

**WORKING PAPER**

**EXPANDING SOCIAL PROTECTION  
FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND  
FAMILIES: LEARNING FROM AN  
INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

Prepared by:  
Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) on Children and HIV  
and AIDS: Working Group on Social Protection

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*Expanding Social Protection for Vulnerable Children and Families: Learning from an Institutional Perspective*

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This is a working document. The Better Care Network is a joint initiative of CARE, UNICEF, USAID Displaced Children's and Orphans Fund, and Save the Children UK that brings together organisations and individuals concerned about children without adequate family care. Contact details for questions and comments: Aaron Greenberg, [agreenberg@unicef.org](mailto:agreenberg@unicef.org).

# Expanding Social Protection for Vulnerable Children and Families: Learning from an Institutional Perspective

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<sup>1</sup> The Better Care Network is a joint initiative of CARE, UNICEF, USAID Displaced Children's and Orphans Fund, and Save the Children UK that brings together organisations and individuals concerned about children without adequate family care. Contact details for questions and comments: Aaron Greenberg, [agreenberg@unicef.org](mailto:agreenberg@unicef.org).

## Table of Contents

<b>I. Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Social Protection .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Lessons Learned and Future Priorities .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>II. Background .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Purpose.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Methodology.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>III. Learning From Country Experience .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>A. Ghana .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>B. Malawi .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>C. South Africa.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>D. Uganda .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>E. Zambia .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>F. Ukraine .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>G. Brazil .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>H. Chile .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>IV. Emerging Lessons Learned from Country Experience.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>V. Priorities for Future Policy Dialogue and Research .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>ANNEX: Country Examples.....</b>	<b>30</b>

# EXPANDING SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES: LEARNING FROM AN INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Social protection, including social transfers and social services for the most vulnerable and marginalized, is gaining momentum as a development priority<sup>2</sup>. Increased attention from governments, NGOs, academic institutes and donors is being accompanied by new calls to strengthen national Governments to coordinate, regulate, and in some cases implement social protection programmes at scale. In order to take up this role, there is increased recognition of the need to strategically locate social protection leadership with the appropriate Government ministry to maximize effectiveness<sup>3</sup>. However, there remains debate about which ministry is best placed to move the social protection agenda forward, given cross cutting implications for numerous Government structures and departments. Despite this recognition and debate, there has been little documentation of lessons learned from strengthening lead ministries; discussions at national levels about the location of leadership, coordination and other key functions; and the drivers of change leading to successful expansion of social protection programming.

The IATT Social Protection Working Group undertook a review of these experiences and debates in selected countries that either have established national social protection programmes or are in the process of developing them. The review aims to shed light on the institutional dynamics of expanding social protection with the goal of informing current and future efforts. Ensuring benefits for children was a particular focus, in light of their lack of access to social protection and their heightened vulnerability to the long-term consequences of poverty. Countries reviewed include Ghana, Malawi, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, Ukraine, Brazil, and Chile.

### **Social Protection**

The most commonly used conceptual framework for social protection is articulated by the Institute for Development Studies, UK (IDS).

*“Social protection describes all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalised; with the objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups. Social Protection: How Important are the National Plans of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children?”<sup>4</sup>*

This paper uses the term *child sensitive social protection* to convey the range of economic and non-economic social protection interventions that need to be strengthened if the most vulnerable children and families are to benefit. These include (but are not limited to) cash transfers, social work, early childhood development centres and alternative care.

Evidence has shown that the risk of exploitation, abuse and neglect can increase for children the further removed they are from their biological family. Children outside of family care altogether are arguably at

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<sup>2</sup> Devereux, 2004; Conway et al., 2000.

<sup>3</sup> African Union and Government of Zambia, 2006; Conway et al., 2000; Green, 2005; Howell, 2001; de Neubourg, 2002; Chemerys et al., 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Sabates-Wheeler and Pelham, 2006.

highest risk. Extreme poverty, conflict, social exclusion, HIV and AIDS, and other health problems are driving factors behind family breakdown and separation.<sup>5</sup>

There is little doubt that interest and action on social protection is expanding.<sup>6</sup> In Latin America, systematic scale-up of nationally owned social protection systems is ongoing, especially in Brazil, Chile, and Mexico<sup>7</sup>. In Central and Eastern Europe, reform of the state social welfare system is leading to increased efforts to provide families with the support they need to stay together, while investing in alternatives to institutional care for children<sup>8</sup>. In Africa, several countries are in the process of developing national social protection policies. Many countries are also implementing pilot projects, mostly focusing on cash transfers to the poorest. South Africa has a national social protection system that is being adjusted and re-tooled. Increased evidence around the gains from investment in social protection, primarily in the areas of poverty relief and uptake in school attendance, is driving increased investment<sup>9</sup>. Although more conceptual clarity and research is needed and problems persist with programming and advocacy, national governments and donor countries are taking greater notice.

#### HIGHLIGHTS OF COUNTRY EXAMPLES

**Ghana:** A live but fragile process underway to expand social protection. High expectations for the Department of Social Welfare, where social services and cash transfer (LEAP) management are co-located. This may be an example of cash transfers serving as the thin end of a social protection wedge. Funding and technical solutions may be running ahead of high-level political commitment. Current momentum could die if key stakeholders lose interest.

**Malawi:** Increased commitment to social protection; national policy development underway. Institutional home for forthcoming social protection funding basket, a potentially powerful role, still being decided. Tension between cash transfers and other aspects of social protection, and ongoing debate about the role of cash transfer pilot within the emerging national social protection policy. Lessons on pros and cons of using HIV and AIDS funds to support cash transfer expansion without imposition of AIDS-specific targeting criteria.

**South Africa:** Institutional capacity constraints, but the Government is giving considerable attention to the institutional dynamics around social protection. Balancing and coordinating the large national cash transfers granting programme with social services is a pressing challenge. It is difficult for social workers to administer transfers as well as to provide services. This leads to overwhelming work loads and high attrition rates, which consequently undermines social service provision.

**Uganda:** National dialogue on social protection starting; forthcoming cash transfer pilot will be the first stage of programming. No discussion of equal prominence on social services. Major challenges with the lead ministry, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, despite earlier capacity strengthening efforts. Live debate underway about role of the Ministry of Finance in social protection and the cash transfer pilot.

**Zambia:** Window of opportunity to build political commitment for social protection. Complex dynamics between cash transfer pilot and national strategy development -- challenge of moving from cash transfers to comprehensive social protection as an integrated policy agenda.

<sup>5</sup> These same factors can block families and children from accessing social protection transfers and services, which often compounds the problem for those who have a right to support.

<sup>6</sup> The social protection momentum is accompanied by mandates from different sources to strengthen the capacity of the traditionally weak ministries in order to initiate, systematise, and sustain social protection. See: African Union and Government of Zambia, 2006; Conway et al., 2000; Green, 2005; Howell, 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Foxley, 2004; Lindert et al., 2007; Soares et.al., 2007; Palma and Urzúa, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Bošnjak and Stubbs, 2006; Cantwell et al., 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Pauw and Mncube, 2007.

**Ukraine:** Despite positive policy changes and pilot projects, expansion of social protection successes is slow. Progress stalled due to dissolution of Parliament, which is now resolved. Important lessons for elsewhere on de-institutionalisation of children and promotion of alternative care, which are national priorities expanding child sensitive social protection. Similar scenario as elsewhere where technical solutions and inputs are running ahead of sustained political commitment.

**Brazil:** Government recognition of the need to reduce fragmentation and duplication led to institutional changes and creation of new ministry. Programme includes formal links between cash transfers and integrated social assistance services through community based social assistance centres. Attention given to relationship between federal and municipal role including using incentives to stimulate performance and provide monitoring and evaluation data.

**Chile:** Chile Solidario's comprehensive social protection system emerged out of existing programming. Widely recognised success story based on high-level political support, broad-based participation in original design, and institutional changes between participating parts of Government to mitigate tensions. Challenges include: institutional coordination among high level agencies and municipalities, ensuring "graduation" from Programa Puente, and families' sustained exit from poverty.

## **Lessons Learned and Future Priorities**

### **Institutional dynamics of social protection expansion vary, but common themes are evident.**

Addressing institutional roles and relationships is critical for expanding social protection. In many countries, social protection is dominated by fragmented approaches with different objectives and institutional homes. Limited capacity is often used for small pilots rather than national programmes. Developing a consistent approach to institutional strengthening for social protection within and between financial organisations (such as the World Bank and the IMF), development organisations (such as USAID, DFID, and UNICEF), and national governments would be a major contribution to the lessons offered by current social protection systems.

The mandated ministries typically responsible for social protection are the weakest in Government. However, there is variation in how their role is defined where social protection is an emerging agenda.

→ Greater attention to institutional dynamics and funding for institutional strengthening is crucial for expanding child sensitive social protection. Attention should focus on the roles of and relationships between ministries responsible for social welfare and more powerful ministries, such as the Ministry of Finance and Planning.

→ Specific recommendations on institutional roles and relationships will vary, but it is critical to differentiate between Government's role as a central *implementing* body and Government's role as a central *oversight* body. Separating social protection programme implementation from policy and oversight can increase the effectiveness of cash transfer programming as well as the provision and targeting of social services.

→ There is an urgent need to reduce fragmentation and increase harmonisation in social protection programme support and delivery. Harmonised support to the social welfare sector is

especially critical to ensure capacity for coordinated social services, including family support and alternative care.

### **Comprehensive social protection is difficult to implement in practice.**

Experience indicates that most countries find it challenging to promote a truly comprehensive social protection approach. The dialogue usually focuses on a single intervention – in many cases, cash transfers to vulnerable households. Often, cash transfer programming runs parallel to the development of national social protection strategies. As in the case of South Africa, there is a risk that the enthusiasm about cash transfers detracts attention from social services and leads to lost opportunities to strengthen capacity and delivery systems. Countries that have the most success with integrated programming are moving away from narrow approaches that focus exclusively on social transfers.

On the other hand, social transfers are an important piece of social protection programming when they are promoted along with services. Evidence from countries in Eastern Europe show that cash transfers and social services need not be competitive. Cash transfer momentum can serve as the “thin end of a wedge,” making space for broader social protection programming including social services.

Coordinated multi-sectoral involvement is necessary to develop a comprehensive approach. Success depends on clear leadership, finance coordination, and donor harmonisation. Multi-sectoral engagement is less likely to succeed without a senior Government official enforcing requirements for inter-ministerial engagement and accountability.

→ To promote comprehensive social protection programming, planners need better understanding of the practical relationship between social transfers and social services, and the synergies between them. The integration of services and transfers is a key aspect of the social protection policies in Chile, Brazil and South Africa. These countries’ experiences demonstrate the importance of an integrated national plan that uses finances and resources for the poorest and most vulnerable. Experience in South Africa shows how, in practice, transfers without a dedicated system for administration have the capability to undermine social service provision.

→ Countries should take greater advantage of opportunities to use the momentum around HIV and AIDS to strengthen child sensitive social protection, and vice versa. However, caution is necessary to ensure that this type of collaboration does not lead to parallel or inappropriately targeted social protection approaches.

