

COVID 19 CRISIS

Initial overview of specific social protection measures for persons with disabilities and their families in response to COVID 19 crisis

Advanced unedited draft

May 2020

Paper prepared by the Centre for inclusive policy for the ILO and UNICEF in the frame of the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD) initiative on disability-inclusive social protection. Information provided and possible errors are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the UNPRPD, ILO or UNICEF views.



Background

Considering the inequalities and barriers faced by persons with disabilities and their families before the crisis, an inclusive social protection response and recovery is critical to mitigate their further impoverishment and marginalisation.

The COVID 19 crisis "has revealed once again the devastating consequences of systemic shocks for societies and economies in the absence of universal and adequate social protection". Exchanges between leaders of organisations of persons with disabilities from more than 40 countries" highlighted severe issues of inaccessible information and the lack of attention to specific support requirements of persons with disabilities. They reflected on the weaknesses of their national social protection systems which undermine state response capacity. The few countries which have more comprehensive social protection systems, including national disability registry, universal disability schemes and publicly-funded community support services have been in a better position to provide urgent support to persons with disabilities than countries with meager social protection systems.

Building on the UNPRPD brief on <u>Disability Inclusive Social Protection Response to COVID19 crisis</u>, this paper is a first attempt to review the type of social protection measures taken by governments to support persons with disabilities and their families. An initial review, it is primarily based on the living paper <u>"Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19: A Real-Time Review of Country Measures"</u> updated every week, with some additional data collection for few countries. This complements the ILO Social Protection Monitor Dashboard.

Update monthly, this paper will be augmented by further analysis, with country case studies, documentation of interesting practices and accompanied by thematic briefs to support stakeholders' efforts to build back better by developing sustainable, universal and inclusive social protection systems, including floors.

Inequalities and limited social protection support pre-COVID 19 crisis

Persons with disabilities which comprise 15% of the world's population, are more likely to be poor, to face catastrophic health expenditures, to have lower levels of education and economic participation^{iv}. To overcome barriers, persons with disabilities face significant disability related costs and, in most countries, their family members have to reduce or stop work to provide the required support, compensating the lack of publicly-funded services. This increases their economic insecurity and vulnerability to shocks^v. Social protection is therefore critical to reduce their vulnerability, to support their economic empowerment, inclusion and sustainable escape from poverty.

In high-income countries, while there are sometimes issues related to over reliance on institutional care, social protection systems offer a quasi-universal coverage of persons with disabilities thanks to a combination of contributory and tax financed schemes^{vi} and public spending amounting, on average, to 1.4% of GDP^{vii}. Those schemes play a vital role to compensate the impact of persistent structural barriers and discriminations. For instance, in 2018, 68.1 % of the EU population with an activity limitation would have been at risk of poverty without social protection support^{viii}.

By contrast, the coverage in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) is low with a global average of 18.5% of persons with significant disabilities accessing disability related social protection benefits, but only 1% in low income countries^{ix}. While most LMICs have contributory disability schemes^x, those only cover the small minority employed in the formal sector. Less than half of LMICs have tax financed disability specific schemes, often poverty targeted, with low coverage ad adequacy of support and very few invest more than 0.3% of GDP^{xi}.

While many countries have been developing or reforming their social protection programs and schemes to provide better support to persons with disabilities and their families, the majority remains unprotected and unsupported, especially those in the "missing middle". Such a situation limits countries' capacity to provide effective relief in the current crisis.



COVID-19 social protection responses so far

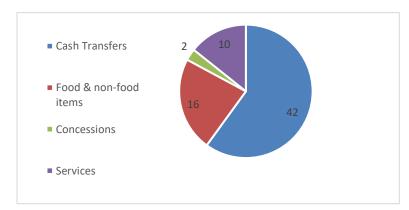
This overview refers only to the countries that have announced measures that are specifically referring to, or targeting persons with disabilities and their families. Many more countries have expanded their usual social protection programs or adopted new measures which may benefit persons with disabilities either because they live in targeted households or because they fit their eligibility criteria, irrespective of disability. Those generic measures, however, may not address disability related costs and support required.

