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Assessing the capacity of local administration and community structures to deliver social protection programmes

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Abstract

Overview

With the expansion of social protection programmes and services and emergence of nascent social protection systems in Sub-Saharan Africa, greater attention is being paid to the capacity of these systems to deliver. In a number of these countries, there is greater reliance on local government structures in management and delivery of these programmes. Moreover, these local administrative units, in turn, depend heavily on voluntary community structures to support delivery of these programmes. Taking a pragmatic and problem driven approach, this paper focuses on the performance of these local and community-based structures in delivering the social protection systems that they are tasked to support. It draws in particular on evidence from assessments carried out Zambia and Kenya, which seek to answer how well the systems are performing and assess the capacity of existing structures to deliver cash transfer and other social protection programmes in accordance with their original design.

Methodology

The paper utilises a multi-dimensional approach to capacity assessment to underpin its data collection and lens through which data is interpreted and analysed. The framework looks at capacity across institutional (e.g. laws, regulations, procedural requirements), organisational and individual dimensions. It also frames capacity within a temporal dimension that distinguishes between the actions needed to create or acquire capacity (in its various aspects), to put it to use in the organisations, and then to ensure that it is not lost. The study utilised a mixed methods approach for data collection, drawing on review of documents and the literature, key informant interviews at national and subnational level and questionnaire survey with government staff at national and sub-national levels.

Findings

The emergence of social protection programmes and, in particular, cash transfers has resulted in the reallocation of district staff time away from statutory functions (e.g. social care services, case management and referral), with increasing time spent delivering the cash transfer programmes. The local governments deliver these programmes under strained staffing structures and with very limited critical material resources (e.g. office space, vehicles, computers, etc.). While the level of range of qualifications is quite high amongst professional staff, the nature of their work has substantially changed from their traditional social welfare role, requiring higher levels of project management skills and leadership skills than their formal education has prepared them for.

Greater linkages between community and local government structures is required; however, this is often hampered by a lack of institutional clarity at the national level around roles, responsibility and mandate that is cascaded downwards to the local government and right through to the multiple, and often overlapping, community structures supporting different vertical programmes.

Great demands are placed on local voluntary structures in delivery of these programmes underpinned by the ethos of community-driven development. The absence of material and financial support, adequate training or meaningful linkages with local government structures puts into question the sustainability of such community-based systems as an effective and sustainable delivery model.

Acknowledgements

The study in Kenya was commissioned by the World Bank on behalf of the Social Protection Secretariat in 2014, as a functional review of capacity to deliver the cash transfer programmes. In Zambia, Oxford Policy Management was contracted by UNICEF to carry out a capacity assessment of the professional and voluntary structures in delivery of the Social Cash Transfer programme (SCT) and other potential social protection programmes. We would like to express our gratitude to all those who supported the study and provided information and insights to underpin the review.

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1   Introduction

This paper proposes an approach to assessing the capacity of governments to deliver social protection programmes, with particular attention to the capacity of local administration and voluntary structures to support programme implementation. It presents findings from the application of this framework to two country case studies: a functional review of the National Safety Net Programme (NSNP) in Kenya and the capacity assessment of professional and voluntary structures in delivering the SCT programme in Zambia.

In the two countries covered by this study, and in many other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the administrative and management tasks of delivering social protection programmes are delegated to local public administration structures, which are tasked with execution of decisions made at the centre where decision-making power remains (Cabral, 2011; UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) 2012). These tasks comprise the frontline service delivery functions (UNCDF, 2012), and normally include sensitisation and awareness raising, targeting, delivery of benefits, monitoring and reporting, management of grievances and coordination. The extent to which local administrations are able to fulfil these functions depends on their capacity to deliver. Generally, the evidence on the effectiveness of decentralisation in improving service delivery has been mixed, with weak technical and managerial capacities at local levels a contributory factor (Cabral, 2011). Despite the identification of local capacity as a constraint in delivery of social transfers, this capacity has often only been viewed through the narrow lens of staff skills and knowledge, with remedial actions in the form of training plans. This paper highlights the importance of organisational and institutional aspects of capacity in the delivery of social protection programmes.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: in Section 2 we introduce the key social assistance programmes and describe their institutional setting. Section 3 sets out the approach and methodology of the study. In Section 4 we present the key findings. In Section 5 we conclude by discussing the implications of our findings.

