For each country, the analysis considers programs that were operating as of March 2017. However, because data on beneficiaries or spending are not systematically available for all programs for 2016 and because there is year-on-year variation, the report’s estimates are based on data over a few years. The following rule is applied. The reference year for each country is defined as the most recent year for which there are data on any programs; for example, the most recent data for Mauritania are for 2016, for one program. Then, the most recent data are considered for each program going back a maximum of three years before a country’s reference year; thus, in the case of Mauritania, data are included for 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016. So, if a program was operating in March 2017, but only produced information older than this (the reference year, plus three previous years), then this program was not included. Also, any data that predate 2010 are systematically excluded to avoid using severely outdated information.

Throughout the report, each country is given equal weight, irrespective of its size, when estimating averages for groups of countries, except where explicitly specified (appendix G, table G.6). The results are therefore not population-weighted.

The main source of information for estimating the number of beneficiaries and spending is the ASPIRE administrative database (see Data Sources).

### B.1 Methodology to Estimate the Number of Programs

The number of social safety net programs for each country is estimated as the number of programs or their components if separated (data presented in appendix E, table E.1). For instance, the Tanzania Productive Social Safety Net (PSSN) is counted as three programs, since it has three distinct components: conditional cash transfer, public works, and livelihood enhancement.
When estimating the average number of social safety net programs for country groups, each country is given an equal weight (data presented in appendix E, table E.2). When a country has no data for a particular category of program, it is assumed that the country has no programs in that category.

When estimating the share of different types of social safety net programs for country groups, the share for a group is the average of the shares of all countries belonging to each country group, giving equal weight to each country (presented in appendix E, table E.3).

B.2 Methodology to Estimate the Number of Beneficiaries

The number of beneficiaries from social safety net programs is derived from the ASPIRE administrative database and is based on program administrative data (box B.1).

In the ASPIRE database, the number of beneficiaries is reported either as the number of households or the number of individuals, depending on the nature of each program. One important aspect that has bearing on measuring the number of beneficiaries is the distinction between direct and indirect beneficiaries. Depending on a program’s target group, its direct beneficiary may be an individual or a household. For some of the programs that provide benefits to individuals, however, the report considers other household members as indirect beneficiaries if the benefit is expected to be shared within the household. In other programs, the benefit is not expected to be shared more broadly, and no indirect beneficiaries are assumed.

In presenting information on the number of beneficiaries, this report considers both direct and indirect beneficiaries for cash transfers, public works, food distribution, emergency programs, and other programs, but only direct beneficiaries for old-age pensions, school feeding, education fee waivers and scholarships, and health fee waivers.

Within the first group of programs, administrative data typically report both the direct and the indirect beneficiaries for food distribution programs, emergency interventions, and other programs (that is, the number reported is the total number of people in beneficiary households), and typically report only the number of direct beneficiaries for cash transfer programs and public works programs. So, in the case of estimates of the total number of beneficiaries, or coverage, the number of direct beneficiaries of cash transfer and public works programs is multiplied by the average household size in the country to obtain estimates of the number of direct and indirect beneficiaries. If multiple individuals are beneficiaries within a single household, this will result in an overestimation of the number of total beneficiaries because the method will count household members multiple times.
The Challenges in Measuring Social Safety Net Coverage in Africa

To measure program coverage in terms of the number of beneficiaries, there are two potential data sources that can be used: administrative data from programs and household survey data (such as national budget surveys or other surveys that collect socioeconomic data and identify program participation). There are advantages and disadvantages to these sources.

Typically, administrative data are regularly collected, whereas household surveys do not exist annually, may not be available for recent years, and may not collect data on specific program participation, in the survey questionnaires.

Administrative data are usually program-specific within a country because most countries do not maintain a single database on beneficiaries of all programs. Double counting will therefore occur if beneficiaries benefit from multiple programs. This will result in overestimation of the total number of beneficiaries. By contrast, household surveys provide information for each household on the set of programs considered in the survey questionnaire, which allows one to avoid double counting in estimating coverage.

Household surveys include information on socioeconomic characteristics, thereby allowing one to profile beneficiaries, whereas administrative data offer only basic details on beneficiaries. Surveys also provide information on nonbeneficiaries, which can supply information on errors of exclusion.

Household surveys in the region are typically too small in terms of sample size, and too clustered in sample design, to be accurate at representing small programs. Thus, these surveys can, at best, provide accurate information only about larger programs that have broad geographic coverage.

Because of these differences, these two sources often do not produce similar estimates of the number of beneficiaries in a given country. The shortcomings in the household surveys, together with the low frequency of survey data collection in many countries in Africa, limit the ability of household survey data to report on the number of beneficiaries or assess the precision of targeting, except in a few countries, such as Ethiopia and South Africa.

As a result, in this report, administrative data are preferred as the main source for the estimates of the number of beneficiaries. Household surveys are only sometimes used in selected countries, and their use is noted explicitly in such cases.