As of 17 may 2020, of the 181 countries that have adopted social protection measures, 60 countries have specifically referred to persons with disabilities while announcing their relief measures. In 55 countries, the benefits were announced at the National level. To be noted that in federal countries, such as India, there may be wide diversity in the additional response provided by local governments.

The key measures aiming at supporting persons with disabilities have been¹:

- Enhancing income security through cash-transfers:
 - Increasing the value of the cash transfer (South Africa), advancing payment or providing extra payment (Argentina, India Australia, Bahrain, Cook Islands, Tonga, Georgia, Honk Kong, Malta, Mongolia) or providing a one off payment (Sierra Leone)
 - Ensuring continued access to disability benefits by relaxing administrative requirements (France, Kyrgyz republic, Saudi Arabia)
 - Expansion of coverage of existing programs (Rwanda, Sri Lanka)
 - Extension of paid leave for parents or family members of persons with disabilities to maintain support (Algeria, Egypt, Norway, Latvia, Romania)
- In-kind support:
 - Delivery of food and non-food items (Albania, Mauritius, Sierra Leone, several states in India, Kyrgyz republic, Kazakhstan, Jamaica, Bulgaria)
 - o Creation of helpline (Several states in India, Jordan, Morocco)
 - o Home based services (Jordan (health care), Spain, Bulgaria
 - o Exceptionally allowing use of taxi during lockdown (South Africa)
- Adaptation of delivery mechanisms to prevent risks of contamination and overcome lockdown restriction
 - Specific dates to withdraw benefits to avoid crowd (South Africa)
 - Home delivery of cash transfer (Albania, Armenia)
 - o Online registration and disability certificate (Russia)

The majority of benefits are tax-financed. Few of the announcements are related to social insurance (mostly in higher income countries) and fewer relate to labour market policy.



Cash transfer related measures are the most frequent, followed by in – kind (food and non-food items) transfers, and services. Paid sick leave or paid leave for parents or carers of persons with disabilities for the purposes of this overview are considered as cash transfer.

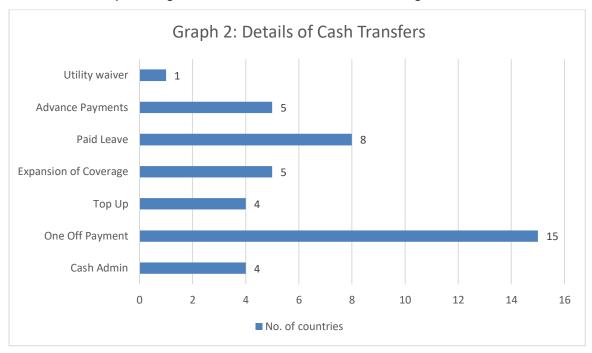
Graph 1: Nature of Social Protection Benefits for persons with disabilities (Source: Table 2, Annexure 1)

In-Kind assistance includes mostly supply of fresh food, food vouchers, and hygiene kits.



¹ Non exhaustive list of countries. Reference and details in annex 1

Services include help lines, home based care or provision of accessible information, including smartphone provided for sign language interpreters for video support. It is to be noted that there are very few announcements of public measures related to expansion of community services which has been confirmed by exchange with OPDs. There is an overreliance of governments on civil societies.



Source: Table 2, Annexure 1

Cash transfers are primarily provided through one off payments of benefits as well as greater flexibility in the process of assessment and renewal, expansion of coverage, ensuring timely transfer and advancement of the transfer. The details of one-off cash transfers provided in the table below:

One- off payment details	Nature of Transfer
Australia	AUD 700 (461\$)
India	INR 1000 transferred in 3 monthly instalments (13\$)
Tunisia	TND 200 (69\$)
Malta	Euro 800 for those who cannot telework
Hong Kong	Addl. one month's allowance
Georgia	600GEL (187\$)
Cook Islands	\$400 (245\$)
Argentina	Double cash benefit for children
France	Cash transfer to parents
Mauritania	Financial Aid for 3 months
Norway	Child care allowance
China	Increased subsidy
Greece	Extension of benefits without assessments
Bahrain	doubled during April
Bolivia	Expansion (not clear)
Mongolia	Additional transfer for next 5 months