2 Social assistance programmes and their institutional setting in Kenya and Zambia

2.1 Kenya

At the time that the functional review was carried out in 2014, five separate non-contributory programmes were provided by the Government of Kenya as the cash component of its national safety net to support poor and vulnerable households. These were:

i. the Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CT-OVC);

ii. the Older Persons Cash Transfer (OPCT);

iii. the Persons with Severe Disability Cash Transfer (PWSD-CT);

iv. the Urban Food Subsidy Cash Transfer (UFS-CT); and

v. the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP).

The programmes had started at different times over the previous decade, originally with divergent funding sources and responding to different needs. The NSNP was established in 2013 to bring these together into a coordinated institutional and programmatic framework, in accordance with the Government's National Social Protection Policy of 2012[1].The administration of the Programme was based on this policy, and associated executive orders setting up the required organisational structures, rather than on primary legislation and regulations.

The management of the five cash transfer programmes was fragmented. The Department of Social Development (DSD) in the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and Services (MLSSS) was responsible for the OPCT, PWSD-CT and the UFS-CT; the Department of Children's Services (DCS), in the same Ministry, was responsible for the CT-OVC; and the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), under the Ministry of Devolution and Planning, was responsible for the HSNP.

During 2014 most of the cash transfer programmes were undergoing a very rapid and large-scale expansion in geographical coverage and number of targeted beneficiaries, as promised in the Government's election manifesto. The administrative pressures involved in meeting the timetable in this regard were considerable, both at local and at central level.

All five NSNP cash transfer programmes operated a similar core delivery model with:

- centralised, planning, programme management, oversight, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and some operations (for example, the generation at headquarters of beneficiary payroll lists for all the MLSSS cash transfers);
- decentralised service delivery by technical officers as part of a wider role in their sub-sector;
- cash payments managed by an external payment agent (such as the Post Office or a bank); and
- community-based mechanisms to help identify and support beneficiaries.

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[1] This was done in order to support increased financing for these safety nets, to enable the total number of households covered to be increased while avoiding multiple transfers, and to improve the efficiency of the programmes' operations.

For the programmes which were the responsibility of the MLSSS, the national-level management and oversight functions were provided by separate Cash Transfer Secretariats within the Departments of Social Development and Children's Services. In both cases, the bulk of the effort of programme implementation rested with the Ministry's staff at sub-county level – the Social Development Officers and Children's Officers.

Social Development Officers have certain other functions in addition to the administration of cash transfers, principally registration of self-help groups and of persons with disabilities, and promoting community involvement in development programmes and activities. Children's Officers have a more substantial set of additional responsibilities related to vulnerable children (e.g. dealing with children in conflict with the law, abandoned children, foster care, etc.).

Different arrangements existed to secure community-level involvement for the five different programmes. For the CT-OVC these consisted of:

- location OVC Committees (LOCs) – voluntary groups to support implementation of the programme through assisting with the identification of potential beneficiary households;
- Constituency Social Assistance Committees – convened at sub-county level under the patronage of the constituency Member of Parliament, these committees determined the order of locations to be enrolled, and other supervisory tasks; and
- Beneficiary Welfare Committees – elected at location level to support the payment process and the updating of beneficiary records.

For the other MLSSS cash transfer programmes there were:

- location-level committees,[2] which assisted the sub-county Social Development Officers with case management and grievances; and
- the Constituency Social Assistance Committees that were also responsible for the targeting of the OPCT and PWSD-CT.

Finally, the Social Protection Secretariat was established in 2012 to provide strategic leadership and management support, and to strengthen governance structures to ensure effective coordination and execution of all social protection initiatives in Kenya, in line with the provisions of the National Social Protection Policy. It was intended to provide support to, and to be answerable to, the proposed National Social Protection Council, but pending the establishment of the Council was located within the MLSSS.

2.2   Zambia

At the time of the assessment, Zambia did not have a legal framework for social protection programmes, or even a policy that provided an overall framework and strategic direction. In 2013 the Government was in the process of developing a National Social Protection Policy (NSPP) to provide an effective, coordinated, and sustainable response to prevailing high levels of poverty and vulnerability.[3] The main social welfare programmes in Zambia are as follows:

- The SCT, which provides bi-monthly cash payments to beneficiaries with the aim of reducing extreme poverty and the intergenerational transfer of poverty. It started in 2003 as a pilot in one

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[2] Sometimes also inaccurately referred to as LOCs.
[3] The National Social Protection Policy was approved in 2014. In 2016, the Government developed a comprehensive Social Protection Bill, which has not yet been enacted by Parliament.

district (Kalomo) and at the time of the research reached 61,000 beneficiary households in 19 districts.