→ In countries where National Plans of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children have been effective in increasing action for vulnerable children, they could serve as a vehicle for promoting social protection funding and programming.

### **Political will is essential to building greater commitment to social protection.**

The lack of political commitment to long-term measures that address entrenched poverty is one of the largest impediments to the expansion of social protection. Attention to strategies to generate political commitment is insufficient, often overshadowed by technical solutions.



Ensuring the commitment of Ministries of Finance and Planning to the social protection agenda can help mainstream social protection in poverty reduction plans. With these important stakeholders, advocacy that speaks to the long-term human capital and economic growth benefits of social protection may be more effective than advocacy rooted solely in humanitarian and human rights arguments.

There are concerns that pilot projects may detract capacity and attention from building national systems. A phased approach where Governments initiate national systems in limited geographic areas using existing capacity (with an eye towards scaling up) may avoid some of the risks that small scale approaches operating outside of Government programming present.

→ It is imperative to get different parts of Government on board as the initial step in expanding social protection; this must include Ministries of Finance and Planning.

→ Starting with the best of existing social protection programming is an effective way to promote national commitment.

→ The strengths and weaknesses of pilot projects must be carefully considered; there is considerable country experience to shed light on their effectiveness in leading to expanded social protection systems.

→ There is an urgent need to strengthen the evidence base on social protection in order to support advocacy and inform planning. This should focus on impact, the role of social services, as well as institutional and political dynamics. In addition, more detailed attention to the actual structures for social work and supervision will be valuable to many people working on these issues in the field. along with an examination of grass-root difficulties.

There is a window of opportunity to ensure that lessons learned from experience are informing practice and influencing conceptual approaches to ensure that vulnerable children and families benefit from social protection.

## II. BACKGROUND

This paper is motivated by the increased attention to social protection in Malawi, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia, all settings of high HIV prevalence. This paper also explores experiences in expanding social protection in Ghana, Ukraine, Brazil and Chile. Within the context of HIV and AIDS, it is recognised that large numbers of children face the risk of losing biological and social parents. At the same time, many HIV and AIDS planners and funders are re-thinking their approaches to targeting, moving away from using HIV or AIDS as a criterion for receiving benefits towards more inclusive approaches that use broader eligibility criteria, such as poverty and household dependency ratios. There are increasing opportunities to use the momentum and financing generated by HIV and AIDS in support of all vulnerable children, including those directly affected by the illness.

*“There is a real opportunity with the growing momentum in the global response to AIDS and this could lead to effective long-term social welfare strategies building on the best of existing systems.”* Strengthening National Responses to Children Affected by HIV/AIDS: What is the Role of the State and Social Welfare in Africa?<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Green, 2005.

Social protection is not just another project. A systematic approach to expanding Government-coordinated social protection systems is necessary to sustain equitable coverage. This requires understanding key Government institutions, strengthening them, and defining their relationships to each other and to civil society. Understanding national and local institutional dynamics can help ensure that social protection systems will be locally relevant, bearing in mind that approaches will vary around some common parameters but blueprints approaches do not make sense.

## **Purpose**

This paper aims to explore two specific issues:

- What efforts are underway to strengthen institutions to deliver child sensitive social protection and what are the practical lessons from prior and ongoing efforts?
- What is the best way to build institutions to expand comprehensive social protection that benefits children, including social transfers and services?

The goal of this analysis is to begin to lay a foundation for research and policy dialogue that can inform efforts to expand social protection for the most vulnerable children and families. To this end, this paper looks specifically at Governments' duties to fulfil the rights of citizens, including rights to social security.<sup>11</sup> It builds on information gathered from DFID's London workshop on cash transfers and a research meeting convened by the Better Care Network (BCN) in November 2007, as well as the ongoing work of the Inter Agency Task Team (IATT) Working Groups on HIV and AIDS and the Joint Learning Initiative on Children and AIDS (JLICA).

This paper is not comprehensive. This paper provides valuable preliminary analysis and highlights potential questions and countries for further research. It does not address topics such as social insurance, social funds, decentralisation, or the roles of local government, NGOs or social workers. Furthermore, it includes limited input from Government representatives – this should be expanded in subsequent work.

## **Methodology**

The review is based literature analysis and interviews with key informants in international agencies and countries with relevant experience. The paper is intended for social and economic policy and programme experts working on expanding social protection; those working to strengthen Government ministries with traditional responsibility for social welfare<sup>12</sup>; and those supporting national action to mitigate the impact of AIDS on vulnerable children and families.

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<sup>11</sup> The right to "social security" is inscribed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, reflecting the concept of the time.

<sup>12</sup> Government ministries with traditional responsibility for social welfare have various titles. The Ministry of Social Welfare is the most frequently and widely recognised name, though in some countries the relevant ministry is named for "Social Development". For the sake of simplicity in this paper, the ministries most often mandated to lead national action on social protection are referred to as "ministries responsible for social welfare."

### III. LEARNING FROM COUNTRY EXPERIENCE

In order to shed light on the institutional dynamics of social protection expansion, a number of countries were identified that have developed (or are in the process of developing) national social protection programmes. Countries were selected for the review based on:

1. Availability of information, from written sources and key informants;
2. Opportunity to learn about the institutional dynamics between different parts of Governments implementing social protection activities;
3. The relationship between the delivery of social protection transfers and services; and
4. Developments from projects towards national strategies and systems.

The review focused mostly on sub-Saharan Africa, where a large number of countries are scaling up social protection and there is a rapidly increasing pool of newly vulnerable children due to AIDS. Social protection initiatives in these countries are not necessarily replicable in other countries, but they contribute to lessons learned about successful models and identify opportunities for improvement. The countries reviewed include: Ghana, Malawi, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, Ukraine, Brazil, and Chile. The main points are summarised in the body of this report. Details can be found in the Annex.

#### **A. Ghana**

*Headlines:* A live but fragile process underway to expand social protection. High expectations for the Department of Social Welfare, where social services and cash transfer (LEAP) management are co-located. This may be an example of cash transfers serving as the thin end of a social protection wedge. Funding and technical solutions may be running ahead of high-level political commitment. Current momentum could die if key stakeholders lose interest.

**Description:** The social protection strategy includes improving existing social protection interventions and monitoring to ensure the poor benefit. MMYE manages policy issues while DSW implements; DSW is currently implementing the social security programme Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP). The National Social Protection Strategy includes specific reference to the need to coordinate LEAP with other social protection programmes, and indeed while social protection is not new in Ghana, cash transfers are not politically popular. The emerging strategy, however, seems to focus largely on cash transfers.

**Rationale:** Part of what inspired the new focus on social protection was a Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (conducted in the name of an emerging Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper or PRSP), which revealed the need for a strategy to address especially vulnerable groups. This demonstrates the value of including social protection in the PRSP/Multi-Donor Direct Budget Support (MDBS) dialogue: to get political recognition from the Ministry of Finance and donors of the challenge and the need to do something serious about poverty.

**Institutional Challenges:** DSW now needs to inspire confidence that they can successfully implement LEAP and spend the allocated funds. This will help to give them a prominent role in the national strategy, as well as attracting direct funds for social protection. There is already work underway to re-invent DSW as a Department of Social Development (beyond welfare), using part of the initial LEAP funds for institutional strengthening. Part of the argument for the institutional strengthening is the need for the

capacity to manage LEAP, but also the need for action to support new legislation passed on domestic violence, trafficking, disability. There are untapped opportunities to institutionalise collaborative relationships between DWS and other sectors (Education and Health, in particular) and to make greater use of CBOs, NGOs and unit committees as a way to increase their capacity, especially at local level.

**Key points:** Ghana's experience demonstrates the potential of including social protection in the PRSP/Multi-Donor Direct Budget Support dialogue to gain recognition from the Ministry of Finance and donors. It is notable that Ghana is using LEAP money to strengthen the responsible Government department, the DSW, which may in future be an example of using cash transfer momentum to generate broader social protection benefits. Future research should explore the process of institutional strengthening (of the lead ministry and department), the balance of social protection service delivery with emerging cash transfer pilot schemes, and the interactions between LEAP and other DSW functions.

## **B. Malawi**

*Headlines:* Increased commitment to social protection; national policy development underway. Institutional home for forthcoming social protection funding basket, a potentially powerful role, still being decided. Tension between cash transfers and other aspects of social protection, and ongoing debate about the role of cash transfer pilot within the emerging national social protection policy. Lessons on pros and cons of using HIV and AIDS funds to support cash transfer expansion without imposition of AIDS-specific targeting criteria.

**Description:** The Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (EPD) is leading the development of a National Social Protection Policy, which marks a shift from safety nets to social protection. The cash transfer pilot is one of the main areas of social protection programming. It is implemented by District Assemblies Social Welfare Offices, supervised by the Ministry of Women and Child Development's (WCD) Social Cash Transfer Secretariat. They are expanding the pilot into additional districts and WCD is building capacity at district level to deliver.

Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM) funds, via the National AIDS Council (NAC), are earmarked for the expanded cash transfer pilot programme for the next 30 months. Notably, neither the NAC nor GFATM are concerned about the lack of AIDS-specific criteria in the targeting rules, as long as it is possible to prove that cash transfers impact positively on households and individuals affected by HIV and AIDS. International agencies are now trying to persuade the NAC to contribute to the forthcoming Social Protection basket fund.

**Rationale:** Social protection is increasingly viewed as a national priority due to recent events that stimulated the Government's interest in supporting responses to chronic poverty.

**Institutional Challenges:** EPD's Social Protection Division coordinates the programme, where they plan and manage the National Social Protection Steering Committee and the National Social Protection Technical Committee. Considerable work is now required to finalise the national policy and determine implementation arrangements, budgets, timelines, and risk mitigation. There are plans to develop the national social protection programme followed by the establishment of a basket fund, but there is no agreement on where management of the basket will sit - EPD, Treasury, or Local Government. For the scale up of the pilot, WCD's staff and management capacity needs to be further strengthened if the cash transfer implementation will continue through them.

**Key points:** Malawi's approach is consistent with the view of some experts that it makes sense that a dedicated cash transfer implementation unit should be separate from a social protection policy body. Despite the separation between dialogue on social protection and orphans and vulnerable children, Malawi is funding the cash transfer project with HIV and AIDS funding. It is the only country in this review that is successfully tapping into HIV and AIDS resources for social protection programming.

### **C. South Africa**

*Headlines:* Institutional capacity constraints, but the Government is giving considerable attention to the institutional dynamics around social protection. Balancing and coordinating the large national cash transfers granting programme with social services is a pressing challenge. It is difficult for social workers to administer transfers as well as to provide services. This leads to overwhelming work loads and high attrition rates, which consequently undermines social service provision.

**Description:** South Africa's national social protection programme includes grants and services, overseen by the Department of Social Development. All grants are administered at national level by the recently-established South African Social Security Agency (SASSA). Though far from perfect, the national social security system is widely viewed as important for poverty and vulnerability reduction; an estimated 25% of the population receives some sort of social assistance. Grants include pensions and disability, foster care, and child support. South Africa also includes other targeted services, such as free health care, education, and school meals; skills development services; and residential care for children, older persons, and persons with disabilities.