Because of the data limitations discussed above, country-level estimates of the number of beneficiaries for a given program type will be overestimated if beneficiaries receive benefits through more than one program of the same type. In the presentation of information on the overall number of beneficiaries of social safety net programs, the number of beneficiaries of cash transfers,
food-based transfers, and public works programs only are summed. Beneficiaries of the other six program types—old-age social pension, school feeding, emergency, health fee waivers, education fee waivers, and other programs—are not included because they are more likely to overlap with the beneficiaries of the three selected types of programs and would likely result in large overestimates of coverage.

### B.3 Methodology to Estimate Coverage Rates

In presenting coverage rates by program type, the report relies on different population groups as denominators.

For overall coverage and cash transfers, public works, food distribution, health fee waivers, and other programs, the total population is used as a denominator. For old-age social pensions, school feeding, and educational fee waivers and scholarships, the following age groups are used as denominators: (1) the program’s age-eligibility criteria for old-age social pension programs (Botswana 65, Cabo Verde 60, Kenya 65, Lesotho 70, Mauritius 60, Namibia 60, Nigeria 65, São Tomé and Príncipe 60, Seychelles 63, South Africa 60, Swaziland 60, and Uganda 65), (2) the population of 5- to 14-year-olds for school feeding programs, and (3) the population of 15- to 24-year-olds for educational fee waivers and scholarships. However, specific country programs included in each category may not precisely follow these target groups. For instance, individuals below the required age may benefit from social pensions on other grounds, or a 16-year-old might benefit from school feeding. As a result, coverage will be overestimated.

In the estimates of coverage rates using the categorization by life cycle, the following population groups are used as denominators: (1) 0- to 14-year-olds for programs for children, (2) 15- to 64-year-olds for programs for the working-age population, (3) 65-year-olds or older people for programs for the elderly; and (4) the entire population for programs for families, households, or special groups. For the estimates of coverage rates using the categorizations by the nature of benefits or by the targeting method, the total population is used as the denominator.

Coverage rates for different program types are calculated by summing the number of beneficiaries for all programs within the category of interest. This method could overestimate coverage if there are beneficiaries who receive benefits from more than one program in the same category.

The overall coverage rate for social safety nets (presented in overview: figure O.5, chapter 1: figure 1.9; and appendix F, table F.1) is approximated by summing up the number of direct and indirect beneficiaries of cash transfers, food-based transfers, and public works programs only. The beneficiaries of the other six program types (old-age social pensions, school feeding, emergency, health and education fee waivers, and other programs) are not included because the
beneficiaries of these programs are more likely to overlap with the beneficiaries of the other programs, which would result in overestimated coverage rates.

In the estimates of coverage rates, 2016 population data are used in the presentations of data for multiple countries, and population data are used for each year in presenting trends for a specific country.

When estimating the coverage rate of different types of social safety nets for country groups, the coverage for a group is the average of the coverage rates for all countries belonging to each country group, giving equal weight to each country (presented in chapter 1: figure 1.5, 1.6; and appendix F, table F.2). When no data are available for a category of program for a country, we assume that country has zero coverage in that category.

**B.4 Methodology to Estimate Spending on Social Safety Nets**

The amount spent on social safety nets is derived from program-level administrative data in the ASPIRE database. This typically includes spending on benefits, as well as on administrative costs. There is no differentiation by the source of the funding (whether development partner funds or government revenues). Data on spending are converted to U.S. PPP dollars (at constant 2011 prices) to allow for cross-program and cross-country comparisons. Overall social safety net spending for a country is measured by summing up the program-level amounts for all active programs. When spending is presented as a share of GDP, the information is expressed in terms of the GDP in 2015 (presented in chapter 1: figure 1.11; and appendix G, tables G.1 and G.2).

When estimating social safety net spending (as percentage of GDP) for country groups, spending (as percentage of GDP) for a group is the average of the spending (as percentage of GDP) for all countries in each country group, giving equal weight to each country (presented in the overview: figure O.12; in chapter 1: figure 1.12; in chapter 5: figure 5.1; and appendix G, table G.3). When no data are available for a category of program for a country, we assume that country has zero spending in that category.

When estimating the distribution of spending on social safety net programs across categories for country groups, the share of each category for a group is the average of the share of that category for all countries in each country group, giving equal weight to each country (presented in appendix G, table G.5). When no data are available for a category of program for a country, we assume that country has zero spending in that category.

In the section on spending, we also present an additional table which brings together all the resources deployed by all countries belonging to a particular country group (for instance, for the group “fragile,” all the spending in dollars
incurred in the 18 fragile countries is summed). Table G.6 presents the
distribution of all these aggregated resources across program categories—
showing, for instance, that 27 percent of all the safety net spending incurred in
all countries of Central Africa is devoted to cash transfer programs. In this
report, these numbers are used in overview: figure O.4 and O.10; in chapter 1:
figure 1.4; in chapter 3: figures 3.4 and 3.5; and in chapter 4: figure 4.3.