

Strengthening the Governance of Social Protection: The Role of Local Government

Regional Analysis



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Resilient nations.*

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*A Working Paper prepared for the Regional Dialogue for Social Protection
and Local Governance, organized on 30 September – 1 October 2013,
in Bangkok, Thailand*

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

APRC	Asia Pacific Regional Centre
BLT	Bantuan Tunai Langsung
CBOs	Community-based organizations
CSOs	Civil society organizations
FFA	Food for Assets
MOE	Ministry of Education
MoFALD	Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development
NSPS	National Social Protection Strategy
PALS	Productive Assets and Livelihoods Support Programme
PKH	Program Keluarga Harapan
RASKIN	Beras untuk Rumah Tangga Miskin
REOPA	Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Assets programme
UIPs	Union Information Centres
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VDCs	Village Development Committees
WFP	World Food Programme

Foreword

Many countries in the Asia-Pacific region have already implemented a wide variety of social protection programmes. Nevertheless, they remain fragmented, inadequate and inequitable. While social protection schemes are developed in response to specific country needs and contexts, and are greatly different in terms of scope and sectoral focus, there are areas where countries can learn from one another. One such area pertains to the governance and institutional set-up for effective implementation of social protection, particularly at the local level.

Building on the existing partnership between UNDP and UNCDF, the regional analysis on *Strengthening the Governance of Social Protection: The Role of Local Government* provides an overview of the current situation in the delivery of social protection programmes in some selected countries in Asia. Particular attention has been given to non-contributory social transfers, which are considered to be the main instruments targeted specifically at poor and vulnerable people, and which are financed from general government revenues. Furthermore, it presents an analysis of the present de-jure and de-facto mandates and functions of local governments to deliver different types of social protection programmes.

Exploring this linkage brings a new perspective to examine the ways in which de facto local-level involvement can be optimized to make the delivery of social protection more equitable, particularly benefitting the most marginalised and vulnerable. As the local governments already play a significant role, they can provide an institutional framework to ensure that social protection schemes are adapted to different geographical and socio-economic contexts and that disaggregated data are available for evidence-informed decision making and policy-setting. Improving the role of local government in implementing effective social protection is an integral part of the efforts to achieve inclusive growth and development in the Asia-Pacific region. Social protection will inevitably play an important role in the Post-2015 agenda as it is an important redistributive measure that can contribute significantly to addressing issues of rights, equity, sustainability and national ownership.

Given the support provided at the local level in many of our partner countries by both UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre (APRC) and UNCDF, through its Regional Office for Asia-Pacific, the two organisations have collaborated in the past few years to initiate the discussions around local governance and social protection. Building on the discussion paper on *Local Government and Social Protection: Making Service Delivery Available for the Most Vulnerable*¹, the current regional analysis highlights some key lessons learned from 7 countries, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Nepal and Timor-Leste. These countries were identified based on countries' expressed self-interest to participate, as well as potential for future programming and technical support opportunities.

We hope that the findings will be useful for our national and local partners to formulate and implement programmes that can address their specific challenges related to the effective delivery of social protection at the local level for the marginalised.



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¹ UNCDF and UNDP, *Local Government and Social Protection: Making Service Delivery Available for the Most Vulnerable*, December 2011, Bangkok Thailand

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“Considerable research has also been undertaken to explore the impact of social protection. However, issues related to governance, institutional arrangements and social protection have received remarkably little attention to date; those related to local governance, in particular, have largely remained unconsidered.”

Over the last two decades social protection and social policy have become key priorities in the development narrative. The economic and financial crises of the 1990s led to an increased interest in social protection, a trend which continued over the last ten years as a result of the global financial crisis, rising energy and food prices, and heightened risks of climate-related disasters. These global changes coincided with increased levels of inequality both within and across countries, and increased constraints placed upon governments to finance social expenditure while grappling with ageing populations. In spite of this, there have been positive impacts as a result of social protection, as a short-term poverty reduction instrument and as a tool to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).² Social protection is a powerful policy instrument for reducing poverty and vulnerability, as well as promoting inclusive growth.