- The Public Welfare Assistance Scheme (PWAS), which provides one-off cash and in-kind benefits to needy households. It targets the poorest 10% of the population, including orphans, people living with a disability, older persons, and abandoned children. Although ostensibly nationwide, PWAS only reached 86,144 beneficiaries in 2012. Support is in the form of cash (for example for school fees) or in kind, such as food, educational material, shelter or clothing.[4]

These programmes are implemented by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), within the Ministry of Community Development, Mother and Child Health (MCDMCH). At provincial level the Department's structure consists of a Provincial Social Welfare Officer, supported by two Senior Social Welfare Officers. At district level there is a District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO), supported by a Social Welfare Officer and Assistant Social Welfare Officer.

In addition to the above non-statutory functions, the DSW is responsible for a large number of statutory services that include: adoption, foster care, correctional and probation services, children's homes, the prevention of gender-based violence and human trafficking, and the protection of victims.

The implementation of SCT and PWAS relies on volunteer structures at the community level, known as the Community Welfare Assistance Committees (CWACs). The CWAC members are elected by the community. Their main responsibilities are related to programme targeting as well as support to awareness raising, witnessing of payments, and as the entry points for dealing with complaints and grievances. The CWACs are supervised by Area Coordinating Committees (ACCs) that comprise representatives of CWACs in a ward and provide oversight and supervision. These voluntary structures are supervised by the DSWOs through the District Welfare Assistance Committee (DWAC), which comprises officials from relevant social sector departments such as Education and Health. The DSWOs are responsible for the main implementation functions of the social assistance programmes.

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[4] Other programmes implemented include the Food Security Pack (FSP), which distributes agricultural inputs to vulnerable but viable farmers, and the Women's Empowerment Fund (WEF), which assists vulnerable women's groups to undertake business ventures by providing access to finance and equipment.

3 Approach and methodology

3.1 Conceptual framework

The starting point for the assessment is to understand what is meant by the term 'capacity'. Many definitions are available, in various authoritative sources, such as the following:

- the ability to perform appropriate tasks effectively, efficiently, and sustainably (Hilderbrand and Grindle, 1994);
- the ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2006);
- the emergent combination of attributes, capabilities and relationships that enable a system to exist, adapt and perform (the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) 2005); and
- the ability of individuals, institutions and societies to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve objectives in a sustainable manner (UN Development Programme (UNDP) 2007).

What these and other definitions share is an understanding that capacity is a complex phenomenon, comprising a combination of institutional, organisational and individual attributes that converge in such a way as to enable tasks to be performed and objectives to be attained. Capacity only exists in relation to performance, and can only be defined in relation to the undertaking of particular activities or the achievement of particular purposes.

To assess the adequacy of existing capacity it is therefore important to begin by reviewing the actual current experience of service delivery, and by identifying specific deficiencies as evidence of current capacity weaknesses. This can be described as a problem-driven approach to capacity assessment, as opposed to a theory-driven approach, which would begin by attempting to define a theoretically-desirable level of capacity, examining current capacity and endeavouring to measure the gap between the two.

Capacity assessments most frequently look at three dimensions of capacity, namely institutional, organisation and individual:

- The institutional aspect includes both the laws and regulations which establish an entity's mandate and define its responsibilities, duties, obligations and powers, and also the procedural requirements (which may also have the force of law) which determine the way in which critical functions are carried out. It also includes the ways in which working relationships are managed between ministries, between ministries and other public bodies and between different levels of central and decentralised government, and their arrangements for the coordination of activities.
- The organisational aspect is concerned with how people are organised to enable them to play their individual roles within the entity, and includes considerations of structure, staffing, and processes and systems – such as, for example, communication, managing work flow, strategic and business planning, budgeting and financial control, reporting, monitoring and performance management, and the recruitment, remuneration, professional development and retention of staff.
- The individual aspect focuses on the personal capabilities of the people who make up the organisation, including their knowledge, skills and attitudes – all of which may be enhanced by training and development activities – and also their actual behaviour in the work place.

There is also a temporal element to capacity. To gain a complete picture it is necessary to look not only at an entity's ability to create or acquire capacity (for example through training, recruitment or introduction of new systems), but also its ability to utilise this newly developed capacity, and finally to ensure it is retained (Table 1).