**Rationale:** SASSA was created to improve the delivery of the large and growing social security granting system, in part due to recognition that the huge expansion in social security was damaging social welfare service delivery; it sought to "free up" social service staff to get back to their core service-related business, such as alternative care, social work services, early childhood development, and family support to access entitlements. In the short term, the creation of SASSA has taken scarce staff away from social services, but it is anticipated that this effect will dissipate in the long-term once SASSA's capacity is sufficiently strengthened.

**Institutional Challenges:** The Department of Social Development has the primary functions of managing and overseeing social security; development of social services in partnership with State-funded institutions, NGOs, CBOs, and FBOs; development of norms and standards; monitoring implementation of policies; and overall planning and management. The Department has a new Strategic Plan Update (2007-2010) describing the challenges and plans. Not surprisingly, the main constraints to expanding the social security system relate more to delivery capacity than to budgetary constraints: fragmentation of services, insufficient institutional coherence, and a lack of social workers, social auxiliary workers, and community development practitioners. For example, one aspect of social protection that imposes an enormous workload on social workers is the foster care grants to relatives which are allocated to about 449,000 families (88% are with relatives). The process involves court orders, regular supervision, and returning to court to reapply after 2 years. Although this provision is seen as positive it is just one of social workers' many responsibilities. In addition, some social workers are leaving South Africa to take posts abroad. "The ideal environment for service delivery would be to ensure that communities

experience integrated service delivery... the Department is hard at work to ensure alignment and coordination of service delivery at two levels [within the Department and the social sector]."<sup>13</sup>

**Key Points:** South Africa is atypical in the degree to which its plans and programmes are documented and analysed, including recognition of the tradeoffs between their social security system of transfers and social services. According to the South Africa Department of Social Development Strategic Plan Update, "Despite having adopted a developmental approach to service delivery, the focus of the Department over the last decade has been predominantly on social security, to the detriment of other developmental social services. Indeed, the crowding-out effect of the social security budget has resulted in the severe curtailment and neglect of other services. Consequently, social service practitioners have been forced to adopt a 'make do' approach, dictated by resource limitations rather than need, priority or statutory and internationally ratified obligations. The neglect has had far-reaching ripple effects."<sup>14</sup>

South Africa is trying to coordinate, rationalise, and build up the appropriate capacities efficiently; they are also explicitly addressing fragmentation. In several years it should be possible to say something about the impact of the current reforms on social protection activities and outcomes targeting children and other especially vulnerable groups, as well as balancing cash transfers with social services.

## **D. Uganda**

*Headlines: National dialogue on social protection starting; forthcoming cash transfer pilot will be the first stage of programming. No discussion of equal prominence on social services. Major challenges with the lead ministry, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, despite earlier capacity strengthening efforts. Live debate underway about role of the Ministry of Finance in social protection and the cash transfer pilot.*

**Description:** The lead ministry for social protection, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), has established a broad-based National Social Protection Task Force, which successfully advocated for the inclusion of social protection in the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP, Uganda's PRSP). The PEAP includes plans to mainstream social development and social protection concerns across sectors.

**Institutional Challenges:** There is little happening, however, to actually implement PEAP social protection plans. There are a number of NGO activities, but they are largely uncoordinated. Securing the necessary resources and capacity for implementation is an enormous challenge. Government community development and social welfare officers tend to be overburdened with high turnover and insufficient capacity. MGLSD is increasingly results-oriented and professional, but they still have a poor reputation across Government – they are generally perceived as conducting business in a fragmented and ineffective manner. This has resulted in decreased Government resources, and they consistently struggle with under-funding.

**Rationale:** In 2003-2004 there was an effort to strengthen MGLSD, supported by DFID. The objective was to develop a coherent plan to use in bidding for an increased budget allocation from the Ministry of Finance. Unfortunately, the "rationale that having a sector plan would lead to an increased budget did not hold up."<sup>15</sup> The establishment of the National Social Protection Task Force chaired by the Minister

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<sup>13</sup> Republic of South Africa, 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Cathy Gaynor, Social Development Consultant. Personal communication, 2007.

with donor, NGO, and UNICEF participation helped to develop benchmarks and promote accountability, improving the performance of MGLSD.

**Key Points:** The National Social Protection Task Force is planning a cash transfer pilot in six districts, but the institutional home remains undecided: MGLSD, the Ministry of Finance, or a “joint lead.” Over the last 10 years efforts to strengthen this ministry have fallen back on advances, including previous reforms to the child care system. In addition, there are questions about the commitment of the Government to comprehensively support MGLSD, or whether they “see it as a repository for the softer/less urgent issues?”<sup>16</sup> MGLSD sees the cash transfer pilot as an opportunity to clear their reputation by demonstrating the capacity to effectively implement. The process of getting national buy-in for the pilot and determining where the leadership should sit is currently with the Cabinet. At the moment, however, there is no national dialogue of equal prominence to the cash transfer debate on the service aspects of social protection.

## **E. Zambia**

*Headlines: Window of opportunity to build political commitment for social protection. Complex dynamics between cash transfer pilot and national strategy development – challenge of moving from cash transfers to comprehensive social protection as an integrated policy agenda.*

**Description:** The Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) is the lead ministry for social protection. Their responsibilities include coordination and reporting, and implementation happens through a range of actors including the Ministry of Health and the private sector. The major strands of social protection programming are the Government’s Public Welfare Assistance Scheme (PWAS) and the cash transfer pilots in Kalomo and other districts. The Public Welfare Assistance Scheme (PWAS) provides in-kind support, including education, health, and material food and transport assistance, for destitute Zambians selected by community committees. A recent review revealed operational improvements, but also highlighted uncertainty in budget allocations and benefit disbursement leading to reductions in PWAS’ overall impact.

**Rationale:** There is a live debate on how to scale up as the country develops the National Social Protection Strategy into a programme, though the national debate focuses largely on cash transfers. Although social protection is relatively new in Zambia, a promising way to encourage Government commitment and ownership would be to build on existing Government run social protection schemes (the PWAS in this case). However, it is also important to recognise that “Government” does not always speak with a common voice; for example, views on the pilot scheme vary across Zambia’s Government.

**Institutional Challenges:** The Ministry of Finance and National Planning and MCDSS are working well together thanks to a new, committed Minister in MCDSS. Results are not yet forthcoming in all aspects of social protection. There are concerns about MCDSS’ institutional and policy-making capacity. To date, inputs have been primarily technical in nature, largely ignoring political dynamics and the need to build political commitment for social protection. Donors and cooperating partners have a plan for building stronger links between technical assistance and political commitment in 2008, but there are also concerns about donors losing interest. There is need for better coordination between the active debate around social protection, orphans and vulnerable children, and improving children’s services.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

**Key Points:** The pilot scheme is not viewed as an institutional model that is replicable on a national scale. It is a challenge to move from cash transfers to comprehensive social protection as a single policy agenda when the social sectors are handled separately, both within international agencies and Government. Social protection programming cannot make sustained progress in the absence of political will. Champions must be sufficiently senior (e.g., a Minister) and/or rapidly create peers or a consensus. In Zambia, DSW headquarters is staffed by just seven officials, with a high rate of turnover. The departure of committed individuals can undermine capacity building initiatives.

## **F. Ukraine**

*Headlines: Despite positive policy changes and pilot projects, expansion of social protection successes is slow. Progress was stalled due to dissolution of Parliament, which is now resolved. Important lessons for elsewhere on de-institutionalisation of children and promotion of alternative care, which are national priorities for expanding child sensitive social protection. Similar scenario as elsewhere where technical solutions and inputs are running ahead of sustained political commitment.*

**Description:** Ukraine has a number of public and a few NGO programmes that are described as social protection, though there is no comprehensive social protection system. Public programmes include social insurance with pensions, disabled benefits, housing subsidies, and child grants, in addition to reform of the child care system. Social services focus on specific population groups, for example, elderly or disabled people. UNICEF and the Government developed a National Action Plan on Children, which promotes more comprehensive programmes specific to children, but the plan is awaiting Presidential approval before implementation.

**Rationale:** Institutionalised children are the largest group of vulnerable children in need of social protection in Ukraine. As of 2005, legislation was passed promoting permanent families for children, including provisions for adoption, kinship care, foster care, and measures to reform child care institutions. A key element of reforms is that public financing follows children rather than institutions as in the past. Reforms have focused wholly on foster care. This is positive but not sufficient; social services geared towards family preservation need attention as well.

**Institutional Challenges:** The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is responsible for social policy at various levels including the public granting programme, while the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports is responsible for family based services. The latter brought young, motivated staff into the system and was backed by Presidential support; as a result Ukraine has a decent policy and plans on child care system reform. On the other hand, implementation has stalled due to political challenges. When the President disbanded Parliament all Government bureaucracies awaited a new Government before acting. Additional challenges stem from a lack of trained staff (especially social workers) and implementing NGOs. Finally, different ministries tend to work on social protection activities in their individual silos. For example, the Ministry of Health is only interested in their health activities and is not actively participating in integrated programmes.

**Key Points:** The direction that social protection will take depends on the new Government. Positive trends in child care reforms do not carry a great deal of momentum because they are so new. It is likely that the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports will continue to support reforms, but it is not clear that the Ministry of Finance will sustain its commitment. Public attitudes remain a challenge: there is still a perception that abandoned and underserved children are the responsibility of the Government rather



than the citizens. There is an urgent need for advocacy to combat this perception. Additionally, donors will have to transition away from supporting narrowly defined activity areas and population groups, which hinders the development of a comprehensive system.

## **G. Brazil**

*Headlines: Government recognition of the need to reduce fragmentation and duplication led to institutional changes and creation of new ministry. Programme includes formal links between cash transfers and integrated social assistance services through community based social assistance centres. Attention given to relationship between federal and municipal role including using incentives to stimulate performance and provide monitoring and evaluation data.*

**Description:** The Bolsa Familia Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme (BFP) is the largest component of Brazil's social protection system overseen by the Ministry of Social Development (MDS). A social service component links BFP beneficiaries to social assistance services for an integrated approach. BFP is one of the largest CCT programs in the world, targeting poor households with children under 15 years old and extremely poor households irrespective of composition.

**Rationale:** The President created MDS in 2004 to synchronise fragmented cash transfer programmes and coordinate a national framework for addressing poverty. MDS replaced three former Government ministries and combined CCT programmes to create BFP as an integrated programme. Donors worked with the Government to expand BFP and strengthen the new MDS. It is responsible for food and nutritional security, social assistance, and income and citizenship for populations that are vulnerable due to age, ethnicity, gender, or domestic violence.

