Oxford Policy Management

TRANSITION MONITORING SYNTHESIS REPORT

Evaluation of the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) Phase 3

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Preface

Oxford Policy Management (OPM) led the monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEK) component of Phase 3 of the Government of Kenya's (GoK's) cash transfer programme for northern Kenya, the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP), from 2019 to 2024. The research was conducted on behalf of the UK Government and funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

One workstream of the MEK components was monitoring the transition to GoK implementation of the HSNP. This synthesis report draws on six transition monitoring reports produced by OPM between July 2022 and February 2025.

The author would like to sincerely thank the staff of the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) and the HSNP Programme Management Unit (PMU) for their time, insight, and cooperation throughout the transition monitoring process. In particular, we acknowledge the contributions of Lt. Col. (Rtd.) Hared Hassan (CEO), Hashim Adan (Director of Corporate Services), Saiyana Lembara (Director of Technical Services), Yussuf Bagaja (Deputy Director, Finance and Accounts), Patrick Musichi (Deputy Director, Human Resource Management and Administration), and Eng. Hussein Jirma (HSNP Programme Coordinator). Their guidance and support were instrumental in facilitating interviews, providing documentation, and validating emerging findings across the monitoring period.

This report was authored by Anita Ntale, on behalf of OPM, under the GEFA framework.

Disclaimer

Executive summary

Introduction

The Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) is a government-led unconditional cash transfer programme that aims to reduce poverty and vulnerability among poor households in Kenya's arid and semi-arid regions. It is now in its third phase (Phase 3).

Funded by the UK Government, Oxford Policy Management (OPM) (through the e-Pact consortium) delivered the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Knowledge (MEK) component of HSNP Phase 3. This included four workstreams. Among these, one workstream monitored the transition of HSNP from a Programme Management Unit (PMU) and technical assistance-led model to full Government of Kenya (GoK) management under the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA). This synthesis report summarises the work and findings of the transition monitoring workstream. It describes and assesses the transition of the HSNP to GoK management, covering the period July 2022 to December 2024, focusing on the progress made, the challenges encountered, and the lessons learned.

Findings

1. **Successful transition of core functions:** HSNP successfully transferred all of the core programme functions to NDMA, including payments, project accounts, internal audit, and operations management. Additionally, the HSNP's management information system (MIS) was developed into a product-based model, which strengthens NDMA's capacity to manage core programme functions in-house.
2. **Advances in institutional ownership:** NDMA restructured HSNP under its Climate Change Adaptation and Social Protection Department. This included integrating key roles into permanent NDMA structures and embedding the realigned MIS within NDMA's broader information management systems
3. **Challenges in system integration and resource constraints:** Despite the enhancements made to the MIS, integration of the system with GoK financial systems, such as enterprise resource planning (ERP) and audit tools, remains incomplete, with a continued need for external support. Additionally, budget reductions significantly impacted post-payment monitoring, training implementation, and staffing stability, resulting in ad hoc prioritisation of critical functions rather than strategic planning.
4. **Inconsistencies in training implementation:** While technical staff transitioned successfully, delays in approving and delivering training led to gaps in capacity development for functions such as detecting fraud in payments, audit automation, and advanced MIS analytics. Some training sessions were not conducted due to budget constraints.
5. **Progress on monitoring systems, but limited application in decision-making:** The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework was revised and validated in 2024, and training on the new M&E tools was delivered. However, actual use of the framework has been minimal due to budget constraints, lack of clarity on roles, and limited follow-through. Post-payment monitoring was suspended in 2024, and MIS-generated data are not yet used for routine M&E reporting. As a result, evidence-based decision-making remains underdeveloped.
6. **Need for proactive policy and financial planning:** The transition occurred against a backdrop of presidential directives, budget uncertainties, and contractual adjustments, all of which affected implementation timelines and operational performance. NDMA was unable to sustain regular payments and instead delivered limited transfers to selected sub-counties within the constraints of the available budget. Structured contingency planning therefore remains essential to ensure long-term stability of the HSNP.

Conclusion and lessons learned

The HSNP3 transition achieved significant milestones, and NDMA's successful restructuring of HSNP within its organisational structure, alongside strengthened MIS, payments, and project accounts functions, has established a strong foundation, despite disruptions to payments from June to December 2024, coinciding with the end of the final transition monitoring period. Although final disbursements took place in September – October 2023, payment flows remained inconsistent throughout the remainder of 2024 and into early 2025, and have not yet fully stabilised at the time of writing this report. However, financial unpredictability, delayed system integration, weak monitoring, and training gaps remain critical risks. Targeted investments in system integration, policy preparedness, and capacity-building will be necessary to ensure sustained effectiveness under full government management. Finally, while institutional ownership has increased, NDMA's ability to sustain key programme functions under future budget constraints remains untested.

Several lessons emerged from the transition process:

- Stable staffing arrangements are necessary to maintain continuity in critical functions during programme handover.
- Transitioning requires a clear plan with structured timelines, defined responsibilities, and formal accountability mechanisms to monitor progress and mitigate challenges.
- There is a need for formal contingency planning when technical assistance exits, including predefined financial mechanisms to maintain service continuity in the face of budget constraints.
- Over-reliance on individual knowledge holders should be avoided, by documenting systems and processes and ensuring responsibilities, knowledge, and skills

are shared across team members, so that continuity is maintained even when individuals change or are unavailable.

- Training should be planned and budgeted for, with clear milestones in transition planning to ensure timely delivery and embedded in government systems and institutions to support long-term sustainability.
- Programme information systems, such as the HSNP MIS, should be integrated into government financial and audit systems, with their use institutionalised across functions.

Key recommendations for strengthening HSNP under NDMA

1. **Strengthen system integration:** Build on the existing integration of the HSNP MIS with the Audit MIS by fast-tracking the integration of MIS with ERP and other operational software to enhance automation and financial oversight.
2. **Formalise contingency planning:** Develop structured budgetary response mechanisms to manage financial constraints and ensure sustained programme effectiveness, including stronger internal advocacy within GoK to protect HSNP budgets. Development partners can play a supportive role by reinforcing the case for sustained financing and linking future support to budget commitments.
3. **Safeguard programme financing:** Explore options such as ringfencing HSNP funds at the Treasury through financing agreements and commitments during negotiations, or by including relevant conditions in development programme objectives (DPOs). Development partners can support this by reinforcing the case for sustained financing and linking future support to such budget commitments.
4. **Optimise training delivery:** Prioritise delayed training in fraud detection, risk management (which were initially rejected), and MIS analytics, ensuring staff receive essential capacity development.
5. **Reintroduce post-payment monitoring:** Advocate for the restoration of monitoring budgets. In the absence of consistent funding, it is recommended to utilise alternative data sources where possible and integrate MIS insights into operational decision-making to compensate for field monitoring gaps.
    - **Sustain advocacy for monitoring budget restoration:** Build on ongoing efforts — including appeals to the National Treasury and the Parliamentary Committee on Regional Development — by maintaining active advocacy for the reinstatement of monitoring budgets. Reinforced engagement with government counterparts can help ensure the commitment to restore funds in Supplementary Budget No. III is upheld.
6. **Revise and implement a communication strategy:** While recent efforts have improved the consistency of messaging to communities and beneficiaries, there is currently no overarching up-to-date communication strategy in place. A formal strategy is needed to coordinate stakeholder engagement across counties, clarify programme information (e.g. payment schedules, rights, grievance channels), and support transparency and accountability.