Table 1   Dimensions of capacity

	Capacity creation	Capacity utilisation	Capacity retention
Individual level	Development of adequate skills, knowledge, competencies and attitudes	Application of skills, knowledge, competencies in the workplace	Reduction of staff turnover; facilitation of skills and knowledge transfer within the organisation
Organisational level	Establishment of efficient structures, processes and procedures; recruitment of sufficient staff and procurement of adequate equipment	Integration of structures, processes and procedures in the daily workflows; adequate prviision for consumables	Regular adaptation of structures, processes and procedures; maintenance and repair of equipment
Institutional level	Establishment of adequate institutions, laws and regulations	Enforcement of laws and regulations for good governance	Regular adaptation of institutions, laws and regulations

3.2   Methods used

Both studies utilised a mixed methods approach for data collection, drawing on a review of administrative documents and the literature, key informant interviews at national and subnational level, and questionnaire surveys with government staff at national and sub-national level. In Kenya the aim of the study was to assess the Government's capacity to implement the NSNP, covering processes, functions, human resources and physical capacity at all levels, national and sub-national. The principal sources of evidence for the assessment were as follows:

- a thorough review of the available programme documentation and previous evaluations;
- a series of individual and small group interviews with Ministry officials and other stakeholders (including volunteers and beneficiaries) in Nairobi and in four counties and seven sub-counties, combined with direct observation of working conditions and practices;
- the returns from a survey of Children's Officers and Social Development Officers at county and sub-county levels, to gain more broadly-based information about workloads, qualifications and experience, the relative allocation of time between cash transfer functions and other professional tasks and duties, and the availability and quality of essential physical resources, such as office space, vehicles, computers, and so on.

In Zambia the capacity assessment primarily focused on the capacity of professional and volunteer members of social welfare structures at the community (CWACs), ward (ACCs), and district level (DWAC) to implement the SCT, in the context of a rapid and massive scaling up of the programme. It also examined whether these structures had the capacity to implement other welfare programmes and services for which the Ministry was responsible, as well as the capacity to conduct case management and referrals to relevant social services. The assessment utilised a similar approach to that in Kenya and drew on the following sources of evidence:

- questionnaires administered to DSWO staff at the district level to explore their level of skills and qualifications, resource needs, confidence in carrying out various functions, and their views of the performance and needs of the voluntary community structures;

- a review of programme documentation and reports; and
- qualitative research in eight wards across four districts with community volunteers and district staff, through two principal qualitative methods: focus group discussions and key informant interviews with district staff and community volunteer groups.

4 Findings

This section summarises the findings from the functional review in Kenya in 2014 and the capacity assessment carried out in Zambia in 2013.

4.1 Staffing

In Kenya, while the MLSSS cash transfer Secretariats were staffed in accordance with what was planned, there were significant staff shortages for DSD and DSC at county and sub-county level, with high levels of vacancies for established positions. Many sub-counties had no Social Development Officer or Children's Officer in place, and overall there was a shortfall of 221 professional staff (or around 33%) at county and sub-county level across the two departments.[5] Despite this shortfall there was little prospect of recruitment of new staff due to a recruitment freeze enforced by the Public Service Commission. As a consequence, much support was provided by volunteer groups and temporary staff.

Volunteer and community-based mechanisms, such as steering groups, Social Assistance Committees, LOCs and Beneficiary Welfare Committees, provided a substantial and a significant source of capacity and labour for the cash transfer programmes, and were a fundamental element of the design of these programmes. Without this support, the government staff at county and sub-county level would not have been sufficiently resourced to implement the cash transfer programmes effectively. Additionally, the programme relied on hiring a large number of temporary data entry clerks (at national level) and enumerators (at sub-county level) on three-monthly cycles, but with little guidance on the recruitment process or criteria for selection.

Staffing capacity at the level of District Social Welfare offices in Zambia faced similar constraints. While urban districts were typically better endowed, most rural districts had only one Social Welfare Officer. This situation changed somewhat with the expansion of the SCT programme, which was accompanied by the assignment of an Assistant Social Welfare Officer to each new district enrolled in the programme. Below the district level, the social welfare sector in Zambia exclusively relies on volunteer structures.

With particular focus on the capacity of these community structures, the Zambian case study found that many CWACs had been established as part of PWAS, roughly since the year 2000. These committees were, however, largely dormant and non-operational prior to the introduction of the SCT. The roll out of the SCT, which required delivery capacity at community level, resulted in the recruitment of new members and the establishment of new roles and responsibilities, requiring more regular and active participation from members.