**Institutional Challenges:** Within MDS, a unified system promotes the social assistance services component at the federal level, while municipalities serve as a local contact point for beneficiaries. To facilitate the service component, a federal fund is offered to those municipalities with social assistance centres. A subset of particularly vulnerable BFP beneficiaries is also targeted for individual accompaniment. Municipalities receive incentives for performance, through which BFP monitors and tracks performance at the local level. The challenges for expanding and improving the effectiveness of social assistance links include insufficient institutional and financing capacity for integration and the lack of clear goals and indicators to ensure linkages. Monetary incentives for municipalities to implement the BFP take into account the number of registered beneficiaries but do not track their access to or participation in social services. There is no specific period of time for beneficiaries to take advantage of the social assistance, nor are there any clearly defined goals. There are persistent supply-side deficiencies in education and health services.

**Key Points:** The Government is promoting efficiency by integrating other federal and municipal CCT programmes into BFP. By combining programmes into one system, families receive benefits of a higher monetary value than those offered by individual programmes. They also receive more comprehensive coverage. Brazil's experience illustrates the importance of building on the existing capacity of federal and municipal programmes and implementing funding, monitoring, and enforcement mechanisms. These strategies have helped to expand BFP from a single CCT programme to a social policy instrument, creating a social safety net across Government ministries and political administrations.

## H. Chile

*Headlines: Chile Solidario's comprehensive social protection system emerged out of existing programming. Widely recognised success story based on high-level political support, broad-based participation in original design, and institutional changes between participating parts of Government to mitigate tensions. Challenges include: institutional coordination among high level agencies and municipalities, ensuring "graduation" from Programa Puente, and families' sustained exit from poverty.*

**Description:** *Chile Solidario* is often cited as the best example of a comprehensive national social protection system. In 2002, the Finance Ministry's National Budget Office designed this social protection system for the poorest. The Planning Ministry, MIDEPLAN, manages the overall system. For the first 24 months, beneficiary families are enrolled in the *Programa Puente* and receive help from a social worker and decreasing amounts of money. After leaving *Programa Puente*, beneficiaries receive a bonus and are eligible for more subsidies from the State and preferential access to social assistance programmes. *Chile Solidario* includes skills development, work assistance, social security, services for vulnerable children and families such as school loans, programmes for at-risk children and domestic violence survivors, and family support visits by social workers, who play a key role in linking participants to services. Many of the services are labour-oriented, which is an inherent difference from countries where there is little formal-sector employment.

**Rationale:** With economic growth in the 1990s, the public recognised the need for aggressive social policies to create equity and improve the situation of the poor. Prior Government-led initiatives to eradicate poverty were plagued by inadequate coverage, low beneficiary participation, and fragmented pilot programmes. The promotion of *Chile Solidario* in 2002 reflected the Government's recognition that an integrated approach, including institutional reform in the public sector, was necessary.

**Institutional Challenges:** *Chile Solidario* is unique among social protection initiatives because it was designed by the Finance Ministry's Budget Office, MIDEPLAN, *El Fondo de Solidaridad e Inversión Social* (FOSIS), and Presidential advisors from local governments and NGOs. They agreed on the need for an integrated approach that would create synergies between different programmes. Ultimately, they used existing cash transfer pilots and emerging skills development strategies to create a single system. The President had the authority to implement the programme, but in order to generate awareness and support it was also approved by Congress.

There were institutional tensions between the main Government departments charged with implementing the programme, MIDEPLAN and FOSIS. These were mitigated by assigning MIDEPLAN overall administrative responsibility of *Chile Solidario* and maintaining FOSIS management of *Programa Puente* in coordination with municipalities. In the initial stages of the program there was a large political cost for mayors who did not come on board. Some mayors would prefer a direct link between national resources and municipalities without intermediary bureaucracies like FOSIS. These tensions persist.

**Key Points:** The programme is successfully reaching the poorest members of the population and having a positive impact on their awareness of and participation in social service programs, especially among families with young children. However, data are unclear on beneficiaries' ability to sustain an exit from poverty. Success factors include inter-governmental cooperation and successful linkages of beneficiaries to social services as a required, rather than recommended, outcome of the programme. *Chile Solidario* illustrates the importance of executive Government support along with cooperation across ministries. Scaling up FOSIS' pilot program and consolidating it within MIDEPLAN created tensions, but also

enforced coordination between the institutions. Finally, in addition to cash transfers, psychosocial programmes and income-generation services have demonstrated positive impacts.

#### **IV. EMERGING LESSONS LEARNED FROM COUNTRY EXPERIENCE**

The lessons learned based on the initial review relate to:

1. The varying dynamics of social protection expansion;
2. Conceptual approaches to social protection and implications for institutional arrangements;
3. Political will.

##### **A. Institutional dynamics of social protection expansion vary, but common themes are evident.**

*Addressing institutional roles and relationships is a critical strategy for expanding social protection that is frequently overlooked.*

- Different parts of Government have roles to play in expanding child sensitive social protection systems. The specific details will vary between countries. Relationships between ministries responsible for social welfare and more powerful parts of Government (e.g., Ministries of Finance, Planning, President's Office) are particularly critical. Planners need to assess existing capacity, mandate, and relationships in order to map institutions with responsibilities.
- Addressing institutional challenges can stimulate tensions between focusing on operations and dedicating capacity to fundamental, but slow, institutional reforms.
- Defining the ideal roles and responsibilities of the ministries overseeing social protection would be a major contribution to building social protection systems. There are different possibilities for situating key functions and responsibilities within Government and civil society. Optimal configurations must be agreed and disseminated. Experience indicates that the lead ministry's minimum responsibility is to establish and monitor use of regulations and guidelines. Where there is a range of actors, the lead ministry needs to monitor, inspect, license, accredit, and set service quality standards. There has been some success with Government workers contracting out supervisory functions.
- For social protection systems to be truly successful, some believe that a lean body with national standing is required for policy oversight and promoting accountability, but not implementation; this can be done by line ministries, local authorities, and NGOs. Other regions can learn from Latin America, where experience indicates that a more influential part of Government needs to be involved in coordination, monitoring, and policy oversight. A challenge is that Government departments and ministries are hesitant to give up the funding that is typically provided for implementation.
- Establishing a separate unit to administer cash transfers within a broader social protection framework may make the most sense – it is a discrete component of social protection that is highly technical in nature. This unit would require oversight by a policy-making body with senior leadership.
- Other social ministries have a key role to play. It is important to identify examples of social protection interventions underway in more “favoured” sectors, e.g., health or education, which are doing well and need to be integrated or coordinated within a national system.

- Financing for institutional capacity building is a challenge. Donor funds need to include capacity building support, even if this is separate from the resources for implementation.
- Decisions about institutional roles and relationships have human resource implications that are not consistently considered. Skilled staff follow programming, e.g.,
  - In fragile states such as Zimbabwe, where social protection is run outside of government through NGOs, civil servants may leave Government to take jobs in the NGO sector. There is a similar risk that if Government sub-contracts functions to NGOs, they may lose staff to them.
  - In the public sectors of Malawi and South Africa, staff followed social protection and social security programming when key functions changed institutional homes, reducing the capacity of key Government departments.

*Ministries responsible for social protection are generally weak within Government. However, there is variation in how their role is defined where social protection is an emerging agenda.*

- There are hierarchies of weak ministries and departments (e.g., weak and weaker); often the ministry with responsibility for children and women is even weaker than the ministry responsible for social welfare.
- In many countries, planners and donors have high hopes for the ministry responsible for social protection. Many of these ministries see the emergence of social protection in general, and cash transfers in particular, as a way to improve their reputation and promote their credibility.
- Within these ministries, human and institutional constraints are typically larger limitations than financial and technical ones. Their mandate is usually politically unpopular, which may result in weak ministers who lack ambition or motivation. Social protection is often caught in a vicious cycle – the inherent institutional weaknesses can reduce the programming effectiveness (leading to leakage and corruption) and promote fragmentation. This in turn reduces the profile, coverage, and resources for the responsible ministries and for social protection activities. Though capacity of these ministries varies immensely between regions, they consistently maintain a low profile relative to other parts of Government.<sup>17</sup>
- In view of limited capacity, some donors and governments are sidestepping the lead ministry and creating parallel systems and structures. This relegates social protection programming to stronger or more popular ministries or to NGOs, risking duplication of services.
- In countries where ministries responsible for social welfare are functioning well, there is minimal documentation about the underlying success factors.

## **B. Comprehensive social protection is difficult to implement in practice.**

*Experience suggests that most countries are not promoting a comprehensive social protection approach. Dialogue usually focuses on a single intervention.*

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<sup>17</sup> For examples, see Conway et al., 2000; Hickey, 2005.

- To maximise the benefits of social protection, programming cannot rely upon a single instrument: it must include a combination of transfers and services. Increasingly, countries are recognising that both components are essential in policies and strategies. However, in most countries with an emerging interest in expanding social protection in Africa, cash transfers dominate the national dialogue.
- Countries need to find the right balance between social services and cash transfers. There are pros and cons of expanding all components of an integrated social protection system simultaneously. Countries developing national plans should look to Chile, Brazil, and South Africa for lessons on balancing social services and transfers within a national system.
- The momentum on cash can potentially create opportunities to maximise synergies between social services and transfers. In some instances, progress on transfers appears to be creating space for attention to broader social protection, thereby serving as the thin end of a wedge. Elsewhere (e.g., Central and Eastern Europe), experience shows that services are serving as the thin end of the wedge, creating space for consideration of cash transfers. Where social transfer programmes link effectively to social services, there is evidence of increased awareness and/or use of services.
- It should be possible to use institutional strengthening for cash transfers as a route to strengthening social work capacity, transport systems for social workers, alternative care systems, involvement of local government bodies and citizen committees, and reporting and response mechanisms for child abuse and exploitation.
- However, in most cases, cash transfer programming is running parallel to the development of national social protection strategies. This means missed opportunities, for example, to use the delivery of cash and household monitoring to collect information on beneficiaries and quantify the demand for social services, and to make referrals in cases of abuse and exploitation.
- There is a risk that the enthusiasm about cash transfers in countries detracts attention and capacity from social services. This has opportunity costs: if the lead ministry's capacity is used for delivering transfers, it can reduce that ministry's ability to deliver on important aspects of core business. This is the case in Kenya, where Department of Children's Services is focusing on expanding the cash transfer programme, which is impeding the ability to deliver on primary responsibilities.

*Coordinated multi-sectoral engagement is key to expanding child sensitive social protection, but this requires singular leadership, coordinated financing, and better donor harmonisation.*

- Part of the challenge of social protection is that vulnerability is multi-faceted, which has led to fragmented programming. It is not seen as a traditional "sector" for development, and donors and Governments often favour funding social protection for one specific group over others (e.g., retrenched civil servants, orphans and vulnerable children), hindering efforts to build systems.
- Silo-based programming hinders a comprehensive approach where different actors work towards shared objectives that address a range of needs holistically. Experience indicates that programming in narrowly defined areas, such as child labour, disability, trafficking, or school feeding is not an effective way to promote a comprehensive system. For example, Brazil's national social assistance system was aligned by sub-sectors until they shifted to a needs-based system relying on integrated

social work service centres to deliver integrated services. While there is room for improvement, the overall effect has been positive.