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List of abbreviations

BWC	Beneficiary Welfare Committee
ERP	Enterprise resource planning
FCDO	UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
GoK	Government of Kenya
HQ	Headquarters
HSNP	Hunger Safety Net Programme
IT	Information technology
KSEIP	Kenya Social Economic Inclusion Programme
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MEK	Monitoring, evaluation, and knowledge
MIS	Management information system
NDMA	National Drought Management Authority
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
PMU	Programme Management Unit
PSP	Payment service provider

1 Background

1.1 Summary of HSNP Phase 3

The HSNP is a government-led unconditional cash transfer programme that aims to relieve extreme hunger and vulnerability for poor households living in its target counties in arid and semi-arid areas of Kenya. In its third phase (Phase 3), it is operating in eight counties which experience droughts, food insecurity, and floods. At the time of writing the programme was delivering 2,700 Kenyan shillings each month to 133,800 beneficiaries across the eight counties. During preceding emergencies, it rapidly scaled up to reach a further 699,710 beneficiaries to provide emergency payments following shocks.

Phase 3 of the programme, which started in 2019, involved transitioning the HSNP to full GoK ownership and financing. A key focus for the HSNP during Phase 3 was building the capacity of the NDMA to effectively lead, manage, coordinate, and finance the HSNP. This was expected to allow for a sustainable programme transition from a donor-/PMU-led arrangement to full GoK management. The Kenya Social Economic Inclusion Programme (KSEIP) Project Appraisal Document envisaged that these functions would be mainstreamed into NDMA's organisational structure under the Directorate of Technical Services.

1.2 Transition monitoring under the MEK component of HSNP Phase 3

Over the last 15 years OPM has been funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to work in partnership with GoK to generate evidence on the impact of the HSNP, its operational performance, and the overall strategic policy framework. In For HSNP Phase 3, this involved implementing the independent MEK component of the programme, which had four workstreams: 1) monitoring; 2) capacity assessment; 3) a process evaluation; and 3) an impact evaluation.

Workstream 2 (capacity assessment) included monitoring the transition of the HSNP to full GoK management under the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA). This focused on tracking the process of institutional transition from a PMU-led delivery model to full GoK ownership under NDMA. As part of this work, between July 2022 and February 2025 OPM produced six biannual transition monitoring reports. The reports tracked the transition of key staff positions and programme functions, setting out achievements, identifying delays, and providing recommendations to strengthen the transition process and pace. Together, the reports provided timely and regular monitoring of the transition process, highlighting progress, challenges, and emerging issues to enable stakeholders to take necessary corrective actions.

The presentis report synthesises synthesises the findings of the six transition monitoring reports. These reports were guided by a Transition Monitoring Framework developed in 2021, which outlined the objectives, indicators, and methods for assessing institutional transition. A summary of this framework is included in **Annex A**.

2 Approach

The transition monitoring conducted by OPM under Workstream 2 of the MEK component assessed the progress, challenges, and sustainability of handover from the HSNP PMU to NDMA, together with capacity development efforts. Each of the six biannual transition monitoring reports built on previous findings, refining the focus areas in response to the transition's evolving achievements and emerging issues. The approach was adaptive, with the emphasis shifting over time: for example, moving from early-stage role tracking to a greater focus on institutional integration, budgeting constraints, and capacity gaps as the transition progressed.

2.1 Methods

The transition monitoring combined output-level assessments of progress against the agreed transition workplan with qualitative data collected through key informant interviews with NDMA and PMU staff as well as other relevant stakeholders. These interviews gathered stakeholders' perspectives on capacity development, handover, and transition efforts, with the aim of comprehending in real time what was working well, what was not, and what the underlying drivers of, and barriers to, a successful transition were, including the sustainability of developed capacities. This allowed for iterative learning and adaptive response by NDMA and its stakeholders across monitoring rounds.

Transition monitoring framework

The transition monitoring process began with the development of a transition monitoring framework. This framework was based on the transition plan developed by NDMA, which was itself informed by capacity assessments conducted in the early phase of the transition. The monitoring framework set out the agreed transition activities, timeframes, milestones, indicators, data sources, data collection tools and methods, and reporting format for the transition monitoring. The framework was a living document and was updated at each monitoring round to reflect progress and adjustments to plans.

Data collection

Monitoring data were collected through several methods, as listed in Table 1. Data collection occurred on a bi-annual basis between January 2022 and December 2024, primarily through key informant interviews with NDMA, PMU, and other stakeholders to track progress and identify emerging issues.

Table 1: Data collection methods

Method	Description
Key informant interviews	Key informant interviews were conducted with NDMA and PMU staff, government stakeholders, and development partners. An iterative process was applied, with focus areas for interviews refined across rounds. The interviews aimed to gather perspectives on the progress of capacity development and handover efforts, outstanding gaps and challenges, successes, and areas for improvement. Interview guides were used to structure these conversations.
Output-level monitoring	Output-level monitoring involved NDMA staff updating a structured transition monitoring table to assess progress against transition workplans, covering indicators, targets, and timelines.
Document review	The transition monitoring team carried out a document review which involved analysing transition plans, operational manuals, and status reports to identify implementation challenges and to assess the documents' consistency with NDMA's evolving mandate and programme delivery responsibilities. Documents reviewed included the Roadmap on HSNP III Transition Plan, the Transition Schedule for all PMU positions, the draft transition workplan, the HSNP operations manual, the M&E framework, the communications strategy, and environmental and social safeguards documents.
Status updates	In some instances, pre-agreed NDMA staff members were requested to complete the 'status' column of the output-level monitoring table in advance of key informant interviews, to provide an initial overview of the transition's progress.

Reporting format: Each report included an executive summary setting out key findings and recommendations, n introduction outlining the objectives of the transition monitoring, and detailed progress updates on the transition of key roles and functions. The transition monitoring reports also featured an analysis of risks and recommendations, progress metrics tracking key milestones, and annexes listing interview participants and providing supporting documentation.

As far as possible reporting was aligned with broader KSEIP monitoring processes, such as the Joint Review and Implementation Support (JRIS) meetings or the KSEIP implementation status and results reporting. A total of six transition monitoring reports were produced over the course of the transition.

2.2 Analysis

The transition monitoring analysis involved comparing the information gathered from the document review and interviews against the agreed transition plans and indicators. The analysis framework was structured around several key elements designed to provide a comprehensive and regular assessment of the handover process.

The Transition Monitoring framework was structured around several key elements that were designed to provide a comprehensive and regular assessment of the handover process. The overarching objective was to provide timely and regular monitoring to highlight progress, challenges, and emerging issues. The analysis aimed to provide a balanced perspective, highlighting both successes and areas requiring further attention and action. Ultimately, the framework aimed to produce outputs that would enable stakeholders to take corrective actions as required. The analysis was guided by a number of key research questions.

Table 2: Key research questions

Research question	Assessment approach
Are capacity development and handover activities on track?	Comparing progress against milestones, indicators, and expected results outlined in transition workplans.
How do NDMA and PMU staff and stakeholders perceive the transition?	Capturing insights through key informant interviews with those directly involved or observing the transition.
What has worked well, what has not, and why?	Identifying successes and barriers and exploring underlying reasons for observed results.
How sustainable is the developed capacity?	Assessing whether skills, systems, and structures would be maintained and effectively utilised in the long term.
What trends are emerging in capacity development and handover?	Tracking transition progress across multiple monitoring rounds and identifying patterns in institutional change.