Not all members of the CWAC remained active over time, although members holding leadership roles (i.e. chairperson, the secretary, the treasurer) were more active – perhaps because they were more informed about the SCT in general, had more regular contact with the DSWO through the ACC, and were more likely to be recipients of resources on behalf of the CWAC. The fact that literacy levels were typically higher among those fulfilling leadership roles probably contributed to this as well. Committee leaders were also more likely to be nominated to attend training and given allowances. The study found that the availability of CWAC members and their commitment to the programme hinged invariably on their livelihoods options, which took precedence over voluntary activities. Moreover, their willingness to participate also dissipated if financial remuneration was expected and not forthcoming. In addition, those who fulfilled leadership roles in a CWAC often

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[5] A comparable review by OPM of the Department of Social Services in Zimbabwe in 2010 found that 39% of professional posts in the district offices responsible for front line service delivery were vacant.

occupied similar roles in other community-level volunteer structures, such as the area food security committee or the neighbourhood health committee. Zambia has a wide array of community-based volunteer roles across the social and agriculture sectors. The potential for integration, preceded already by volunteers taking on responsibilities in more than one structure, has never really materialised.

4.2   Skills and training

The capacity of individual members of staff in terms of their formal educational qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience is critical to the successful delivery of social cash transfers.

In Kenya staff capacity was relatively high across all the agencies involved, with 73% of staff having a bachelor-level degree in a relevant subject as their highest level qualification, and 22% also having a higher degree; only 4% had a diploma and 1% a certificate as their highest qualification. The general level of qualifications was lower at the county and sub-county levels than at headquarters level, although 81% had a bachelor's degree.[6] The assessment found that professional staff overall had extensive experience in social development and child services, but with the recruitment freeze the increasing average age of the workforce[7] presented a potential problem, giving rise to the danger of the accumulated skills and experience of the agencies concerned being significantly eroded when these staff retired.

Given the nature of tasks undertaken by the staff in the delivery of social transfers, additional skills beyond the formal qualifications were needed, including a much higher level of project management skills and leadership skills than their formal education had prepared them for. Many staff indicated that they lacked skills in project management, financial management, using computers effectively (particularly Excel and management information systems), and report writing. They also felt under-prepared regarding the leadership, communication and motivational skills needed to manage committees and volunteers.

While the national-level staff have had substantial training from well-regarded service providers this had not sufficiently trickled down to staff at county and sub-county level, where training was often confined to one- or two-day briefing sessions on the relevant Cash Transfer Operation Manuals. This had impacted on their capacity to deliver the NSNP.

In Zambia, by way of comparison, OPM's assessment found that only 47% of sub-national professional staff had a bachelor's degree and 4% a higher degree. Overall, close to 80% of district-level staff had some form of qualification in social work. Less than a third of district staff described themselves as fully confident in their ability to implement the social cash transfer programme, and a significant number noted the need for further training on the programme. Similarly to Kenya, the staff reported needing additional training on topics such as accounting and financial management. Interestingly, at least a quarter of staff had little or no confidence in undertaking statutory tasks, such as tasks related to adoption, foster care or disability services.

Assessing the skills and ability of the CWAC members, the study found their ability to read and write to vary from place to place, although there were always a few members of the committee who were able to read and write. Most support material produced by programmes is in the national language, and this has implications for local volunteers, who are either better versed in reading and writing in the local language or are unable to read or write.

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[6] These figures reflect the qualifications of 109 staff in the headquarters' secretariats and units and at county and sub-county level who were interviewed or responded to a questionnaire.
[7] Over 50% of staff were into their fifties, with a retirement age of 60.

The CWAC members viewed the training that had been provided on SCT to be more akin to a briefing than to training, and stated that it was not long enough. The members wanted more regular support to help them in understanding their roles and responsibilities and the operations of the SCT. CWAC members recommended a more hands-on approach to training that provided sufficient time for practice. Since they were also being drawn into undertaking a range of social support activities for which they felt they were ill-trained, they also mentioned the need for training in the areas of child protection, counselling and first aid.

4.3   Time allocated

In both Kenya and Zambia a high political premium was placed on scale-up of social cash transfer programmes, and as a result much time and resources of the sub-national staff were diverted towards the delivery of these programmes. In Kenya, at sub-national levels, Social Development Officers on average spent 66% of their time on cash transfer tasks, and Children's Officers 56%, but during targeting and registration cash transfer work typically occupied 100% of their time. In Zambia for Social Welfare Officers in the districts already implementing the SCT, duties related to the scheme took up around a quarter of their time. The SCT and PWAS combined absorbed over half of the staff's time.