- Coordinated multi-sectoral engagement requires harmonised approaches and a strong oversight body. Lessons from sector wide (SWAp) approaches, or use of the “Three Ones” principle<sup>18</sup> used in national HIV and AIDS programmes, may be useful for harmonising social protection systems.
- There are concerns that multi-sectoral coordination and oversight committees do not work;<sup>19</sup> laws, decrees, and inter-ministerial agreements are usually insufficient to enforce coordinated multi-sectoral engagement. There is a need for a high level body demanding accountability. In Chile, the Ministry of Finance earmarks *Chile Solidario* funds flowing through different line ministries to beneficiaries. The Ministry monitors funding to the end user to reinforce binding legislation and inter-ministerial agreements. In the case of cash transfers, conditionalities may serve to enforce multi-sectoral participation in social protection (i.e., where the health or education sector can see a direct benefit to service uptake).

*Countries are having more success with expanding comprehensive social protection by moving away from narrow programming approaches towards integrated programming.*

- There is great potential to maximise social protection benefits by integrating health and education with social protection activities. This relies on sufficient human resources to ensure that referrals and integrated programming are working effectively, requiring parallel investments in other sectors. For example:
  - Building Ministries’ of Education awareness of the benefits of social protection can lead to supplementary social protection measures arranged by schools (e.g., school meals, counseling, accessibility and adaptation measures for disabled children, those at risk of exclusion, etc.)
  - In Zambia, a proposal is under consideration to use clinics as grant distribution points, with probable health and social protection benefits for hard to reach populations. Monitoring will be important to ensure staff do not become overburdened if this approach takes off.
- There are important opportunities to strengthen links with expanded social protection and the Justice Sector as well, for example, in the areas of legal access and legal empowerment. Social protection and justice can work together to increase access by encouraging non-Governmental community based legal aid services and mediation. Another point of intersection relates to juvenile justice: in many countries, Government social welfare officers are responsible for identifying guardians and accompanying children during interrogation and judicial proceedings, and often making recommendations on how cases should be handled.
- Countries with an active national response to HIV and AIDS are rarely linking AIDS impact mitigation efforts with social protection. In most cases, national dialogue on orphans and vulnerable children and social protection are totally separate. Few countries look to National Plans of Action for Orphan and Vulnerable Children (NPAOs) as an opportunity to promote child sensitive social protection, and vice versa. Some countries have functional multi-ministerial bodies (including donors and NGOs)

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<sup>18</sup> Developed by UNAIDS to help rationalise national HIV and AIDS responses, the Three Ones principle advocates for one national plan, one oversight body, and one monitoring and evaluation system.

<sup>19</sup> Howell, 2001.

working on behalf of vulnerable children, which are similarly disconnected from the social protection dialogue.

- There are potential risks in aligning social protection and the national orphans and vulnerable children response, particularly in light of some Governments' scepticism about NPAs. Caution should be exercised to ensure that better alignment does not lead to narrow AIDS-specific targeting of social protection benefits. Additionally, most AIDS funds are external to national budgets and time-limited; while they may be helpful to support social protection as a short term measure, they should not ultimately displace long term Government investment in social protection.

### **C. Political will is essential to building greater commitment to social protection.**

*The lack of political commitment to address entrenched poverty is one of the largest impediments to the expansion of social protection. Attention to long-term measures that generate this political commitment is insufficient, and too often displaced by technical solutions.*

- In many countries, social protection is a fragile agenda. Governments often view it as the “flavour of the month” for donors, rather than as a fundamental human right.
- Public attitudes towards poverty and poor people are important in shaping public policy and commitment to social protection. In terms of cash transfers in particular, conditionalities can serve to maintain political support and credibility in places where social attitudes toward the poor make cash transfers politically or socially undesirable or where previous programmes have had little impact.
- It is imperative to get different parts of Government on board as the initial step in expanding social protection. This must include Ministries of Finance and Planning as well as Ministries of Social Welfare or Development, and may also include the President's Office, the Ministry of Health or Education, or the National AIDS Council.
- Starting with existing public social protection programming can increase chances of Government commitment and ownership. However, this can be a challenge when it is necessary to reduce fragmentation by reducing the number of existing projects.
- Where the President is involved in promoting social protection (even making it an election issue), the rewards are considerable. At the same time, unless a social protection “champion” is sufficiently senior, he or she will not usually have the power and stamina to move the agenda at national level.
- Integrating social protection plans into PRSPs and the budget support dialogue can be an effective way of getting Ministries of Finance and Planning (and donors) on board, leading to possible sector support and political commitment. There are several examples in which poverty analyses played a pivotal role in gaining the necessary political commitment to develop a specific strategy for addressing entrenched poverty.
- While donors are keen to support Government owned policies and programmes, it is important to recognise that Governments do not speak with one unified voice. The “ownership” of some parts of Government will be more meaningful than others.

- NGOs are often more active than Governments in implementing social protection programmes.<sup>20</sup> Where NGOs are critical to social protection operations, this can be a challenge to building the Government's commitment. For example, the Asian Development Bank observes many Asian Governments "handing over" responsibility for core Government functions, including ensuring access to social protection for the most vulnerable citizens.<sup>21</sup> In some cases, NGOs serve a watchdog function and demand Government accountability for the poorest citizens.

*More attention to advocacy is necessary in order to build political commitment. This must be informed by solid, country-specific information on social protection and its impacts.*

- Better monitoring and evaluation of existing programmes is needed, along with documentation of institutional dynamics and the drivers of change. In Chile and Brazil, the monitoring and evaluation activities play a role in incentivising programming, in addition to providing critical programming information.

Packaging data and information on the impacts of social protection in other countries can be effective for advocacy.

- It is important to demystify the concept of social protection and to educate NGOs and Governments. Building understanding of social protection amongst NGOs and other civil society organisations can help build the demand for Governments to fulfil their obligations.

*Are pilot projects a route to expanded social protection systems?*

- Pilots are a popular approach to introducing social protection programming in some regions. This is particularly the case in East and Southern Africa, where cash transfer pilot projects are flourishing. Views vary on the usefulness of pilots in demonstrating the feasibility of social protection or cash transfer programming in a given context and generating broader commitment.
- Pilot projects can be effective in stimulating Government and donor interests, delivering essential support to beneficiaries, and demonstrating the impact of specific interventions. In addition, they are used to test different operational approaches related to targeting, conditionalities, and delivery modes.
- However, there is not much evidence that pilots lead to national programmes. In fact, some experts are concerned that pilot projects can detract attention, capacity and resources from the development of national strategies, and systems. Concerns about pilots include their frequent reliance on time limited donor funding and non-state implementers, which risk undermining Government financial and political commitment and programme sustainability. They tend to focus on demonstrating impact at the cost of building systems. In order to show impact, they may create human and financial resource circumstances that are not representative of the national situation, which limits their utility in modelling what is feasible in a scaled up national programme.

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<sup>20</sup> Sabates-Wheeler and Pelham, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Conway, et.al., 2000.



*In poorer countries...funding and implementation of cash transfer programs is more often by international agencies and NGOs and through pilot projects. This raises a number of concerns. Multiple programs can operate in one country, with different requirements, targeting procedures, benefit levels and this raises all sorts of questions about equity and transparency.... This duplication, which is repeated in numerous countries, reduces possibilities for synergies and capacity building and strains already weak administrative capacity. Moreover, pilots have started with no plan for how to move from pilot to scale or for how programs can become absorbed in regular government operations. Since they are dependent on external financing, there is a very real risk that funding will end at the end of the project cycle. Social Protection in East and Southern Africa: A Framework and Strategy for UNICEF. <sup>22</sup>*

- Several national programmes (e.g., Brazil's Bolsa Familia) were initiated by Governments in limited geographic areas using existing capacity, and gradually scaled up as they expanded capacity. This type of phased approach has value because it avoids small scale approaches that operate outside of Government programming, as well as the risks associated with scaling up too rapidly beyond country capacity.

## **V. PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE POLICY DIALOGUE AND RESEARCH**

Greater attention to institutional dynamics and funding for institutional strengthening is crucial for expanding child sensitive social protection. The roles of, and relationships between, line ministries responsible for social welfare and Ministries of Finance and Planning warrant particular attention.

Strengthening political commitment for child sensitive social protection should be given the highest priority. Starting with the best of existing social protection programming can help to promote national commitment.

Getting Ministries of Finance and Planning on board is an effective way to mainstream social protection in poverty reduction plans. With these important stakeholders, arguments based on the economic benefits of social protection may be more effective for advocacy than humanitarian and rights arguments.

Specific recommendations on institutional roles and relationships will vary, but it is critical to differentiate between Government's role as a central *implementing* body and Government's role as a central *oversight* body. There is increasing evidence suggesting that separating social protection programme implementation, especially cash transfer programming, from policy and oversight can increase effectiveness.

Multi-sectoral engagement in social protection programme delivery is key, but less likely to succeed without a senior Government official enforcing requirements for inter-ministerial engagement and accountability.

In many countries, social protection is dominated by fragmented approaches with different objectives and institutional homes, using limited capacity for small pilots rather than national programmes. There is an urgent need to reduce fragmentation and increase harmonisation in social protection programme delivery. The lessons from SWAps and the Three Ones principle may be helpful for harmonising systems.

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<sup>22</sup> Handa et al., 2007.

There is rarely a consistent approach to institutional strengthening for social protection within and between international organisations. More consistency in international partner approaches is needed, based on lessons from practical experience. Harmonised support to strengthening the social welfare sector, including social workers, is especially critical for children to ensure capacity for coordinated family support and alternative care services.

Planners need a better understanding of the synergies between social protection transfers and services, and how the relationship between these elements plays out. Is relationship competitive, leading to the "crowding out" of services suggested in East and Southern Africa, or can the cash transfer momentum serve as the "thin end of a wedge," and make space for broader social protection programming? Experience in Chile, Brazil, and South Africa should inform efforts to balance services and transfers within a national system and help develop models for social workers and implementers at the grassroots level that recognise capacity of existing workers and areas where increased capacity is needed.

There are missed opportunities to use the momentum around HIV and AIDS to strengthen child sensitive social protection, and vice versa. In countries where National Plans of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NPAs) are effective, these could serve as a vehicle for promoting social protection funding and programming. Multi-sectoral bodies working on behalf of vulnerable children could also help to move NPAs from emergency to social protection approaches. However, caution is necessary to ensure that this type of collaboration does not lead to parallel or inappropriately targeted social protection approaches.

There is an urgent need to strengthen the evidence base on social protection in order to support advocacy and inform planning. This should focus on impact as well as institutional and political dynamics. In addition to deepening understanding of the issues addressed here, other questions needing policy-oriented research include:

- Mapping countries with social protection systems in place and their contents.
- Defining the ideal functions that a child sensitive social protection system should fulfil - there is a demand for models that are relevant in diverse different settings, based poverty levels, state and civil society capacity, and existing social protection programming.
- Applying lessons from developed countries to inform progress in low and middle income countries, including information on building, monitoring and maintaining public consensus for programs, and the relationship of the programs to the political economy, among others.
- Models for social work that take into account grassroots difficulties and implementation challenges.