Limitations and adaptations of the transition monitoring framework: The transition monitoring framework was a living document, updated in each round to reflect progress, emerging priorities, and adjustments to the transition plan. While this adaptive approach facilitated relevance, challenges included:

- evolving institutional structures, which affected the stability of transition roles;
- data delays and inconsistencies, which limited the ability to track longitudinal trends with accuracy; and
- shifting timelines and a lack of specificity in the transition plan, which made it difficult to assess progress against time-bound milestones and limited the ability to systematically monitor implementation.

Despite these challenges, the iterative nature of the qualitative data collection allowed the monitoring framework to remain responsive to transition realities, ensuring that findings remained actionable and relevant.

Focus of the analysis: The analysis framework focused on the transition of key HSNP functions and roles:

- **Operations manager:** The analysis monitored the identification of a shadow officer, training progress, and the handover of the operational responsibilities of this key role.
- **MIS:** The analysis assessed the assignment of shadow officers, the alignment of job descriptions, training on the MIS, the procurement and development of the MIS product, and the overall transition of MIS functions.
- **Payments:** The analysis tracked the deployment of shadow officers, training in payment processes, and the transition of payment responsibilities.
- **M&E:** The analysis monitored the identification of shadow officers, the development of training plans, engagement with the MIS, updating of the M&E framework, and the handover of M&E functions.

- **Internal audit:** The analysis assessed the identification of shadow officers, training on audit processes, engagement with the MIS, and the integration of HSNP audit functions within NDMA's internal audit department.
- **Project accounts:** The analysis tracked the deployment and training of shadow officers and the transition of project accounting roles and responsibilities.
- **Communications:** The analysis monitored the recruitment of staff, the development of a communication strategy, and the handover of communication responsibilities.
- **Programme officers and programme managers (at the county level):** The analysis assessed plans for the incorporation of these roles into NDMA structures.

Progress within these focus areas was often assessed using progress metrics, which provided an output-level assessment of whether agreed transition actions were on track compared to the transition workplan. These metrics included indicators such as the identification of shadow officers, the development and approval of training plans, training that was underway, and the formal transition of roles.

The analysis also considered key implications and risks associated with the transition progress (or lack thereof), along with providing recommendations for strengthening the transition process and pace. These sections of the biannual transition monitoring reports highlighted potential threats to service delivery and suggested corrective measures.

3 Findings

3.1 Overview of transition progress and delays

The transition of HSNP roles from the PMU to the NDMA was initially expected to follow the 2021 NDMA transition plan, with staggered handovers aligned to contract end dates for PMU technical assistants. However, the early biannual transition monitoring reports produced by OPM revealed that many roles lacked clear timelines and structured handover plans, making it difficult to track or enforce progress. By March 2023 (transition monitoring report 3) persistent delays prompted concerns about continuity: for example, shadowing for the transition of the Operations Manager's role had not begun at this time, even though this was a key role and the PMU specialist's contract was due to end in June 2023. The lack of structured handovers and delayed appointments led to a risk of knowledge loss, with PMU contracts extended as a temporary measure to bridge capacity gaps. These delays, while partly attributed to broader institutional reforms and recruitment processes, significantly shaped the pace and structure of the transition.

The HSNP operations manual underwent multiple revisions during the transition, reflecting the programme's evolving structure under full NDMA management. However, the revised version was not fully disseminated or operationalised until the very end of the transition period. This created ambiguity around roles, responsibilities, and compliance procedures, particularly in areas such as data reporting, monitoring, and grievance handling.

Furthermore, while the Transition Committee was tasked with overseeing progress, limited follow-up mechanisms and a lack of structured issue resolution processes meant that many challenges were addressed reactively rather than proactively.

The following sub-sections provide more detail on the transition of the key roles and functions that were the focus of OPM's transition monitoring.

3.2 Operations Manager

The transition of the Operations Manager role was a key component in shifting HSNP's management from the donor-led PMU to full integration within NDMA. Initially, this transition faced delays due to the lack of a structured handover plan and delays in identifying a shadow officer. However, by December 2024, the transition was completed, with the Operations Manager formally appointed as Deputy Director of Climate Change Adaptation and Social Protection in NDMA, fully embedding the role within the organisation's leadership structure.

The following paragraphs outline the transition process and timeline for the Operations Manager in more detail.

Early transition challenges (July 2022 to March 2023): The first transition monitoring report (July 2022) highlighted the absence of a shadow officer to take over from the PMU Operations Manager. By March 2023, there was still no progress on this point, raising concerns about continuity as the incumbent's contract neared expiration (in June 2023). Without an understudy, critical functions such as beneficiary data accuracy, complaints resolution, and payment service provider (PSP) engagement were at risk.

Identification and training of an understudy (July 2023 to November 2023): In July 2023, the PMU Operations Manager's contract was extended temporarily, but there was still no identified successor. This was only resolved in November 2023, when the NDMA identified an understudy from within its ranks, marking a step towards continuity. However, full engagement in operations had yet to begin at this time, raising concerns over knowledge transfer and institutional memory loss.

Induction and shadowing (March 2024): By March 2024, the new Operations Manager had begun induction and was shadowing the outgoing PMU Operations Manager. The induction and shadowing focussed on:

- hands-on training in HSNP operations, county engagement, and strategic planning;
- familiarisation with NDMA's legal frameworks and disaster risk financing; and
- participation in high-level discussions and joint reviews, ensuring alignment with broader NDMA objectives.

A key milestone at this time was the revision of the operations manual, which was outdated and required alignment with new NDMA structures.

Final transition to Deputy Director role (December 2024): By December 2024, the transition was complete: the Operations Manager was promoted to Deputy Director of Climate Change Adaptation and Social Protection in NDMA with broader programme realignments to:

- institutionalise the role's responsibilities within NDMA;
- integrate HSNP strategic planning into NDMA's long-term vision; and
- facilitate a smooth leadership transition, leveraging the experience gained during the shadowing process.

The table below captures successes and challenges during the transition process for the Operations Manager role.

Table 3: Key achievements and challenges faced during the transition[1]

Successes	Challenges
Full transition and institutional embedding – The Operations Manager role was successfully transferred and integrated into NDMA's governance structure.	Training gaps – Delays in the approval and execution of planned training impacted knowledge transfer.
Strategic leadership established – The appointee now oversees the operational implementation of HSNP.	Initial delays in identifying a successor led to an extended transition period.
Operations Manual revised and validated, ensuring procedural clarity.	

The Operations Manager transition ultimately ensured full integration of the role into NDMA, providing institutional leadership and operational continuity. While initial delays in identifying the shadow officer impacted the process, alongside training gaps which constrained their technical capacity, the structured induction and final appointment of the Operations Manager as Deputy Director marked the successful completion of the transition by December 2024. Formatting for this heading is inconsistent with similar ones elsewhere.

- Plan leadership transitions early: Early identification of shadow officers, especially for such key roles, is essential to allow sufficient time for knowledge transfer.
- Institutionalise key roles: Embedding leadership roles within permanent structures supports strategic alignment and sustainability.
- Allocate sufficient time for shadowing and training: Dedicated time for induction and mentoring, alongside necessary training, improves continuity during transitions and ensures requisite technical competence to deliver the role.

