



# Key Decisions for COVID-19 Social Protection in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

The expansion of social protection programs has an important role to play in pandemic response. Cash transfers are an especially promising avenue, as they are effective at improving a number of development outcomes. These include raising individuals' incomes and asset ownership, improving their nutritional status and mental health, and lowering their risk of experiencing illness or intimate partner violence (IPV). Digital payments can offer the opportunity to distribute cash transfers in a manner compliant with social distancing.

How should policymakers decide what type of support to provide to vulnerable citizens during the pandemic, and which individuals should benefit? This policy brief outlines four key decisions in social protection program design. These choices relate to topics like determining

funding requirements, selecting beneficiaries, and deciding whether beneficiaries should receive cash payments, digital payments, or in-kind transfers of food or other goods.

Evidence can help to guide these decisions. This brief shares the latest evidence on these topics, as well as ongoing studies which are examining social protection in the time of COVID-19 at [IPA's Research for Effective COVID-19 Responses \(RECOVR\) hub](#). It also identifies important areas for future research on this topic.

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