Source: Table 2, Annexure 1



Annexure 1

Table 2: Showing Details of Countries and their SP measures

Country	National	Financing	Type of intervention	Comment
Albania	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	The Government is providing monthly payments (pensions, disability payments, etc.) home ^{xii} .
Albania	National	Tax Financed	In-Kind	Council of Ministers decision No. 236 date 19.3.2020 on providing home assistance to persons in need during COVID - 19 epidemic, to ensure home delivery to persons in need (elderly, disabilities, recipients of economic assistance) of food medical products and others ^{xiii} .
Algeria	National	Social Insurance	Job protection	Suspending the obligation of contribution of the national social protection funds for employees with disabilities xiv
Algeria	National	Social Insurance	Paid Leave	For women that take care of children with disabilities ^{xv}
Antigua and Barbuda	National	Tax Financed	in-Kind	The Ministry of Social Transformation is providing relief packages of food and medication to elderly living alone, persons with disabilities, and unemployed adults with children ^{xvi} .
Argentina	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Benefits doubled for March. This is for minors and others including children with disabilities (more for children with disabilities) (AUH)**vii
Argentina	National	Social Insurance	Cash Transfer	Paid leave for adults over 60 years, pregnant women and people with health conditions that present a risk (until quarantine declaration 3/20 when the leave was extended to all the workers who are not in the excepted sectors: health, production distribution and sale of food and hygiene items and pharmacy among others)xviii
Armenia	National	Tax Financed	In-Kind	One and three food and hygiene packages for elderly people living alone and persons with disabilities (1400 citizens). MLSA is planning for provision of food and other protective measures for those who are 50+ years old and persons with disabilities for 2 months ^{xix}
Armenia	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Payment providers deliver payment at home and all soon to expired entitlements are extended ^{xx} .



Australia	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	An extra payment (one-time payment of AUD 750 / person) as part of COVID response. One of the eligibility criteria is that the person is already receiving another benefit out of a specific list (including basic government pension and allowances). This includes disability benefit ^{xxi} .
Australia	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	One off payment of 750 AU\$ for persons receiving the disability allowance or carer allowance
Azerbaijan	National	Not Clear	Utility waiver	Payment of tuition fees to the following categories: - recipients of targeted State social assistance, - where both the parents (if there is a single parent, the same person) or legal representative belong to any of the following categories: persons with I and II degree disabilities, those registered as unemployed, labour pensioners by age or recipients of age related social benefits xxii
Bahamas	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Persons with disabilities under the age of 16 who normally receive their services every two months, had their April assistance advanced to them in the month of March to facilitate whatever preparations they needed to make. Similar arrangements were also made for persons receiving foster care subsistence***
Bahrain	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Social security benefits for 17,000 families, to be distributed in mid-April, were doubled, as were disability pensions for 12,000 individuals. A Budget of BD 5.5 million was allocated for this purpose ^{xxiv}
Barbados	National	Tax Financed	in-Kind	The Government has distribute 4000 care packages comprising of 14 days' supply of basic food and sanitary items to vulnerable groups such as elderly, the disabled and impoverished in the community identified by social service agencies including national assistance board, the National disabilities Unit, Barbados council for the disabled, the welfare department, salvation army, Prison fellowshipxxx
Belarus	National	Tax Financed	in-Kind	On April 6, 2020, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection informed that the social services are ready to provide support to elderly people and people with disabilities and to deliver foods and medicines ^{xxvi} .
Bolivia	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	BCF is expected to indirectly and directly cover 23.9 percent of the population and the transfer amount is Bs \$ 400. By design, it mostly reaches the elderly (86.2 percent of the population 65 years or older), but also pregnant women, mothers of children below 2 years old, and people with disabilities accessing subsidies ^{xxvii}
Brazil	National	Social Pensions	Cash Transfer	The 13th salary for retirees, salary bonus allowances and benefits for people with disabilities as well as sickness benefits will be anticipated xxviii