3.3 MIS

The transition of the HSNP MIS was one of the most technically complex aspects of shifting HSNP's digital infrastructure and operations from PMU oversight to NDMA management. The transition aimed to strengthen internal capacity, reduce reliance on external support, and improve integration of the MIS with broader NDMA functions. By December 2024, NDMA's in-house team had assumed full responsibility for management of the MIS, though some external support remains necessary in relation to advanced system architecture and database integration.

The following paragraphs outline the transition process and timeline for the MIS in more detail.

The first transition monitoring report highlighted major delays in transitioning the HSNP MIS due to holdups in the procurement of a data centre and contracting of a technical assistance MIS firm. At this stage, NDMA was still reliant on external contractors and lacked direct control over the MIS, which raised sustainability concerns. By March 2023, NDMA had contracted an MIS firm, marking the first major step

[1] It is important to note that in this table (and the similar tables for other roles/functions throughout Section 3) we include challenges that were subsequently resolved and are not ongoing at the time of writing.

towards transition. Moreover, training sessions for the newly appointed MIS staff were planned at this time, though the time available for training was limited due to the earlier delays.

Building internal capacity (July 2023 to November 2023): By July 2023, the MIS firm had been onboarded and capacity-building exercises for internal NDMA staff were underway.. User acceptance testing was initiated, marking major progress. At this time, NDMA's MIS team (six officers) were assigned different responsibilities:

- **Databases and database management:** Overseeing the storage, organisation, and maintenance of critical data.
- **Backend development:** Managing networks, data centres, and system components integration.
- **Geographic information systems (GIS):** Handling spatial data analysis and mapping functionalities.
- **Quality assurance and documentation:** Ensuring the system's quality standards are met and maintaining thorough documentation for continuity.
- **Software development and customisation:** Ensuring the system's adaptability, scalability and interoperability.
- **Networking and IT support:** Ensuring seamless operation across counties.

System testing and finalisation (March 2024 to December 2024): By March 2024, all MIS modules were completed, with user acceptance testing conducted across programme officers, programme managers, and the MIS team. NDMA's in-house staff successfully took over day-to-day MIS operations, including system maintenance, real-time monitoring, and automation of payment tracking. However, integration of the MIS with the ERP and audit software remains incomplete and there remains a need for external support for full financial automation, particularly in relation to advanced database management, AI-driven analytics, and the integration of audit software, the ERP and the MIS for real-time financial reporting.

Table 4: Key achievements and challenges faced during the transition

Successes	Challenges
Full transition of the MIS to NDMA's in-house team, reducing reliance on external developers.	**Delayed procurement** of data centre and MIS firm slowed early transition progress.
Role division enhanced resilience, reducing dependency on individual staff members.	**Integration of the MIS with the ERP and audit systems remains incomplete,** which limits automation.
Mobile applications were introduced, and a real-time dashboard was developed within the new MIS.	**The dashboard is not yet fully functional for monitoring and reporting purposes**, limiting its contribution to decision-making. Advanced database management and AI-driven analytics require ongoing external support.
Training of MIS officers improved technical expertise and operational independence.	**Gaps in advanced system architecture training,** requiring phased technical upskilling.

The MIS transition successfully shifted MIS ownership from external support to NDMA's internal team, with key improvements in capacity building, role division, and system functionality. While integration of the ERP and audit software with the MIS remains a challenge, the structured approach to training, role distribution, and phased implementation ensured that NDMA can now manage core system operations, with reduced reliance on external technical assistance. Moving forwards, closing system integration gaps and strengthening staff training in advanced data management will be key to sustaining long-term MIS capacity and efficiency.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- **Splitting roles improves sustainability:** The decision to divide the MIS function into multiple roles reduced dependency on a single technical assistant and supported specialisation. This model can inform other complex transitions.
- **Capacity building must account for operational realities:** MIS officers missed critical training sessions due to competing responsibilities. Future transitions should build in protected time for learning during live operations.
- **Clearer MIS ownership is needed for data use:** While technical handover has been largely completed, responsibility for generating and using MIS data (e.g. for monitoring or audits) remains ambiguous and fragmented, resulting in suboptimal use of MIS for decision-making and accountability. Clarifying roles and responsibilities for production and use of MIS data should be part of operational planning.

3.4 M&E

The M&E function is essential for tracking HSNP progress, ensuring accountability, and measuring programme impact.

The transition of M&E responsibilities from a PMU-led approach to NDMA's internal Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation team aimed to enhance long-term sustainability. However, significant budget constraints forced NDMA to prioritise cash transfer delivery over other functions, delaying the full operationalisation of M&E activities post-transition.

The following paragraphs outline the transition process and timeline for the M&E function in more detail.

Early transition struggles (July 2022 to March 2023): The first transition monitoring report, in July 2022, highlighted a major gap: no shadow officers had been identified at that time and NDMA had not assigned personnel to take over M&E functions. At this stage, HSNP's M&E activities remained fully dependent on PMU personnel, with no formal handover strategy in place. This initial gap in planning created challenges for data collection, quality assurance, and programme evaluation. By March 2023, progress had been made, with the identification of an officer to shadow the M&E Specialist, representing the first structured step towards transition of the M&E function. While this was a positive development, further efforts were needed to strengthen capacity building and to establish a clearer framework for aligning HSNP's M&E with NDMA's broader monitoring, evaluation, and learning structures.

Challenges in engagement and MIS focus (July 2023 to November 2023): By July 2023, the transition was facing setbacks due to limited engagement from the M&E technical assistant, who was unavailable for multiple review sessions due to their competing priorities. . This slowed knowledge transfer and delayed planning for an expanded HSNP M&E function under NDMA. At the same time, the M&E team prioritised MIS integration, enhancing digital reporting capabilities but temporarily shifting focus away from field-based monitoring. As a result, post-payment monitoring activities were deprioritised, with teams heavily involved in MIS-related training. Additionally, the review of the M&E framework was delayed, which led to postponing the roll-out of revised monitoring tools, indicators, and reporting procedures.

Despite these challenges, by November 2023, the NDMA Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation team was engaged in MIS training and had strengthened its engagement in system-wide digital monitoring, contributing to more data-driven decision-making and laying the groundwork for future improvements in M&E processes.

Major advancements and training efforts (March 2024 to December 2024): In March 2024 a key breakthrough was achieved with the full revision of the M&E framework and updated monitoring tools. Additionally, in December 2024 county-level teams were trained on new data collection tools for case management and emergency scale-up, real-time data tracking through MIS dashboards, and revised post-payment monitoring strategies. This enhanced overall system efficiency and responsiveness. Despite these improvements, however, and while full transition was complete by December 2024, budget cuts have seriously limited post-payment monitoring fieldwork.