*This is a moment of tremendous opportunity.* Social protection is a live agenda across several countries, especially in Eastern and Southern Africa. Many countries are having similar debates about the roles and responsibilities of different parts of Government, particularly ministries with responsibility for social welfare and finance. It is critical to use the experience of countries that are wrestling with this debate to inform others. There is a window of opportunity to ensure that lessons learned from experience are informing practice and influencing conceptual approaches to ensure that vulnerable children and families benefit from social protection.

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## **ANNEX: Country Examples**

### **GHANA:**

Ghana has a National Social Protection strategy lead by its Ministry of Manpower, supported thus far with pooled funding from UNICEF and DFID. The program is housed within the Ministry of Manpower, Youth, and Employment (MMYE). The Department of Social Welfare (DSW) is one of its implementing bodies.

The social protection strategy includes improving existing social protection interventions and monitoring to ensure the poor benefit. MMYE manages policy issues while DSW implements; DSW is currently implementing the social security programme Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP). The National Social Protection Strategy includes specific reference to the need to coordinate LEAP with other social protection programmes, and indeed while social protection is not new in Ghana, cash transfers are not politically popular. The emerging strategy, however, seems to focus largely on cash transfers.

DSW now needs to inspire confidence that they can successfully implement LEAP and spend the allocated funds. This will help to give them a prominent role in the national strategy, as well as attracting direct funds for social protection. In order to advance the social protection agenda, there is also recognition of the need to strengthen DSW. There is already work underway to re-invent DSW as a Department of Social Development (beyond welfare), using part of the initial LEAP funds for institutional strengthening. An institutional assessment and the development of a costed institutional strengthening plan are underway. Part of the argument for the institutional strengthening is the need for the capacity to manage LEAP, but also the need for action to support new legislation passed on domestic violence, trafficking, disability. There are untapped opportunities to institutionalise collaborative relationships between DWS and other sectors (Education and Health, in particular) and to make greater use of CBOs, NGOs and unit committees as a way to increase their capacity, especially at local level.

Government commitment to social protection was seen in the implementation of several social protection measures, including a school feeding programme, free primary school programme, free bus system for school children, capitation grant for basic public schools, National Health Insurance Scheme, and the Youth Employment Programme, among others. In terms of funding, the Government allocated \$2 million towards LEAP in the 2007 budget. In 2008, the Government has allocated of \$2.2 million to LEAP. It is notable that the planned social protection expansion will start with existing Government programmes. The school programmes have had a considerable impact; a more concerted effort is needed to make sure the extreme poor meet basic eligibility requirements and have access to the programmes.

Part of what inspired the new focus on social protection was a Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (conducted in the name of an emerging PRSP), which revealed the need for a strategy to address especially vulnerable groups. This demonstrates the value of including social protection in the PRSP/Multi-Donor Direct Budget Support (MDBS) dialogue: to get political recognition from the Ministry of Finance and donors of the challenge and the need to do something serious about poverty.

The Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs also has a role to play, particularly in ensuring that social protection benefits reach children. There have been historic efforts by DFID and various UN agencies to build up their capacity. These efforts did not have a sustained impact. This Ministry is now even more limited than DSW and often mired in turf battles. These factors combine to keep them from usefully contributing to the national strategy development process.

In the future, Ghana's experience should provide lessons on institutional strengthening of the lead ministry and department; as well as balancing social protection service delivery with emerging cash transfer pilot schemes. Using LEAP money to strengthen the responsible Government department is an example of using cash transfer momentum to generate broader social protection benefits. It will be important to see what LEAP does to other DSW functions. Do improved transport systems for LEAP really improve the mobility of social welfare workers? Does strengthening community groups for LEAP advance social protection objectives?



## MALAWI:

*Formal social protection is increasing in Malawi – Smith and Subbarao (2003) recorded 15 distinct donor-funded social protection programmes – but these interventions are generally uncoordinated, poorly targeted and ‘projectised’ rather than institutionalised.*

*A danger with many safety net interventions is that they are stand-alone ‘flagship’ projects, often designed and funded by bilateral or multilateral donors, and run by international NGOs, that create islands of social protection in oceans of vulnerability. Even if these projects are successful if evaluated on their own terms, they typically have limited impact beyond their defined target group of beneficiaries, and they are usually time-bound rather than permanent. Social protection must not be ‘projectised’, it must be institutionalised; it must not be donor-driven, it must be government owned (though donor financing may be required in very poor countries like Malawi); and it must not be seen as ‘charity’ or ‘welfare’, but ultimately as a right of citizenship. Vulnerability and Social Protection in Malawi*

In Malawi, social protection is becoming more of a national priority due to recent events that stimulated the Government’s interest in supporting medium- and long-term responses to chronic poverty. It is possible to trace this emergence to two factors: the recent (2005) food crisis, which increased attention to the short-term nature of emergency food assistance; and documentation of the considerable amounts of resources flowing into programmes described as “social protection,” while poverty rates have stagnated over the past ten years.

Malawi’s Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (EPD) is now leading the development of a National Social Protection Policy, which marks the shift in focus from safety nets to social protection. The emerging policy will operationalise part of Malawi’s Growth and Development Strategy (PRSP), advancing the theme of social protection and disaster risk reduction. As presently drafted (Third Draft, October 23, 2007), the key themes are:

1. *Provision of Welfare Support* to provide unconditional cash transfers to those with the most limited factors of production;
2. *Protection of Assets* of poor and vulnerable households including public works, seasonal cash transfers, and social insurance;
3. *Promotion through Productivity Enhancement* to enable households to lift themselves out of poverty through vouchers/cash transfers, public works, village savings and loans programmes, and conditional cash transfers;
4. *Ensure Policy Linkages and Mainstreaming* through collaboration to ensure access to social services, economic activities, and disaster management strategies.

In terms of leadership, social protection was originally seated within the Office of the President (Department of Poverty and Disaster Management) but has re-located to EPD, bringing the Deputy Coordinator for Social Protection along. The Social Protection Division in EPD coordinates the programme, where their primary functions include serving as the Secretariat for a National Social Protection Steering Committee (NSPSC) and a National Social Protection Technical Committee (NSPTC), planning, and coordination. The NSPSC is supported by the NSPTC and includes Principal Secretaries of the relevant ministries and heads of development partner institutions and NGOs. District Assemblies are responsible for coordination, while Village Development Committees supported by Community Social Protection Committees are to oversee implementation.

There are plans to develop the national social protection programme followed by the establishment of a basket fund for social protection, but there is not yet agreement on where management of the basket will sit (EPD, Treasury, or Local Government). Additionally, harmonized financial management, reporting, and monitoring and evaluation is envisioned. Considerable work is required to finalise the policy, solidify implementation arrangements, budgets, timelines, and mitigate risks.

Cash transfers will comprise part of the national social protection programme, although the degree to which cash transfers are prioritised in the emerging national policy has been under debate for several years. A pilot was established to learn lessons about cash transfers as a potential instrument for Malawi. Lessons are feeding into the social protection programme design and have featured in all drafts of the National Social Protection Policy. Many

planners are prioritising cash transfers due to the success of the pilot scheme, despite general agreement not to reduce the national social protection programme to a single intervention.

The cash transfer pilot is currently one of the main areas of social protection programming; it is implemented by District Assemblies Social Welfare Offices, supervised and guided by the Ministry of Women and Child Development's (WCD) Social Cash Transfer Secretariat. They are expanding the pilot into six new districts now, and WCD is building capacity at district level to deliver. Trainers are well qualified to serve management functions. With support from UNICEF, the Social Cash Transfer Secretariat is improving its management capacity to guide, supervise and monitor the scheme. For the scale up of the pilot, this capacity needs to be further strengthened with additional staff and more management capacity.

In the emerging national policy, it is envisioned that the cash transfer implementers will continue as at present, through WCD, though concerns about their capacity persist. At present, the pilot is running somewhat separately from the national policy development process, and WCD is reportedly not active in the NSPSC. In the early 2000s, DFID supported the Ministry of Women and Child Development with the goal of building the sector's capacity, but achieved limited success.

Malawi's approach is consistent with the view that it makes sense to separate dedicated cash transfer implementation units and social protection policy and coordinating bodies.

There is some link between HIV and AIDS processes (in funding terms) and social protection processes (the cash transfer components), despite the separation of dialogue on social protection and Orphans and Vulnerable Children. Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM) funds, via the National AIDS Council (NAC), will support the expanded cash transfers pilot programming for the next 30 months. GFATM funding for the cash transfers is part of Malawi's National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NPA) support through the NAC, which funds the District Assemblies directly.

NAC feels that cash transfers are an efficient way to spend their money; they feel it is more direct than their previous approach to supporting AIDS impact mitigation through umbrella organizations. Notably, neither NAC nor GFATM are concerned about the lack of AIDS-specific criteria in the targeting rules, as long as it is possible to prove that cash transfers impact positively on households and individuals affected by HIV and AIDS. International agencies are now trying to persuade the NAC to contribute to the Social Protection basket fund, when it is established.

## **SOUTH AFRICA:**

South Africa's national social protection programme is based on a "developmental social welfare" approach, recognising that social development cannot occur without economic development and vice versa. Social protection includes grants and services, overseen by the Department of Social Development. All grants are administered at the national level by the recently-established South African Social Security Agency (SASSA). While there is considerable room for improvement, the national social security system is widely viewed as important for poverty and vulnerability reduction. An estimated 25% of the population receives some sort of social assistance. Grants include old age pensions, and disability, foster care, and child support grants, with the latter covering nearly seven million children under 14 years old (60% of targeted children<sup>23</sup>). Other targeted services include free health care, education, and school meals, skills development, access to low cost housing, maternity benefits, and other social services and residential care for children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

The primary core functions of the Department of Social Development are to oversee social security; facilitate the development of social services (in partnership with State-funded institutions, NGOs, CBOs, and FBOs); develop of norms and standards; monitor implementation of policies; and lead overall planning and management.

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<sup>23</sup> As of December 2006. Naicker and Mguye, 2006.

The Department of Social Development has a new Strategic Plan Update (2007-2010) describing the challenges and plans to tackle necessary reforms. Not unusually, the main constraints to expanding the social security system and services relate more to delivery capacity than to budgetary constraints. The Strategic Plan Update describes the challenges to expanding social services: fragmentation of services, insufficient institutional coherence, and a lack of social workers, social auxiliary workers, and community development practitioners.

Administration of foster care grants is one aspect of social protection that imposes an enormous workload on social workers. The process involves court orders, regular supervision, and reapplication every 2 years. Although foster care grants are seen as a positive measure, they constitute just one of social workers' many responsibilities. In addition, some social workers are leaving South Africa to take posts abroad.

"The ideal environment for service delivery would be to ensure that communities experience integrated service delivery... the Department is hard at work to ensure alignment and coordination of service delivery at two levels (within the Department and the social sector)."<sup>24</sup> Recommendations for improvements of the social security component include consolidating systems and procedures, addressing irregularities, establishing credibility of SASSA before adding new programmes, and improving the supply of education and health services in close coordination with SASSA.