British Virgin Island	National	Tax Financed	in-Kind	Assistance with food supplies delivered to 800 families' homes during the 24th curfew period jointly organised by the social development department, BVI Red Cross and the family support network. It prioritises the needs of the most vulnerable, including elderly, persons with chronic illnesses and with children first, then unemployed and those with reduced incomes ^{xxix} .
Bulgaria	National	Tax Financed	In-Kind	Expanding the coverage and scope of the home visiting services provided to elderly people and other vulnerable groups (people with disabilities), including the delivery of food and medicines ^{xxx}
Bulgaria	National	Tax Financed	In-Kind	Expanding the coverage and scope of in-kind support for the elderly, people with disabilities, and people living under the poverty line. The support includes individual food packages and hot meals
Bulgaria	National	Social Insurance	Cash Transfer	The disability certificates that are due for renewal will be renewed automatically during the period of emergency and 2 months after that allowing access to Pension ^{xxxi}
China	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Under the head guaranteeing the basic life of people in difficulty, the government mandating all allowances to be paid on time fully. This includes allowances to allowances to severely disabled persons and nursing allowance. In areas where the epidemic situation is serious subsidies will be increased appropriately. Also, there is a mention of request for care services by persons with disabilities xxxii.
Cook Islands	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	One Off Payment to be paid on top of the current welfare payment next fortnight in the amount \$400.00 per beneficiary. This one-off support is to assist the most vulnerable as they are not only at health risk from the COVID19 but also likely to be exposed to its economic impact. The cash is only available to those who are currently on the welfare list of infirm, destitute and pensioners*
Costa Rica	National	Not Clear	Service	Identification of persons with disabilities as vulnerable groups, provision of accessible information, services, complaint redressal, 900 most vulnerable will be given hygiene packagexxxiv
Cyprus		Not Clear	Cash Transfer	A special leave will be granted up to 4 weeks to a parent with a salary of up to € 2,500 (for the first € 1,000 of the special leave amounts to 60% of the salary and for the subsequent € 1,000 of the salary the special leave will be paid in an amount equal to 40%). The leave will be granted to one of the two parents. This permit applies to the parents of people with disabilities (regardless of age), provided that no care allowance is granted for such persons ^{xxxv} .



Egypte	National	Tax Financed	service	Support for centre of isolation dedicated to persons with disabilities xxxvi
Egypte	National	Not Clear	Paid leave	For mothers of persons with disabilities (according to information at least in the public administration)xxxvii.
Fiji	National	Labor Market Policy	Concession	Deductions for businesses employing Fijians living with disabilities for three consecutive years will increase from 300 to 400 per centxxxviii.
France	Not Clear	Not Clear	Cash Transfer	Self-employed parents who need to stay home to take care of a children under the age of 16 or children with disabilities under the age of 18 in a specialized establishment are entitled to a daily compensation daily from the 1st day offxxxix
Georgia	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	One off cash transfer in six months, 600 GEL in assistance will be given to - persons with severe disabilities and children with disabilities. About 40000 citizens will benefit and 25 million GEL will be spent in assistance ^{xl}
Greece	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Three-month extension of disability benefits and disability pensions of people who would be assessed by the end of March ^{xli}
Hongkong	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	An extra 1-month allowance is planned for CSSA payment, Old Age Allowance, Old Age Living Allowance, or Disability Allowance
India	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Pension (NSAP) - Ex gratia of INR1000 paid in 3 months ^{xliii} .
India	Sub National	Tax Financed	In-Kind	Kerala: Hot cooked food delivered to every household. Community kitchens are set up. This is inclusive of persons with disabilities and find a specific mention xliv
India	Sub National		Cash Transfer	Kerala: The announcement stated INR 8500 pension have been paid. (But the actual Pension in Kerala is INR 1100 / month) No mention of this being one off ^{xlv} .
India	Sub National	Tax Financed	In-Kind	Tamil Nadu: Supply of provisions and milk. This done based on the requests through helplines delivered by Volunteers. This is a specific service to persons with disabilities**
India	Sub National		Services	Tamil Nadu: On request through helpline - set up by Government - rehab services are provided by guiding parents orally online or through network of therapists ^{xlvii}
India	Sub National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Tamil Nadu: Maintenance allowance to existing beneficiaries ("persons with mental retardation, severely disabled people, those affected by muscular dystrophy and leprosy affected persons") bank transfer advancing 2 months paymentxiviii