Table 5: Key achievements and challenges faced during the transition

Successes	Challenges
Updated M&E framework, enhancing monitoring effectiveness.	Severe budget constraints impacted field monitoring, reducing post-payment evaluations. Continued over-reliance on post-payment monitoring for M&E data.
New data collection tools integrated into the MIS, allowing for real-time tracking.	**Delayed appointment of shadow officers** led to slow transition progress.
Training workshops for county-level teams built their capacity.	**Integration of M&E tools in the MIS was not fully completed**, limiting automated analysis.
Initial engagement with MIS officers improved **M&E digitisation**.	**Geospatial data analysis and advanced evaluation techniques remained underdeveloped.**

Lessons learned and recommendations

- **Ensure parallel focus on both digital and field-based M&E:** While digitisation through the MIS is beneficial, it should not replace direct field monitoring as this provides valuable detail and casual understanding.
- **Secure dedicated funding for monitoring activities:** Budget shortages significantly weakened NDMA's ability to track programme implementation and service delivery in real time.
- **Strengthen geospatial and advanced analytics training:** Enhancing M&E teams' data analysis capabilities will provide the basis for improved evidence-based decision-making, provided that these skills are applied, and the outputs are used.
- **Prioritise post-payment monitoring and beneficiary verification:** A hybrid MIS and field-based approach should be adopted to improve coverage and data reliability. More detailed findings and recommendations on this are available in the separate monitoring and MIS deep-dive reports (See references).

3.5 Internal audit

The internal audit function plays a critical role in ensuring financial accountability, programme transparency, and compliance monitoring within HSNP. The transition of this function aimed to shift audit responsibilities from the PMU to NDMA's internal audit team, thereby strengthening governance and reducing reliance on external oversight. Initially, the transition of the internal audit faced challenges due to gaps in training, delays in system integration, and limited exposure to HSNP operations. The internal audit team relied heavily on external consultants and once their contracts had ended operational knowledge gaps emerged. While the internal audit team participated in multiple training sessions, including governance, risk, compliance, and data analytics, engagement with HSNP's financial and operational processes remained limited.

By December 2024, the transition was formally completed, and the internal audit team had taken full responsibility for auditing HSNP. However, integration of audit processes and data flows across the ERP system and the HSNP MIS remained incomplete at this time, limiting the internal audit team's ability to conduct fully automated and data-driven audits.

The following paragraphs outline the transition process and timeline for the internal audit function in more detail.

Initial induction and confidence gaps (July 2022 to March 2023): The first transition monitoring report (in July 2022) reported that NDMA's audit team was being inducted into HSNP functions and that initial capacity-building efforts had been initiated. This marked an initial step towards transferring oversight responsibilities. However, readiness concerns emerged due to:

- limited direct engagement with HSNP financial records;
- lack of exposure to programmatic risks associated with social protection payments; and
- over-reliance on PMU guidance for compliance tracking.

By March 2023, while engagement had improved, internal auditors lacked confidence in independently managing HSNP audits. Additionally, training gaps and delays in ERP integration meant audit procedures remained heavily reliant on manual review processes.

Formal transition and training needs (July 2023 to November 2023): By July 2023, the HSNP audit function was officially transferred to NDMA's internal audit team, marking a key milestone in strengthening government financial oversight of the HSNP. NDMA assumed full responsibility for financial reporting and risk assessments, ensuring greater alignment with its internal governance structures. While this transition represented progress, the audit team required further experience in HSNP-specific risk assessments to enhance compliance tracking. Additionally, system-based auditing tools were still in the process of being integrated, meaning some transactions continued to be validated manually.

To build capacity and improve efficiency, two additional training sessions were scheduled for late 2023. These sessions focused on risk management, fraud detection, and compliance with World Bank and NDMA financial guidelines, to equip auditors with the necessary skills to manage HSNP audits more effectively. However, gaps in ERP integration and system-based auditing persisted.

Integration challenges and system limitations (March 2024 to December 2024): By March 2024, NDMA had developed a structured training plan for internal auditors, aimed at strengthening financial analytics and risk management, ensuring compliance with international auditing standards, and integrating audit processes into NDMA's ERP and MIS systems. These efforts were designed to enhance automation and streamline audit functions. While progress was made, the full integration of audit software and ERP functions was still underway, with continued refinement required to reduce manual processes. Additionally, expanding access to programme data was identified as a priority to support more effective risk assessment.

By December 2024, the transition was formally completed, with HSNP audits embedded within NDMA's governance framework. With key systems in place, ongoing improvements in automation and data accessibility are now needed to further strengthen audit efficiency and risk evaluation over time. Limited exposure to HSNP operations still affects audits.

Table 6: Key achievements and challenges faced during the transition

Successes	Challenges
Audit responsibilities fully transitioned to NDMA's team.	Limited exposure to HSNP's operational processes hinders the effectiveness of risk assessments.
Training sessions improved financial oversight capacity.	Delays in integrating audit functions into the MIS and ERP system reduced efficiency.
New audit software procured, offering potential for automation.	Inconsistent engagement in early training sessions slowed skill development.
HSNP financial reporting is now fully embedded within NDMA's governance structures.	Manual data validation remains necessary due to incomplete automation.
Internal auditors successfully assumed HSNP oversight, reducing dependency on external consultants.	Delayed system integration forced continued reliance on manual auditing.
Training programmes enhanced financial compliance capabilities.	Internal auditors lack exposure to HSNP operations, impacting effectiveness.
Procurement of new audit software paved the way for future automation.	Limited compliance tracking due to ERP implementation delays.
HSNP audits were fully embedded into NDMA's governance framework.	Some training programmes were postponed due to scheduling conflicts.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- Enhance practical exposure to HSNP for internal auditors: Direct engagement in HSNP operations will improve their understanding of programmatic risks.
- Fast-track ERP and audit system integration: Automation will improve efficiency and reduce compliance risks.
- Improve training coordination: Avoid delays in training delivery by ensuring sessions align with auditors' availability.
- Strengthen cross-departmental collaboration: Improved communication between finance, audit, and MIS teams will facilitate system integration.

3.6 Communications

The communications function plays a crucial role in stakeholder engagement, beneficiary outreach, and public awareness of HSNP activities. The transition aimed to establish a dedicated communications team within NDMA to ensure effective dissemination of programme operations, payment schedules, and policy changes. However, delayed recruitment and the absence of an institutional handover process created significant setbacks, impacting public engagement and grievance handling.

The following paragraphs outline the transition process and timeline for the communications function in more detail.

Laying the groundwork (July 2022 to March 2023): At the start of the transition, NDMA's corporate communications function remained unstaffed, leaving HSNP without a dedicated officer to manage beneficiary messaging, media relations, and public engagement. While communication efforts continued under the existing PMU structure, the absence of a designated in-house lead meant there was limited coordination of awareness campaigns and no formal mechanism for knowledge transfer.

As the transition progressed, recruitment efforts did not advance as planned. By March 2023, no officer had been appointed, and without a structured handover there was growing concern about retaining institutional knowledge. The lack of a dedicated focal point for grievance handling and stakeholder engagement also highlighted the need to formalise the communications structure for the HSNP.

Critical recruitment gaps and institutional knowledge loss (July 2023 to November 2023): By July 2023, NDMA had yet to identify a shadow officer to work alongside the Communications Specialist, limiting opportunities for structured knowledge transfer and risking knowledge loss. With PMU team members preparing to transition out, ensuring continuity in beneficiary outreach and programme branding became a priority.

A breakthrough came in November 2023, when NDMA initiated a recruitment drive for a Communications Officer. This marked a step forward in institutionalising HSNP's communications, laying the foundation for a dedicated team. Alongside recruitment, there was increasing recognition of the need to enhance public engagement strategies, particularly as HSNP scaled up operations across more counties.