There was evidence that this had been at the expense of work on other functions. In Kenya nearly all of the sub-national officers interviewed reported that cash transfer functions negatively impacted on their ability, and the time available to them, to carry out their other social protection and social development functions. In Zambia less than one-fifth of staff's time was dedicated to statutory functions.

At the community levels in Zambia, all CWACs interviewed dedicated at least one day a month to SCT activities, in which they witness payments, monitor how transfers are used, or deal with complaints. Often, CWAC members work on an informal rotational basis, taking turns to perform these tasks.

4.4   Material resources

The effective delivery of the cash transfer programmes is affected not only by the number and quality of staff but also by the availability and quality of critical resources such as office space, vehicles, computers, and so on.

At national level in Kenya these physical resources were found to be fairly sufficient and the staff did not identify resource shortages as a critical constraint on their work. However, in most counties and sub-counties there were particular constraints on the availability of office computers, internet modems, reimbursements for personal IT costs, vehicles and fuel, and funds for the maintenance of equipment. In some cases offices were based in facilities such as public libraries or community halls. In other cases offices lacked amenities such as windows, furniture or running water. Most sub-county officers did not have access to phones and internet lines and relied on personal mobile phones and portable modems, or used public places such as internet cafés for conducting official business. The study also found that the shortage of vehicles, drivers and fuel allowances affected operations at the county and sub-county level. Very similar conditions were found in Zambia, where the assessment found that the delivery of social protection programmes was heavily constrained by the shortage of internet connections, telephones, cell-phones, vehicles, fuel, furniture and photocopiers, as well as the availability of copies of relevant legislation and policy documents.

The community structures in Zambia also had limited resources and this constrained their ability to undertake their tasks. The CWACs reported needing more support with transportation, communication and materials that identified them to the community as well as protecting them from poor weather. These requirements were also confirmed by District Social Welfare staff. At the time of research, most CWACs in districts implementing the SCT had received one or two bicycles to be used through sharing arrangements, as well as a modest quarterly lump sum (about US$10) to cover administrative costs. In addition, CWAC members attending training sessions at district level and small lunch allowances were provided to those witnessing cash transfer payments in the community .

4.5   Institutional and organisational setting

The effective delivery of social transfers relies on a clear and conducive institutional framework and appropriate and supportive organisational structure.

In Kenya a Social Assistance Act was enacted and came into force in 2013, but in many respects this is not aligned with the Government's policy intentions, as expressed in the National Social Protection Policy, which was approved in 2012 and has not been implemented. Legislative gaps therefore remain, in the absence of the enactment of the draft bill to establish the National Social Protection Council that would have provided the overall coordination framework as a statutory agency of central government. In the absence of the Council, activities are coordinated by the Social Protection Secretariat, within MLSSS. However, with no Council or effective legislative base there is still some uncertainty in the social protection sector as to the role of the Secretariat in relation to the NSNP, since it has no statutory mandate, authority or power to coordinate activities across the departments of MLSSS, let alone with other institutions such as the NDMA.

Despite the process of devolution of power to the counties, the NSNP remains the responsibility of the national government, with functional responsibilities delegated to the counties and sub-counties. Over time, this is likely to create some tensions between the central and county governments: with the probability of increasing pressure for the implementing staff in the counties and sub-counties to report directly to the county governments and thus ultimately to the county assemblies, rather than the current direct vertical route of accountability through MLSSS and thus to the National Assembly.

In addition to the institutional setting, a number of organisational factors were observed to have an impact on effective and efficient delivery of the cash transfer programmes, including the following:

- Centralised human resource management decision-making, with limited authority for county coordinators to manage their staff regarding recruitment, deployment or the nature of tasks undertaken. While major human resource decisions are made at the headquarters level these are in turn referred to the Public Service Commission, resulting in long delays in decision-making, as well as a freeze on recruitment.
- A performance appraisal system with sanctions for low performance but no reward for high performance, affecting the morale of staff.
- Lack of clear job descriptions that incorporate the functions of delivering cash transfers alongside the existing duties of the staff involved, resulting in significantly longer hours of work.
- Despite rapid expansion of the programme, no workforce planning to establish how many staff are required and of what type.