South Africa is atypical in the degree to which its plans and programmes are documented and analysed, including recognition of the tradeoffs between social security and social services. "Despite having adopted a developmental approach to service delivery, the focus of the Department over the last decade has been predominantly on social security, to the detriment of other developmental social services. Indeed, the crowding-out effect of the social security budget has resulted in the severe curtailment and neglect of other services. Consequently, social service practitioners have been forced to adopt a 'make do' approach, dictated by resource limitations rather than need, priority or statutory and internationally-ratified obligations. The neglect has had far-reaching ripple effects."<sup>25</sup>

SASSA was created to improve the delivery of the large and growing social security granting system. This occurred as a response to the perception that the huge expansion in social security was damaging the delivery of social services. SASSA sought to "free up" social service staff to get back to their core service related business. In the short term, the creation of SASSA has had the effect of subtracting scarce staff from the social service side, but it is anticipated that this effect may dissipate in the longer term once SASSA's capacity is sufficiently strengthened.

The overall focus of the Strategic Plan is to develop a "service delivery model" that will provide the basis for further reforms to improve service delivery, including norms and standards. The Plan's 18 priorities would benefit from further focusing to concentrate limited capacities on the most critical priorities.

There remains ongoing debate about the overall goals and objectives of South Africa's social protection system. At the 2007 International Bi-Regional Conference on Social Protection and Poverty Reduction in South Africa, the Deputy President asked "whether countries [should] explicitly design social protection interventions with a specific intention to reduce poverty or do they design programmes that have specific interventions on social protection – health, education, shelter, nutrition etc. Put differently, should the focus be on social protection reforms or on poverty eradication strategies that conclusively address social protection challenges?"<sup>26</sup> Despite the ongoing dialogue, South Africa is working to coordinate, rationalize, and build up the appropriate capacities in an efficient manner. South Africa is also addressing fragmentation. In several years it should be possible to say something about the impact of the current reforms on social protection activities and outcomes for children.

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<sup>24</sup> Republic of South Africa, 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Leiva, 2007.

## UGANDA:

The lead ministry for social protection, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), has established a broad-based National Social Protection Task Force, which managed to get social protection into the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP, Uganda's PRSP). The PEAP includes plans to mainstream social development and social protection concerns across sectors. However, there is little happening to actually implement PEAP Social Protection plans. Getting the necessary resources and capacity for implementation is an enormous challenge. There are a number of NGO activities, but they are largely fragmented and uncoordinated. Community development and social welfare officers tend to be overburdened with high turnover and insufficient capacity.

A recent decision was passed to establish a Directorate of Social Protection in the MGLSD, dedicating capacity to this agenda. Once functional, this should help with strengthening the national capacity, but similar changes are not yet manifest at lower levels of Government. The Directorate of Social Protection will take over social protection leadership from the Orphans and Vulnerable Children Directorate.

In 2003-2004 DFID supported an effort to strengthen the MGLSD. The objective was to develop a coherent plan to use to bid for an increased budget allocation from Ministry of Finance. Through the plan, they hoped to address problems of overstaffing, inefficiencies, lack of coordination, fragmentation, and corruption. A sector plan was developed and appreciation increased of a sectoral versus a project approach. The understanding of social protection broadened, including in the Ministry of Finance.

However, the "rationale that having a sector plan would lead to an increased budget did not hold up."<sup>27</sup> Analysis identified several problems: high rates of staff turnover; overburdening of committed staff in the Planning Section; staff unconvinced of their role to provide policies and standards, rather than implement; inconsistent partner support to MGLSD; and donors funding favoured groups and activities.

There was recognition that in order to address these problems, the structure of MGLSD had to change. Government and donors undertook a process of Institutional Review. Several years ago, the establishment of the National Social Protection Task Force (chaired by the Minister and with donor, NGO, and UNICEF participation) helped to establish benchmarks and promote accountability. In turn, this helped to improve the performance of the MGLSD. The Task Force still exists, and enjoys a greater degree of Government ownership than in the past; for example, the Government is now funding Task Force activities that they once asked donors to cover.

MGLSD is increasingly results-oriented and professional, but their reputation remains poor across Government. They are generally perceived to conduct business in a fragmented and ineffective manner. It is difficult, for example to secure MGLSD's consistent participation in various Government working groups. This has resulted in decreased Government resources, and they have consistently struggled with under-funding. They recently lost the role of managing the civil service pension programme to the Ministry of Finance.

Although the Government is increasing its allocation to the social sectors and is committed to equitable growth, *"social protection is regarded everywhere as 'welfare handouts' or 'charity' that consumes scarce public resources and generates no real economic returns."*<sup>28</sup>

There are questions about Government commitment to comprehensively support MGLSD, or whether Government sees MGLSD "as a repository for the softer/less urgent issues?"<sup>29</sup> Over the last 10 years, efforts to strengthen this ministry have overshadowed advances, including reforms to the child care system and the MGLSD. The social protection sector suffers even more from skilled personnel (social workers and managers of institutions for orphans and abandoned children) shortages than other social sectors.

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<sup>27</sup> Cathy Gaynor, Social Development Consultant. Personal communication, 2007.

<sup>28</sup> Devereaux, S., et. al. 2002.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

There is discussion of developing a national social protection strategy, policy, framework to include in the new National Development Plan. The National Social Protection Task Force is planning a cash transfer pilot in six districts, but there is an unanswered question about the institutional home: MGLSD, the Ministry of Finance, or a "joint lead." MGLSD sees the cash transfer pilot as the opportunity to clear their reputation by demonstrating their capability, which has led to the current debate over leadership. The Cabinet is currently engaging in the process of generating national buy-in for the pilot and determining where the leadership should sit.

There is no national dialogue of equal prominence on the service aspects of social protection.

## **ZAMBIA:**

There is a social protection strategy and chapter in Zambia's Fifth National Development Plan. The Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) is the lead ministry for social protection. MCDSS oversees social protection activities with financing from the Ministry of Finance and National Planning (MoFNP); their responsibilities include coordination and reporting, but not necessarily implementation. MCDSS works from a traditionally top down model of service delivery for public assistance; implementation happens through a range of actors, including the Ministry of Health, the private sector, etc. There are two major strands of social protection programming: the Government's Public Welfare Assistance Scheme (PWAS) and the cash transfer pilots in Kalomo and other districts.

The Government's Public Welfare Assistance Scheme (PWAS) provides in-kind support for destitute Zambians who are selected by community committees. The major components are education, health, and social assistance with material, food and transport assistance. Social Welfare Officers distribute the in-kind assistance to households, advised by social welfare committees. A recent review revealed operational improvements but uncertainty in budget allocations and disbursement of benefits, which reduce PWAS' overall impact.

There is currently a debate on how to scale up national programming as the country develops the National Social Protection Strategy into a programme. The national dialogue on social protection is largely about cash transfers. Topics of debate include: how the Government wants to express key obligations to the rights of the poorest, what can be learned from the pilot schemes, and how the PWAS and the pilots can best produce a combined scheme.

The pilot scheme provides many valuable lessons, but it is not necessarily an institutional model that is replicable on a national scale. There are concerns that it is not representative in terms of human capacity. There are also concerns about donors losing interest, although many donors are active and interested at present.

MCDSS lacks institutional and policy-making capacity. MoFNP and MCDSS are currently working well together thanks to a new and committed Minister in MCDSS, but results are not yet forthcoming in all aspects of social protection. For example, MCDSS does not have effective influence over the Ministries of Health and Education.

Next year MCDSS plans to decentralize. One idea is to use clinics as distribution points for cash transfers but distribution mechanisms – institutions and technology – are still being discussed. This could have multiple benefits on the health and social protection front, but it is not yet clear if anyone wants to go this route.

To date, assistance and inputs have been primarily technical in nature, with little focus on political dynamics and the need to build political commitment for social protection. There is an urgent need to educate and advocate for broader buy-in; significant technical assistance prior to this would be largely ineffective. Donors and cooperating partners have a plan for building stronger links in this regard for 2008. CSOs can play a role in building political commitment to implement the national Social Protection strategy, with both MCDSS and MoFNP on board.

At the moment, the discussion is weaker and less coordinated in other social protection component areas. Cash transfers are not being discussed in connection with social services. There is also a need for better coordination between the active debate around social protection and that around orphans and vulnerable children. There have been moves to unify these through partner agencies who are active in both areas, such as DFID and UNICEF.

There are also ongoing efforts to shape National Development Plan commitments to children into a national plan of action for children, with high-level oversight under the leadership of the Vice President's Office. He has the necessary stature to hold key line ministries to account to a children's development plan, though the details are still contentious.

The Ministry of Sport, Youth and Child Development is even weaker than MCDSS. It is not active in social protection, but is active in coordinating activities for orphans and vulnerable children. The National AIDS Council is another prospective actor for coordinating the response to orphans and vulnerable children, but they are not generally viewed as a useful player in advancing the social protection agenda.

In summary, the applicable lessons learned from Zambia are:

- Social protection programming will not make much headway in the absence of political will. National ownership is key, even if it reduces chances for technical perfection or for taking advantage of every programmatic opportunity. A promising way to encourage Government commitment and ownership is to start with existing Government-run social protection schemes (PWAS in Zambia's case). However, it is also important to recognize that "Government" does not always speak with one voice, and that there are different incentives operating for public sector employees at different levels.
- Demand creation, especially amongst civil society organisations, can help to promote political will. "Government systems work according to the amount of demand placed upon them." (C. Harland)
- Champions are not a solution if they are not sufficiently senior (e.g., a Minister) or if they do not rapidly create peers or a consensus. In Zambia, the "Number Three" in the Department of Social Welfare was the social protection champion. He has left Government to work for an NGO, taking that commitment with him.
- Relative to other social sectors, social protection is relatively new. It may be perceived by Government as the development "flavour of the month," a result of donor fickleness.
- It is a challenge to move from cash transfers to comprehensive social protection as a single policy agenda when all of the social sectors are handled separately (both within international agencies and Government)
- It is important to be honest about both the risks and benefits of pilot approaches.
- Monitoring and evaluation is critical, especially for measuring impact, and packaging it in such a way that is useful for demystifying the concept and for advocacy.

## **UKRAINE:**

Ukraine has a number of public and a few NGO programmes that are described as social protection, though there is no comprehensive social protection system. Programmes include social insurance with pensions, disabled benefits, housing subsidies, and child grants, in addition to reform of the child care system. There are also social services focused on specific population groups, such as elderly or disabled people.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is responsible for social policy at various levels. They are in charge of the public granting programme, while the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports is responsible for family based services.

Institutionalised children are the largest group of vulnerable children in need of social protection in the country. Therefore, reform of the child care system (with a focus on the de-institutionalisation of children) is a high priority within Ukraine's social protection arena. As of January 2005, Government agreed on new legislation promoting permanent families for children, including provisions for adoption, kinship care, and foster care. This included focused efforts to develop each of these, plus measures to reform existing child care institutions.

The focus of reforms has been on foster care. This is a positive move but not sufficiently comprehensive; it will also be necessary to increase attention to the preservation of families as another key part of reforms. At central level, there is good understanding of the role of domestic adoption, family preservation, and group homes. However, at regional level, Government staff and the public have not similarly "modernised" their attitudes towards child care.