Appointment of communications leadership (March 2024 to December 2024): By March 2024, a significant milestone was reached, with the hiring and induction of an Assistant Director of Corporate Communications. This appointment strengthened HSNP's ability to deliver consistent and structured messaging, while the availability of handover notes from the outgoing communications technical assistant helped mitigate potential knowledge gaps. Additionally, a review of HSNP's communication tools and outreach strategies was initiated to enhance the effectiveness of programme communications.

With leadership in place, the focus shifted towards modernising HSNP's communication strategy. As the programme evolved, existing approaches needed to be refined to incorporate digital engagement tools and mobile-based communication channels. By December 2024, a structured communications function was fully embedded within NDMA, providing a solid foundation for future improvements in stakeholder engagement and public outreach.

Table 7: Key achievements and challenges faced during the transition

Successes	Challenges
Recruitment of an Assistant Director of Corporate Communications ensured programme continuity and improved NDMA's capacity.	**Delayed recruitment** created a major transition gap, weakening beneficiary outreach.
Increased recognition of communications as a critical function for HSNP's long-term success.	**No structured knowledge transfer occurred**, risking the loss of key programme messaging expertise. **Lack of clear county-level communication structures** reduces outreach effectiveness.
Some institutional memory retained through handover notes from the outgoing communications technical assistant.	There remains a need for a revised HSNP communication strategy to align with updated programme realities and to set out how HSNP engages with beneficiaries digitally.
Opportunities identified for improved beneficiary engagement through digital platforms.	Inconsistent communication across counties due to gaps in coordination with field officers.
Successful recruitment of an Assistant Director of Corporate Communications ensured programme continuity.	Significant delays in recruitment led to a long transition gap, impacting beneficiary engagement.
Institutional knowledge was partially retained through handover notes and documentation.	Absence of a structured knowledge transfer process weakened HSNP's public relations continuity.
NDMA formally recognised communications as a critical function, securing long-term staffing for this role.	Lack of clear county-level communication structures, reducing outreach effectiveness.

The communications transition was completed with the recruitment of an Assistant Director. However, in the absence of a structured handover or formal strategy, initial efforts focused on addressing immediate priorities, particularly around harmonising messaging on payment cycles, grievance processes, and programme access. Communication at the frontline continued to rely on field staff, who were balancing multiple responsibilities, leading to some variation across counties. A formal communication strategy would help clarify roles, support field teams, and strengthen beneficiary understanding of the programme.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- Gaps in communications capacity weakened HSNP's public messaging efforts.
- Institutional knowledge transfer must be formalised: Future transitions should include structured handover periods, to ensure skills and expertise are not lost.
- Updating the HSNP communication strategy is essential: New approaches should integrate social media, SMS-based beneficiary engagement, and real-time programme updates.
- County-level communication must be improved: Strengthening regional coordination with field officers will ensure that HSNP messages reach all target beneficiaries effectively.

3.7 Payments and project accounts

The transition of the payments and project accounts functions was essential in shifting financial oversight and cash disbursement responsibilities from external PMU management to NDMA's internal structures. By December 2024, NDMA had fully assumed responsibility for processing payments, managing financial records, and ensuring compliance with public sector financial regulations. While the transition was largely successful, some challenges remain, particularly in ensuring compliance, enhancing fraud detection mechanisms, and automating payment processes.

The following paragraphs outline the transition process and timeline for the payments and project accounts function in more detail.

Payments transition (July 2023 to December 2024): By July 2023, NDMA assumed full responsibility for both functions, ensuring that financial reporting, budget execution, and payroll processing were handled internally. This meant that PSP contracts were reviewed for compliance, payroll disbursement cycles were streamlined, and reconciliation processes were aligned with NDMA's financial governance. By November 2023, there was strengthened oversight of PSPs and by March 2024 payroll and payments processing was fully internalised.

However, severe budget cuts in **financial year 2023/24** (from 5.4 billion to 1.53 billion Kenyan shillings, a 71.7% reduction) posed challenges. To sustain payments, NDMA prioritised transfers to the most affected sub-counties, while non-core financial tasks such as post-payment monitoring and compliance training were deprioritised.

Project accounts transition (July 2023 to December 2024): By July 2023, NDMA fully took over project accounts, aligning financial reporting and budget execution with public sector financial regulations. By March 2024 financial reporting aligned with NDMA's governance.
Key improvements included:

- **internalising financial reporting and budget management**, strengthening NDMA's financial governance;
- **enhancing financial oversight mechanisms**, improving fund disbursement efficiency; and
- **strengthening compliance with reporting standards,** reducing the risk of audit queries.

As of December 2024, system integration and compliance monitoring improvements were continuing, and external support was still required for automation.

System integration and compliance strengthening: The MIS dashboard has improved real-time tracking of payrolls and beneficiary data, enhancing transparency. However, incomplete integration with the ERP and audit software means there is continued reliance on manual financial verification. Additionally, limited automation in PSP reconciliation and fraud detection necessitates extra manual oversight, further increasing the administrative workload.

Capacity gaps and financial oversight: While NDMA staff adapted to routine payment processing, gaps in advanced financial risk assessment and PSP contract management persist. The transition process underscores the need for specialised training in fraud detection, compliance, and financial forensics to enhance oversight and accountability.

Table 8: Key achievements and challenges faced during the transition

Successes	Challenges
Payments successfully transitioned to NDMA, reducing reliance on external oversight.	**Budget cuts impacted transfer coverage** and delayed financial oversight activities.
Payroll processing streamlined, improving disbursement efficiency.	**ERP and audit software integration remains incomplete**, requiring manual financial tracking.
Stronger oversight of PSPs ensured better contract compliance.	**Limited automation of financial verification** increases administrative workload.
NDMA managed to sustain minimum payment continuity during transition, showing flexibility in prioritisation. However, these decisions were not structured around a formal contingency plan.	**NDMA has yet to complete a full, uninterrupted payment cycle post-transition**. Payment regularity remains untested under full NDMA management.
Collaboration between MIS and project accounts function improved real-time financial reporting.	**Training gaps in compliance monitoring and risk assessment** limit fraud detection capabilities.

The payments and project accounts transition successfully transferred cash disbursement and financial management responsibilities to NDMA, ensuring continuity despite severe budget reductions. NDMA's ability to maintain cash transfers, even in a staggered manner, highlights its adaptability. However, system integration delays and financial oversight gaps remain key areas requiring further attention. Moving forwards, completing ERP integration, enhancing compliance training, and automating financial verification will be essential to strengthen NDMA's capacity to manage HSNP payments sustainably.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- **Staggered payments require transparent criteria:** NDMA showed flexibility in managing constrained budgets, but the lack of a pre-agreed prioritisation framework created confusion. Future payment planning should incorporate scenario-based prioritised disbursement models.
- **Align payment operations with evolving financial systems:** Delays in integrating ERP and audit systems have led to ongoing manual reconciliation. Continued alignment is needed between payments, the MIS, and financial reporting functions.

3.8 Programme officers and programme managers

The programme officers and programme managers are integral to the successful implementation of HSNP activities at the county level, including beneficiary registration, grievance handling, post-payment monitoring, and community engagement. The transition aimed to integrate them into NDMA's structure to ensure the continuity and sustainability of HSNP operations. Despite challenges along the way, including uncertainty regarding their long-term status and delays in decision-making, these personnel were eventually integrated into NDMA's structure.