In Zambia, the roles and responsibilities of volunteer members of CWACs and ACCs were made explicit in the PWAS guidelines. However, the absence of systematic plans to train volunteers on

these guidelines and the relatively high turnover explain the widespread lack of clarity and understanding of these responsibilities among the volunteers themselves. The same is true for the SCT guidelines, which were extensively captured in the SCT Operations Manual but which had never been effectively relayed below the level of the DSWOs. As a result, and in particular for the volunteers, there was no detailed guidance on M&E for the programme, with information needs, data sources and institutional roles and responsibilities being unclear. This reflected a more general weakness in the development of the Ministry's M&E system, which was intended to work in a decentralised manner to support implementation of Ministry programmes at local level, and to build capacity to make informed decisions in communities and districts. In practice, MCDMCH was still striving to develop its M&E and did not have a robust integrated system in place, in large part due to the lack of staff resources at headquarters to take this work forward. As a result, DSWOs had no clear procedure for undertaking monitoring activities, which resulted in a bias towards communities closer to the district headquarters. The planning and budgeting system was also complicated by the institutional structure: budgets for community development and social welfare programmes were allocated centrally by MCDMCH in a top-down process, while district administration and infrastructure costs were budgeted and accounted for through the provincial administration.

5   Discussion and way forward

This paper proposed a framework for understanding and assessing capacity to deliver cash transfer programmes. The framework was applied in two countries, Kenya and Zambia. The case studies demonstrate the usefulness of the framework in terms of understanding and linking capacity constraints at institutional, organisational and individual levels. The framework enabled the studies to go beyond the traditional focus on capacity as synonymous with skills and training needs, and to highlight, in addition, significant capacity constraints arising from institutional weaknesses and low levels of organisational resources, which are equally important determinants of performance in service delivery.

The findings from capacity assessments of social protection structures at sub-national level highlight the challenges in the rapid scaling up of social protection programmes that relies on the capacity of local public administration and voluntary structures in implementing the programmes. The implications of these findings for expansion of social protection programmes are discussed under the sub-headings below. It should be noted that while, in both cases examined, programme implementation lay with the deconcentrated local offices of national ministries, it is reasonable to assume that similar categories of capacity deficit would be experienced by devolved local government authorities if responsibility passed to them.

5.1   Shift between statutory and non-statutory functions and implications in regard to building linkages

In both Kenya and Zambia there was high level political commitment to rapid expansion of the social assistance programmes in a short timeframe. This political premium resulted in additional tasks being carried out by already stretched and under-staffed local administrations, and often at the expense of their staff not carrying out other important statutory functions related to social services. This raises questions as to how best to divide administrative functions and delineate roles and responsibilities in a way that ensures all statutory and non-statutory functions[8] are carried out, while at the same time enabling the interventions to be linked and coordinated with one another. This entails a number of considerations: first, it requires administrative resources to be matched to the expansion in geographical coverage and/or beneficiary numbers of the cash transfer programmes; secondly, it demands the revisiting of the job descriptions of existing staff to assess realistically how the duties related to delivery of social assistance programmes fit with other roles and responsibilities, and what additional level of time and effort is required; thirdly, decisions need to be made as to whether these activities can be combined or whether separate functional units need to be established; finally, there needs to be an assessment of whether further elements of programme delivery can be outsourced, and what the capacity implications of this would be. In Mozambique, for example, significant time is spent by local administration units in manually delivering cash payments to programme recipients (Kardan *et al.*, 2016). Where parts of the programme are outsourced, this will save staff time but require procurement and management capabilities to be developed to manage these additional service providers effectively.

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[8] Once ratified by law, social assistance programmes will also become 'statutory' by definition. The main point of contention here is that, due to the introduction of the social assistance programmes, at times other functions such as time-critical child protection and other related judicial services may be side-lined and the targeted populations put at risk.