India	Sub National	Tax Financed	In-Kind	Delhi: Provisions distributed through the Public Distribution system with ration cards. This announcement is inclusive of persons with disabilities with a specific reference ^{xlix}
India	Sub National		Cash Transfer	Delhi: Direct bank transfer. Advance payment of 2 months Pension (actually pension is Rs.1500/ month usually. The announcement is advancing 2 months pension. however, there is a mention of 5000 - no clarity)
India	Sub National	Tax Financed	In-Kind	Uttar Pradesh: Rations will be distributed through public distribution system. This is inclusive of persons with disabilities and finds a specific mention
India	Sub National	Tax Financed	In-Kind	Himachal Pradesh: Provisions will be distributed through public distribution system with ration cards ⁱⁱ
India	Sub National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Himachal Pradesh: The first quarter pension will be paid in advance within a fortnight from the date of announcement. This is a direct bank transfer
India	Sub National		Services	Maharashtra: Helpline for to address mental health crisis ^{III}
Italy	National	Not Clear	Cash Transfer	Extended parental leave benefit with children with disabilities up to 15 days / month iii
Jamaica	National	Tax Financed	in-Kind	The Ministry of Labour and Social Security through its Central Foods Warehouse is delivering relief packages (food and other relief items) to persons in quarantine, elderly, parents of children with disabilities enrolled in the Early Stimulation Program ^{liv}
Jordan	National	Tax Financed	service	Creation of hotline including video calls: Answering medical request , victims of violence's, in-kind support request ^{lv}
Jordan	National	Tax Financed	service	In home medical care and providing support persons to persons with disabilities leaving alone
Jordan	National	Tax Financed	in-Kind	Smartphones for sign language interpreters
Kazakhstan	National	Tax Financed	In-Kind	Free grocery packages are planned for large families with children, persons with disability and other vulnerable families vi
Kuwait	National	Tax Financed	service	Support service at distance for families: trainings and advice to family through mobile apps ^{ivii}
Kyrgyz Republic	National	Tax Financed	In-Kind	Provision of food kit/set to supplement low income families with children and children and adults with disabilities. In Bishkek city, Municipal Territorial Departments together with economic entities and shopping centres delivered food to 60 large, disabled and low-income families in the territory of the Municipal Territorial Administration (Viii)



Kyrgyz Republic	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer (Admin)	Low-income families with children do not need to report on their income and visit district social protection offices. Categorical cash transfer to persons with disabilities [children and adults] will be prolonged automatically if their term finishes in time of quarantine ^{lix}
Latvia	National	Not Clear	Cash Transfer (leave)	Paid sick leave for parents in case of care for quarantined children with disabilities below 18 years of age lx
Malaysia	National	Tax Financed	In-Kind	The Government will allocate RM25 million (around US\$6 million) to be channelled to vulnerable groups including the elderly and children in shelters, the disabled, and the homeless. The Government will work with NGOs and social entrepreneurs to distribute food, medical care equipment and shelter ^{xi} .
Malta	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Persons with disabilities who have to stay at home due to health concerns that may arise as a consequence of COVID-19 and cannot telework will be entitled to a benefit of €800 per month for a specified period (€500 per month for part-timers) xii
Mauritania	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	The allocation of 5 billion ouguiya to support 30 thousand dependent families by women, the elderly and people with disabilities, most of which are in Nouakchott, with a monthly financial aid for three months ^{lxiii}
Mauritania	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Dependant families by women, elderly and persons with disabilities (5 billion ouguiya)
Mauritius	National	Tax Financed	In-Kind	Thirty-five thousand food packs distributed to citizens who receive the Carers' Allowance, as well as residents of Homes and the disabled lxiv
Mexico	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Advance payment of non-contributory disability pension (for 4 months at once instead of 2) by 4 months lxv
Mongolia	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Around 32.6 thousand people, including 3.6 thousand senior citizens who are not entitled to pension benefits, 42.5 thousand citizens with disabilities, 16.5 thousand orphaned or half-orphaned children and single parents will receive additional MNT 100,000 in the next five months until October 1, totalling their monthly allowance to MNT 280,000 lxvi
Morrocco	National	Tax Financed	service	Support service at distance for families: hotline for advising and guiding families of persons with down-syndromes ^{lxvii}
Morrocco	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Financial support: disability as one of the criteria
Norway	National	Social Insurance	paid leave	Single caregivers and parents of children with chronical diseases have an extended number of days of childcare allowance lxviii.
Peru	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Advancing the bi-monthly payments grouping populations that are in high risk of corona virus such as old people, persons with severe disabilities kix