The following paragraphs outline the transition process and timeline for the programme officers and programme managers in more detail.

Uncertainty and temporary contract extensions (July 2022 to December 2023): The transition of programme officers and programme managers faced early uncertainty due to the absence of a clear transition plan and uncertainty regarding the status of county-level HSNP staff. By July 2022, discussions were underway about integrating these roles into NDMA's permanent county-level structures, but budget constraints and slow approvals delayed progress, leaving their long-term status unresolved. There was no formal plan for the integration of these roles into NDMA.

By March 2023, HSNP county staff contracts were temporarily extended under NDMA's KSEIP counterpart funding, providing short-term continuity but no long-term security and increasing the risk of staff turnover. The decision on their absorption into the NDMA structure remained pending at this time. When contracts expired in July 2023, county positions were left temporarily vacant, disrupting programme monitoring and post-payment tracking activities. A week later, contract extensions were granted until December 2023, restoring operations but leaving staff morale strained due to the ongoing uncertainty over future employment.

Integration efforts and strategic delays (in 2024 and ongoing): In March 2024, NDMA explored the possibility of absorbing some roles into existing county structures, with resilience officers identified as potential replacements for programme managers. Concerns emerged about their capacity to balance HSNP responsibilities alongside their drought response duties. However, by December 2024, a final decision was made and programme officers and programme managers were fully integrated into NDMA's structure, with their roles reclassified as drought officers and drought assistants under the Resilience Directorate. This provided long-term staffing stability and aligned their responsibilities with NDMA's broader drought management mandate.

This integration marked a significant milestone in the transition process, with the roles now part of NDMA's permanent county-level staff. However, the integration did not come without challenges, including the need for additional training and resource allocation to ensure effective management of both HSNP and other NDMA responsibilities.

Table 9: Key achievements and challenges faced during the transition

Successes	Challenges
Programme officers and managers were instrumental in ensuring smooth cash transfer processes and beneficiary support. Programme officers and managers played a central role in the effective implementation of HSNP activities.	**Uncertainty over the future of these roles during the transition period, which risked staff turnover.** Lack of initial commitment from the National Treasury to fund these positions permanently, causing delays.
Temporary contract extensions ensured continuity in operations, preventing disruption to HSNP activities.	The integration process required significant adjustments, including training and restructuring within NDMA.
The integration of officers into the NDMA structure provides long-term stability for HSNP operations.	**Balancing HSNP responsibilities alongside other NDMA duties**, such as drought response, poses operational challenges.

Table 9: Key achievements and challenges faced during the transition cont.

Successes	Challenges
Some NDMA technical officers were trained in HSNP operations, in preparation for potential role absorption.	Continued adjustments to staffing and resource allocation are needed to fully optimise the integration and maintain effective programme delivery.
The integration of HSNP functions within NDMA's Resilience Directorate offers a long-term solution. The successful integration of officers into NDMA has solidified their role in programme delivery.	**Staff morale during the transition period was affected by uncertainty about their future roles.** Ensuring continued coordination between the Resilience Directorate and HSNP activities remains a key focus.

In conclusion, the integration of programme officers and programme managers into NDMA's structure ensures the long-term sustainability of the HSNP. Despite challenges during the transition, including funding uncertainties and staffing delays, the final integration provides stability and enhances coordination between HSNP and drought response activities

4 Conclusions, recommendations, and lessons

4.1 Conclusions

The transition of the HSNP to full GoK implementation involved the successful transfer of key functions, with payments, project accounts, internal audit, and operations management now fully embedded within NDMA. Additionally, the HSNP MIS has evolved towards a product-based model, enhancing NDMA's ability to manage core programme functions in-house and reducing reliance on external support. A key improvement brought about by the MIS transition is the division of responsibilities across multiple roles, which decreases dependency on individual staff members and improves resilience in managing system operations. However, lack of integration of the MIS with ERP and audit systems restricts the automation of financial oversight, necessitating the continued use of manual processes.

Resource constraints significantly impact post-payment monitoring, training implementation, and operational expansion, raising concerns about NDMA's ability to sustain programme effectiveness under ongoing budgetary limitations. While NDMA has demonstrated flexibility in prioritising payments to the most vulnerable sub-counties, these measures have been *ad hoc* rather than planned, highlighting the need for a structured contingency framework to prepare for future financial fluctuations and policy shifts.

A key operational risk during the transition was the early departure of some technical assistants before formal handovers were completed, leading to gaps in institutional knowledge transfer, particularly in communications and audit oversight. Although NDMA adapted to these disruptions, the absence of structured knowledge transfer and documentation created reliance on individual staff. In cases where those individuals (such as technical assistants) left, this resulted in unnecessary disruptions that could have been avoided with proper continuity planning. County-level staffing uncertainties have now been resolved, with programme officers and programme managers integrated into NDMA's Climate Change Adaptation and Social Protection Department, ensuring continuity at the subnational level.

Overall, the HSNP3 transition has laid the foundation for NDMA's long-term management of the programme, but continued improvements in system integration, resource planning, and preparedness for budget disruptions and staff turnover will be critical to ensure the programme's sustainability. Notably, staff turnover within NDMA was not a significant barrier during the transition – unlike in many comparable processes – suggesting that the stability of core NDMA personnel may have played a key role in maintaining institutional continuity.

4.2 Recommendations

The findings from the biannual transition monitoring reports, synthesised in this report, give rise to two sets of recommendations: the first relates to actions needed to strengthen HSNP under NDMA implementation; the second concerns future transitions of social protection programmes to government systems.

4.2.1 Recommendations for strengthening HSNP under NDMA implementation

- **Prioritise system integration to improve efficiency:** The incomplete integration of the MIS with the ERP and audit software limits NDMA's ability to conduct data-driven operations and audits. Efforts should now focus on fully integrating these systems and ensuring NDMA staff are adequately trained to maximise system use.
- **Expand the use of alternative data sources for monitoring:** Given budget constraints that limit post-payment monitoring and field visits, NDMA should leverage existing programme datasets – including payments, beneficiary registration, and grievances – to enhance monitoring. However, this should complement rather than replace dedicated payment monitoring surveys, which remain essential for capturing field-level insights. Strengthening cross-functional data utilisation between M&E, payments, and internal audit teams would improve efficiency and support targeted follow-ups in the absence of (more expensive) field-based methods.
- **Improve the use of existing monitoring data in decision-making:** The M&E MIS platform provides real-time insights regarding programme operations and performance, yet its integration in operational

planning remains limited. To maximise its impact, NDMA should streamline reporting structures, ensuring that monitoring insights directly inform programme adjustments and resource allocation. Additionally, MIS dashboards could be optimised for automated tracking of key performance indicators, allowing for timely responses to operational challenges.