It is interesting to note the role of public funding policies in driving child care arrangements and implications for the future. A key element of the reform is that public financing now follows children rather than institutions. In the (recent) past, the central Government paid for institutionalization while family-based placements were covered by local budgets – an obvious disincentive for the latter. With the recent policy change, the central Government now funds both types of responses.

Renewed attention to child care system reform was the result of a new Government coming to power and the appointment of a new Minister of Family, Youth and Sports. The Minister brought young, motivated staff into the system and was backed by Presidential support.

Ukraine has a suitable policy and plans on child care, but implementation has now stalled due to political troubles. When the President disbanded Parliament, everyone, including ministries, awaited a new Government before taking further action. Again, technical inputs do not make sense in the absence of solid political commitment.

Many of the points made regarding the reform of the child care system are also applicable to other Government plans to move away from residential services towards community-based social services (e.g., home care, foster care) for the elderly, people with disabilities and chronic illnesses, and homeless people.

Major challenges to implementing an effective, comprehensive social protection system include:

- Fragmentation. Different ministries work on socially protective activities in their individual silos for example, the Ministry of Health is only interested in health activities and The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, which handles public grants, does not work closely with the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports, which handles family based services. UNICEF and the Government developed a National Action Plan on Children, which seeks to break down silos and promote comprehensive programmes, though the plan still requires Presidential approval.
- Lack of trained staff. Social workers are especially important. Also, NGO's that could implement social protection programming are few and far between.
- Public attitudes. There is still a perception that children are the responsibility of the Government and not the citizens. There is an urgent need for advocacy to combat this perception.
- Donor support. Funding targets narrowly defined activity areas or population groups, which hinders the development of a comprehensive social protection system.

*There are those in Ukraine who... believe that the complex division of responsibilities for child welfare questions, at both central and other levels, makes it all but impossible to develop a co-ordinated policy and to ensure efficient and effective implementation. Some – though a minority among our interlocutors – feel in contrast that it would be dangerous to concentrate decision-making powers and resources, and consider that the present fragmentation of authority in this sphere brings with it a series of checks and balances that are healthy for the system. Assessment of the Adoption System in Ukraine*

The direction that social protection will take in the future depends largely on the new Government. The recent positive trends in child care reforms do not have a great deal of momentum because they are so new. It is likely that the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports' support for reforms will continue, but it is less clear if the commitment of the Ministry of Finance will be sustained. Sustained support from the Ministry of Finance is critical to progress.

## **BRAZIL:**

The Bolsa Familia Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme (BFP) is the largest component of Brazil's social protection system overseen by the Ministry of Social Development (MDS). In addition to cash transfers, a social service component links BFP beneficiaries to social assistance services for an integrated approach, aspects of which are modelled on the well-known Chile Solidario programme. BFP is one of the largest CCT programs in the world, reaching 11 million families. It targets poor households with children under 15 years old, as well as extremely poor households regardless of composition. Studies show BFP's impact on reducing income equality and reducing

extreme poverty. Because conditionalities are related to health and education for children, beneficiaries perceive that they should spend the bonus on children.

Conditionalities are not meant to penalise families, but rather to identify those that are particularly vulnerable and may require additional interventions. The Government emphasises links between CCTs and local services, and addresses supply side deficiencies in order to help the neediest families adhere to conditionalities.

BFP's position as one of the largest CCT programs in the world reflects societal attitudes about poverty in Brazil, as well as a decade of experience with CCT programs. Most Brazilians believe that poverty is a result of an "unjust society" rather than that "people are lazy" according to a World Values Survey. These attitudes are codified in the Brazilian constitution, which provides a legal framework for federal social assistance and the basic right of citizens to access health and education services.

The President created MDS in 2004 to synchronise fragmented cash transfer programmes and coordinate a national framework for addressing poverty. The MDS replaced three former government ministries and combined CCT programmes to create BFP as an integrated programme. Donors worked with the Government to expand BFP and strengthen the new MDS. It is responsible for social development, food and nutritional security, social assistance, income and citizenship. In addition to BFP, MDS also administers other social protection programmes targeting populations that are vulnerable due to age, ethnicity, gender, or domestic violence.

Within MDS, the Unified System for Social Assistance (SUAS) promotes the social services component. SUAS classifies poor and at-risk families according to their needs and risks in order to define a specific service package. Municipalities assume duties related to social services such as maintaining local coordinators, registering potential beneficiaries in the national database, monitoring health and education conditionalities, and prioritizing BFP beneficiaries for complementary services.

To facilitate the service component, federal funding is offered to municipalities with social assistance centres. Social workers within the social assistance centres work with families individually and in groups, and link them to other federally funded or municipal social assistance services. A subset of particularly vulnerable BFP beneficiaries is also targeted for individual accompaniment. Social workers accompany poor families, including helping them prepare tailored "family development plans". Often, social workers help link clients to other social assistance programmes and services through direct screening and referrals.

The challenges for expanding and improving the effectiveness of social assistance links include insufficient institutional and financing capacity for integration and the lack of clear goals and indicators to ensure linkages. Monetary incentives take into account the number of registered beneficiaries but do not track their access to or participation in social services. Unlike Chile's *Solidario* programme, there is no specific period of time for beneficiaries to take advantage of the social assistance nor are there clearly defined goals. There also remain supply side deficiencies in education and health services.

Along with the federal programme, many states and municipalities still offer regional CCT programs. In order to promote efficiency between the federal and local programmes, MDS creates formal cooperation agreements with sub-national entities, essentially merging the two.

To bridge BFP and municipal level activities, MDS offers monetary support and incentives to municipalities. These systems are important to promote programmes as well as to provide a BFP monitoring and evaluating mechanism. For example, municipalities receive federal subsidies based on the number of families registered in the national database and information about adherence to education and health conditionalities. This allows MDS to track municipalities' performance and compliance with BFP terms.

Other federal and municipal CCT programmes exist that the federal Government is integrating into BFP, promoting efficiency. By combining programmes into one system, families receive benefits of a higher monetary value than those offered by individual programmes. They also receive more comprehensive coverage. Brazil's experience



illustrates the importance of building on the existing capacity of federal and municipal programmes and implementing funding, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to expand BFP from a single CCT programme to a social policy instrument creating a social safety net across levels of Government and political administrations.

## CHILE:

*Chile Solidario* is often cited as the best example of a comprehensive national social protection system. In 2002, the Finance Ministry's National Budget Office designed a social protection system for the poorest to better coordinate the sectoral and aid area and to apply homogeneous criteria to beneficiary selection. *Chile Solidario* was the result. The Planning Ministry, MIDEPLAN, is responsible for managing the overall system. For the first 24 months, beneficiary families are enrolled in the *Programa Puente* and receive the help of a social worker as well as decreasing amounts of money. After leaving *Programa Puente*, beneficiaries receive a bonus and preferential access to social assistance programmes. They also become eligible for more State subsidies. The programme is successfully reaching the poorest members of the population and having a positive impact on their awareness of and participation in social service programs, especially among families with young children.

Before the implementation of *Chile Solidario*, poverty fell further in Chile than anywhere else in Latin America. With economic growth, the public recognised the need for aggressive social policies to create equity in growth and improve the situation of the poor. Between 1990 and 2000, tax collection grew with broad political support for improving health and education services for poor and vulnerable populations in the face of governmental neglect.

From 1998 and 2000, the percentage of indigent poor stopped falling. On taking office, President Lagos sought advisors from local governments and NGOs to design a programme specifically for the indigent poor. There was consensus on the need for an integrated approach that would create synergies between different programmes, but disagreement regarding the specific components, such as income vouchers or skills development. The latter was promoted by *Programa Puente*, an existing pilot programme designed by *El Fondo de Solidaridad e Inversión Social* (FOSIS). The President had the authority to implement the programme but in order to generate awareness and support he sent it to Congress for approval. *Chile Solidario* is unique among social protection initiatives in that the Finance Ministry's Budget Office, the Planning Ministry, FOSIS, and the President's advisors used existing cash transfer pilots and emerging skills development strategies to create a single system.

Prior Government-led initiatives to eradicate poverty were plagued by inadequate coverage, low beneficiary participation, and fragmented pilot programmes. The promotion of *Chile Solidario* in 2002 reflected the Government's recognition that an integrated approach, including institutional reform in the public sector, was necessary. Until then, MIDEPLAN did not have executive authority and had crises of institutional mission and political legitimacy. For example, FOSIS served under MIDEPLAN but acted autonomously in the design and implementation of projects, including *Programa Puente*. In order to mitigate tensions, MIDEPLAN assumed responsibility for managing *Chile Solidario* while FOSIS administers *Programa Puente*. MIDEPLAN answers directly to the President and evaluates projects, as well as system coordination and management. MIDEPLAN has at least one professional in each region to coordinate and monitor execution and maintain contact with the regional *Programa Puente* personnel and social service agencies.

Using information from national databases, FOSIS works with municipalities to provide resources for *Programa Puente*. To participate in *Programa Puente*, municipalities establish Units of Family Intervention with dedicated staff, as well as municipal health and education personnel to serve as family supporters. The programme assists with providing family supporters who cannot be provided within the local network. Despite initial resistance at the local level, there was a large political cost if certain mayors did not come on board. However, tensions do remain. For example, mayors would prefer a direct link between national resources and the municipalities without having to deal with intermediary bureaucracies like FOSIS.

*Chile Solidario* includes skills development, work assistance, social security, services for vulnerable children and families such as school loans, programmes for at-risk children and domestic violence survivors, and family support visits by social workers. During the *Programa Puente* phase of the programme, a social worker works with around

30 families to develop a work plan to enable families to participate in locally offered services. The family supporter plays a key role in linking participants to services, but does not provide the services. Evidence shows the programme positively impacts beneficiaries' likelihood to be enrolled in job training or employment programmes. While these types of programmes have an effect on beneficiaries' ability to self-sustain in the future, data are unclear about the long-term impact on families' ability to exit poverty. Many of the services are labour-oriented, which is an inherent difference from countries where there is little formal sector employment.

Success factors include inter-governmental cooperation and successful linkages of beneficiaries to social services as a required, rather than recommended, outcome of the programme. *Chile Solidario* illustrates the importance of executive Government support along with cooperation across ministries. Scaling up FOSIS' pilot program and consolidating it within MIDEPLAN created tensions, but also enforced coordination between the institutions. Along with the institutional and social provisions, the Ministry of Finance earmarks *Chile Solidario* funds for different ministries for multi-sectoral programming and monitors expenditure all the way to beneficiary level. The designated funding mechanism at the national level allows for monitoring across various Government agencies.

Although the driving force behind *Chile Solidario* came from the Executive level, the level of political support for social programmes in general and specifically for *Chile Solidario* helped reduce initial resistance at the local level. Additionally, there is suggestive evidence on the key role of the psychosocial support component in impacting poverty reduction by increasing households' future orientation as well as awareness of community social services. Finally, in addition to cash transfers, psychosocial programmes and income-generation services have a demonstrated positive impact on beneficiaries and consequently, the success of the programme overall.