Romania	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Workers caring for people with severe disabilities may also claim for paid days of \mathbf{f}^{lxx}
Russia	National	Social Insurance	Cash Transfer (Admin)	Remote issuance and registration of electronic disability certificate lxxi
Rwanda	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Expansion in coverage of Direct support unconditional cash transfers to additional families with old age, disability and critical illness as part of COVID-19 responselxxiii
Saudia arabia	National	Not Clear	Cash Transfer (Admin)	Suspend the medical visits related to the renewal of disability certificate until the end of Covid crisis lxxiii
Sierra Leone	National	Tax Financed	In-Kind and Cash transfer	On 4 April, the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Anti-Corruption Commission, and the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, distributed 25 kg bags of rice, 250,000 leones (\$25.77), Veronica buckets, and others items to people with disabilities in district headquarter towns. This support reached 1,891 individual and group beneficiaries. Outreach to people with disabilities is now continuing, and the Government expects to reach approximately 10,000 PWD (500 per district and 2,500 in the Western Area), for a cost of 4 billion leones.231
South Africa	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Advancing payment of social grant for old people and persons with disabilities with an increment in the grant
South Africa	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Early payment of disability grants and old age pension to minimize risk of contamination at payment points and transportation facilitation
South Africa	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Increase of disability grant to 1810 ZAD lxxv
South Africa	National	Tax Financed	Services	Flexible taxi hours for holder of disability card lxxvi
South Africa	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Other social grants – including the Old Age Grant (or pension) and the Disability Grant – will be increased by R250 per month from May to October;
South Sudan	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	The South Sudan Safety Net Project will expand access to safety net and provide income security for low income south Sudanese, while strengthening delivery tools and local capacities. Nearly 430000 people will receive cash transfer in 10 countries across South Sudan, including Juba. Specifically, the project will provide cash transfers to the poorest and vulnerable people for working on public works projects. It will provide direct grants to those who are unable to work, including people with disabilities, the elderly and pregnant or breast-feeding women among others ^{lxxvii} .



Spain	Both Central And Local	Tax Financed	Service	For home care services and distance caregiving for dependents, both elderly, and people with disability; support and care services for homeless people; funds for minimum income schemes; caregiver assistance for families (especially, for single-parent families) ^{lxxviii}
Sri Lanka	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Payment of LKR 5000 for 84,071 people who are the recipients of the disability allowance and for 35,229 people who have been identified as people with disabilities and are in the waiting list ^{lxxix}
St. Marten	National	Not Clear	Service	Provision of psychosocial care has been expanded ^{lxxx}
Tonga	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Top up of TOP 100 made to Elderly Benefit and Disability Benefit in April 2020, in addition to regular benefit
Trinidad and Tobago	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	3 months top up for food card, public assistance and disability assistance beneficiaries / month for 3 months lxxxii
Tunisia	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Additional financial support of 200 Dt for foster families that have children with disabilities which in regular time receive 200Dt (200dt+200dt) (400DT=145USD in 9/04/2020) lxxxiii
Turkey	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	Social Assistance for the elderly and disabled will be made for three months without seeking income criteria and severe disability xxxiv
Ukraine	National	Tax Financed	Cash Transfer	A one-off payment to the current beneficiaries of child disability payments boxes
Ukraine	National	Social Insurance	Cash Transfer	Slight increase in pensions for pensioners with incomes below the threshold UAH 5000, or \$ 180; it is also considered to extend this measure to children with disabilities lxxxvi
Uzbekistan	National	Tax Financed	In-Kind	Disposable facial masks, antiseptic sanitizers and antibacterial soap have been added to a list of 18 essentials foodstuffs and hygiene products provided to beneficiaries of regular goods baskets. Eligible populations include the elderly (men over 60 years and women over 55) and people with disabilities (groups 1 and II) who need outside care, do not have children (except for minors or people with disabilities), spouses and parents (with the exception of the elderly or disabled), or guardians, trustees, or persons entrusted by the court to provide care



END NOTES

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