5.2   Reliance on local voluntary structures necessary but not sustainable

In principle, community involvement can bring much added benefit to the delivery of programmes, by creating more community engagement and cohesion and helping to better reach the poor who are known to the community, although gains on this have tended to be small (World Bank, 2013). In both Kenya and Zambia great demands were placed on local voluntary structures to support delivery of the social assistance programmes. These structures played an important role in filling some of the local administrative capacity gaps, and without them the effective delivery of the programmes would have been in doubt. However, despite the altruistic spirit of those involved, in a context where a large proportion of the population are poor (including those who volunteer) these voluntary activities are unlikely to be sustained over time without appropriate material and financial support to compensate for time forgone or out-of-pocket costs incurred. Moreover, these structures need adequate training and regular engagement with the local administrative structures in order to maintain a sense of purpose and remain abreast of programme operations and any new developments. Voluntary structures should be better linked with and formally recognised by local administrative structures – or, better still, become an extension of them. In a context where there are multiple community voluntary structures, often with overlapping membership, a more unified approach to use of voluntary structures that are consolidated into a single group, or at the least better coordinated, may provide a more feasible option. This would, however, require institutional clarity and coordination at the central level of government that is then cascaded downwards. An alternative to this would be to consider the establishment of a network of locally-based salaried officers to carry out some of the functions of the volunteers, as is the case in some countries, such as the auxiliary social workers in Lesotho.

Whichever way local voluntary structures are organised and utilised by the local administration, they will require a certain minimum level of professional staffing, in terms of numbers and competence, to facilitate such structures and enable them to operate effectively and consistently. And finally, while a robust and sustainable system is likely to continue to need the support of volunteers who know their communities well, and are known by them, there is also a need to recognise the limits of volunteer support for programme implementation.

5.3   Need for better coordination and consolidation of programmes

In Zambia the SCT and PWAS were managed by the DSW and a number of other programmes through the DCD, both within MCDMCH. Similarly, in Kenya four of the five cash transfer programmes were implemented by MLSSS: three by the DSD and one by the DCS. Despite this institutional proximity and despite the similarities in the core processes and functions of the programmes there was limited coordination between the departments.

In both of these cases consolidation of the programmes would result in capacity gains within existing staffing levels by eliminating duplication of effort in administering the programmes separately. In cases where the greatest constraints relate to the number of recruited staff and physical resources, programmes should be remodelled to better fit available resources, especially where constraints are likely to remain in place and binding due to the wider institutional and fiscal environment.

5.4 Embedding programmes in an appropriate legislative framework and policy

While the capacity to deliver social protection programmes is constrained by limited staffing, skills and resources programmes are as much affected by lack of policies, legislation, clear delineation of roles and responsibilities and appropriate organisational structures. In Kenya a proposed bill to establish a statutory body, the National Social Protection Council, responsible for coordinating all social protection, has not yet been enacted, leaving its supporting Social Protection Secretariat without mandate, power or authority to coordinate activities within the same Ministry.

In addition to the institutional framework, greater attention needs to be paid to organisational management to ensure staff are well resourced, motivated and have a clear understanding of what is expected from them and other stakeholders involved in delivering social assistance.

Consideration of the institutional setting and organisation requirements should be brought to the fore and not considered as an afterthought of programme expansion, which is often instigated and financed initially by development partners.

In Zambia the rights, duties and responsibilities underlying the SCT were not established in in primary legislation. The programme would also benefit from the more detailed procedural requirements of the scheme being set out in regulations. Moreover, organisationally the need for an authoritative manual of procedures – and, better, joint annual planning between departments – was identified as a prerequisite and initial basis for more integrated service delivery and use of available resources. Finally, where there is a reliance on volunteers, in the social welfare sector and beyond, definite benefits would be obtained from the development of a comprehensive community-based volunteer policy. This would represent an attempt to standardise the government's expectations from, and incentives provided to, volunteers. It could also lay the foundation for a more integrated approach to volunteer mechanisms, within the social welfare and broader social protection sector, as well as in other sectors that rely upon community-based volunteers. In terms of streamlining incentive packages, a policy could outline how government intends to support the work of volunteers through training (see point below), the provision of means of transport, the provision of means of clear identification as a volunteer (ID cards, t-shirts), the provision of stationery, the issuing of awards, or the standardisation of allowances for certain aspects of the work delivered by volunteers.

5.5 Standardising training packages

Both studies found a need for training for both professional and volunteer staff on the different elements of the programme. A standard training package to develop a range of staff competencies which are essential for successful programme management was found to be necessary. The studies also found that these need to be periodic and to reach the staff at the lowest level. Ultimately, limited and inadequate training will, over time, result in the programme evolving local variations in practice, even if these are based on misunderstandings or misinterpretations. This risk is likely to be exacerbated in the absence of written reference or guidance materials, as was the case in Zambia.

Due to financial and logistical reasons, a train-the-trainer approach (relying on ministry staff to cascade knowledge to lower levels) is often utilised. However, this requires serious effort to ensure that those delivering the training have a thorough understanding of the topics, are supported by appropriate materials, and have confidence in, and an understanding of, the principles of adult learning to deliver effective sessions.

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