- **Establish contingency plans for funding constraints:** While the PMU itself did not face significant budget shortfalls, financial unpredictability under NDMA has impacted key programme functions (including payments), limiting training, system integration, and post-payment monitoring. To mitigate these risks, NDMA should formaliseframeworks for the prioritisation of essential activities, rather than relying on ad hoc adjustments. Future planning should include predefined response measures to ensure critical functions continue even under constrained budgets.
- **Develop institutional preparedness for policy shifts:** Presidential directives have disrupted operational planning and introduced uncertainty in implementation. While NDMA cannot control such shifts, it should develop a structured strategy for engaging the NDMA Board to anticipate and manage associated risks. This could include scenario planning, adaptive implementation models including transparent prioritisation protocols, and enhanced Board oversight to help stabilise HSNP operations in response to external policy shifts.
- **Strengthen high-level advocacy for HSNP financing.** NDMA leadership should proactively engage in high-level advocacy within government to safeguard the HSNP budget, particularly during national budget negotiations. Lobbying by senior officials – both within NDMA and through the Board – can help ensure that social protection priorities are protected despite fiscal constraints. Development partners can support these efforts by reinforcing the importance of stable, long-term financing for shock-responsive safety nets and by amplifying evidence on the HSNP's value in national policy forums.

4.2.2 Recommendations for future programme transitions to government implementation

- **Establish explicit, measurable transition plans:** The absence of regularly updated transition plans with defined milestones and timelines hindered tracking of, and accountability for, progress during the HSNP transition. Future transitions should include detailed workplans with verifiable targets, aligned with contract timelines and agreed upon by all stakeholders. Plans should also be flexible enough to accommodate delays and evolving operational realities.
- **Implement continuity planning for technical assistance roles:** Misaligned transition timelines – including the early departure of some technical advisers and delays in onboarding their replacements – disrupted knowledge transfer, particularly where handover periods were already constrained.. Future transitions should include structured handover processes—such as overlapping transition periods, staggered exits, and formal documentation of key responsibilities. An accountable transition committee should also track adviser contracts and develop contingency plans (e.g. peer learning, secondments, or refresher training) to preserve institutional knowledge and momentum.
- **Develop long-term training plans and embed them in government systems:** Training efforts should be aligned with long-term capacity development objectives and embedded within government frameworks.
  This includes:
  - **Integrating training into public systems:** During the HSNP transition, training was delayed due to internal approval bottlenecks. Future efforts should treat training as a core government function, planned and budgeted within existing institutional structures.
  - **Aligning training with government structures and long-term roles:** Training content should correspond to the specific responsibilities of staff who will retain functions post-transition. For instance, HSNP benefited from aligning NDMA's internal training plans with programme roles, supporting continuity across teams.
  - **Improving coordination and timely execution of training plans:** Despite approved training budgets, delays in training roll-out created frustration amongst staff and other stakeholders. A viable, pre-approved training schedule should be incorporated into the transition plan to enable timely delivery and avoid administrative delays.

[1] Hakeem, B. and David, C. (2025) 'Evaluation of the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) Phase 3: MIS Assessment 3', Oxford Policy Management, Oxford.

[2] van der Westhuizen, W. (2023) 'Evaluation of the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) Phase 3: MIS Assessment – Deep Dive 6', Oxford.

4.3 Lessons learned

The HSNP experience provides wider lessons for the transition of social protection programmes to government systems.

- **System integration must be prioritised early, as part of the transition planning process.** Integrating programme IT systems into public financial management and audit platforms is essential for sustainability and oversight[2]. Structured processes should be in place to review system challenges and plan for improvements, supported by appropriate training and technical capacity[3].
- **Cross-functional coordination is essential.** Programme transitions require alignment between departments and functions. In HSNP, areas like audit, MIS, and payments often relied on joint action, yet coordination gaps sometimes delayed progress. Future transitions should include mechanisms – such as joint planning or shared reporting structures – to coordinate and support cross-team collaboration.
- **Knowledge transfer must be planned for staff turnover.** Staff exits during transitions risk the loss of institutional memory. In HSNP, some technical assistants left before completing handovers, and a lack of structured documentation contributed to knowledge gaps –particularly in communications. Future transitions should anticipate such risks through clear documentation of systems and processes, role overlap, and peer learning.
- **Flexible institutional arrangements maintain transition momentum.** Transitions rarely unfold exactly as planned. During the HSNP transition, NDMA's ability to extend contracts and reclassify roles (e.g. programme officers) helped bridge delays in approvals and staffing decisions. Flexibility in staffing and institutional arrangements can prevent operational gap.
- **Contingency planning is critical to protect service delivery.** Predefined mechanisms can help ensure service continuity in the face of fiscal shocks or policy shifts, particularly during the early stages of government-led implementation.

5 Annexes

Annex A: HSNP Transition Monitoring Framework *(September 2021)*

This annex presents a summary of the transition monitoring framework developed under the GEFA evaluation of HSNP Phase 3. The framework guided Workstream 2 monitoring and provides the basis for the findings and recommendations presented in this synthesis report. The information below is a recreated version of the original framework document, prepared by Oxford Policy Management under the e-Pact consortium in September 2021.

A.1 Purpose and objectives

The transition monitoring framework was designed to track the progress of the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) in assuming full responsibility for the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP). The framework was intended to provide a structured, regular view of progress and challenges in the transition process to inform adaptive management. The objective was to:

Monitor NDMA's capacity development and the handover of functions from the Programme Management Unit (PMU);

- Identify enablers and barriers to transition; and
- Provide timely, actionable insights to support management decision-making.

A.2 Approach to Transition Monitoring

Monitoring was carried out biannually and designed to complement HSNP operational monitoring. Transition monitoring under the framework involved two complementary approaches:

1. **Output-level tracking** against the transition workplan: assessing whether agreed activities were on track.
2. **Qualitative assessment** of perceptions and trends, exploring how transition was progressing, why certain challenges were occurring, and what implications these had for programme sustainability.

A.3 Core monitoring areas and indicators

The table below summarises the core transition areas, expected results, and illustrative indicators drawn from the original framework.

Transition Area	Expected Result	Illustrative Indicators	Primary Data Sources
Programme Management	NDMA assumes full operational leadership of HSNP	% of functions transitioned; existence of updated SOPs	NDMA reports; KIIs with staff
Human Resources	Staffing aligned with long-term NDMA structures	Number of NDMA staff in key roles; clarity of role descriptions	HR records; org charts; interviews
MIS and IT Systems	MIS integrated into NDMA systems and independently managed	Integration with ERP; % of MIS tasks managed in-house	MIS documentation; NDMA IT staff
Financial Oversight	Financial management functions embedded in NDMA	Integration with audit software; budget oversight by NDMA	Audit reports; NDMA finance team
Monitoring and Evaluation	NDMA leads performance monitoring using internal systems	Use of M&E MIS; extent to which data informs decisions	MIS dashboards; M&E team interviews
Communications	NDMA manages communications and visibility functions	Existence of communications strategy; staff assigned	Strategy documents; staff interviews

A.4 Data collection and reporting

Data collection was led by OPM, with input from NDMA. Reporting was conducted twice a year and aligned with key decision-making moments, such as the Joint Review and Implementation Support (JRIS) missions. The process included:

- Pre-assessment by NDMA focal points (e.g. Programme Coordinator, Directors);
- Key informant interviews (KIIs) with NDMA and development partners;
- Document review (workplans, SOPs, MIS reports);
- Thematic analysis to identify trends across monitoring rounds.

A.5 Use and audience

The primary audience for the monitoring outputs was the NDMA Transition Executive Team, comprising senior NDMA leadership. Development partners, including FCDO and the World Bank, also received and reviewed the monitoring reports. The outputs were intended to inform both immediate course corrections and broader strategic planning related to NDMA capacity strengthening and programme ownership.

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