19 exposed deep inequalities in countries across the world, especially in neoliberal economies, where decades of underinvestment in the social sectors left the poor and marginalised people most vulnerable to the economic hardship associated with lockdowns. It highlighted the importance of having well-functioning social services to cater to all types of workers with different employment contracts. It also exposed weaknesses and gaps, especially in terms of humanitarian relief capacities and permanent universal social protection systems. Simultaneously, COVID-19 was a wake-up call to countries across the world. It forced countries to re-evaluate their social protection systems and recognise the importance of effective functioning social protection systems. It exposed gaps in social protection systems and brought to the fore the plight of women, and those engaged in the informal economy which countries especially in Africa tended to ignore. Countries however reacted to the pandemic with a swiftness that was guided by existing policies and structures that they had in place. Post-



*"Social Protection  
is a promise we  
cannot and must not  
break". (United  
States Senator  
Bernie Sanders)*

COVID- 19 there is, therefore, a need to strengthen this response through the strengthening of support in the labour market (re-)entry stabilising of jobs and income through job retention and various other initiatives providing income support. Using case studies from Africa, the Americas, Europe, and Asia this paper has also shown that social security measures linked to ALMPs are effective. In addition, this paper has shown that UBIs should be the first response in assisting the most vulnerable populations globally with ALMPs being developed against their backdrop. Thus, countries should explore this avenue further.

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## APPENDIX A

### Global Social Protection Innovations - Post Covid

Country	Region	Program	Date	Category	Objective	Scale	Costs	Coverage
Namibia	Africa	National Employment and Salary Protection Scheme for COVID-19	May 2020-July 2021	1,4, 5		National	\$25 million	7,900 employers, 65,420 employees,
Mauritius	Africa	Government Wage Assistance Scheme (GWAS) & Self-Employed Assistance Scheme (SEAS)		1,3,5		National		
France	Europe	Solidarity Fund	-	1, 3	To prevent layoffs of 'standard workers & 'non-standard workers.	National	-	-
UK	Europe	Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)	Mar 2020 - Sept 2021	1		National	£70 billion	11.7 million jobs
Germany	Europe	Kurzarbeit	-	1		National	€35bn	-
Italy	Europe	Cura Italia Decree		5		National	-	-
Japan	Asia and the Pacific	Employment Adjustment Subsidy (EAS)	-	1, 4	Maintain employment.	National	200 billion yen per month	-
South Korea	Asia and the Pacific	Employment Retention Subsidy	-	1	Maintain employment.	National		
Tajikistan	Central Asia	Improving employment and income for Tajik migrant workers	-	2,3,4	to see the income and employment prospects for Tajik migrant workers in selected regions of Tajikistan improve			
Egypt	Arab States	Minimum Wage Adjustment		3		National		
Argentina	Americas	Boost Work Programme	2020-ongoing	1,3		National		
Jamaica	Americas	The Business Employee Support and Transfer of Cash (BEST Cash)		1		National		