Social protection is usually understood to consist of two sets of instruments: 1) **social insurance** or contributory systems, through which participants acquire a right to transfers to cover situations of ill-health, accident or disability, unemployment and old age; and 2) **social assistance** systems, based on transfers that are not linked to prior contributions, but are instead financed from the general tax system, to assist low income and vulnerable groups³.

Increased focus on the social dimensions of development has prompted more research to be conducted on social protection, which has produced a body of evidence and stimulated debate. Evaluation studies have been conducted, to assess the impact of social protection programmes on the reduction of social and economic vulnerabilities. Design and implementation questions have also received significant attention, as have financial issues⁴, targeting and conditionality⁵. Considerable research has also been undertaken to explore the impact of social protection on other sectors, such as health, education, agriculture, and labour.⁶ However, issues related to governance, institutional arrangements and social protection have received remarkably little attention to date; those related to local governance, in particular, have largely remained unconsidered.

With the scaling up of many programmes from pilots to the national level, more work is needed to improve the governance and institutional dimensions related to the delivery of effective social protection. How programmes are organized, how they are financed, how effective and efficient they are in delivering social protection services, and how administrative capacity is strengthened are important questions.

2 U.N. General Assembly, 65th Session. *Outcome Document of the High-Level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals*, (A/65/L.1). Official Record. (New York, 2010).

3 ILO, “Global Extension of Social Security – Glossary,” ILO (2013): http://www.ilo.org/gimi/gess/ShowGlossary.do?GLOSSAIRE_LETTER=s&GLOSSAIRE_LANG=EN.

4 Christina Behrendt, “Can Low Income Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa Afford Basic Social Protection? First Results of a Modelling Exercise,” in *Social Protection for the Poor and the Poorest* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Armando Barrientos, “Financing Social Protection,” in *Social Protection for the Poor and the Poorest* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

5 Esther Schüring, *To Condition or not? Is that the Question? An Analysis of the Effectiveness of ex-ante and ex-post Conditionality in Social Cash Transfer Programs* (Boekenplan: Maastricht, 2012).

6 CSDH, *Closing the gap in a generation: health equity through action on the social determinants of health* (Geneva: WHO, 2008); GIZ, “Protective and Productive: the Role of Social Protection for Rural Development and Food Security. Social Protection Discussion Paper No. 16.” (working paper, GIZ, Eschborn, 2013).

Local governance and the role of local government in social protection

Debates around the operational aspects of social protection have highlighted the difficulties faced by local government in supporting the implementation of social protection without a clear role or mandate. Given that local government is generally seen as a major delivery arm of public services, due to its close geographic proximity to beneficiaries, it is also important in the context of social protection programmes. Local government is also often considered to be able to provide services in a relatively efficient and cost-effective way, thereby contributing to the administrative sustainability of service delivery.⁷ Nevertheless, the role of local government and the extent to which it can fulfil these functions varies greatly in different social and political contexts.

Generally, social protection programmes aim to strengthen the 'demand side' of service delivery. Conditional cash transfers, for example, provide benefit payments to recipient households provided that they use public services such as education or health, and so generate increased demand for such services. Unconditional transfers potentially have the same effect, as benefit payments provide recipients with an income supplement that may enable them to enhance their access to public or other services. An increase in demand for public services, generated through social transfers to households, needs to be linked to adequate and improved delivery and supply of services. Given that local government often has a key role to play in ensuring access to and the supply of public services, it must also play a role in delivering social protection. Local government is of specific importance for social protection in two ways: as an implementer of social protection programmes in its own right; and as a coordinator of services across different sectors in order to maximize and strengthen development outcomes. Local government also has a role to play in implementing gender-responsive social protection interventions that account for gender-specific risk and vulnerabilities through beneficiary selection and targeting. This paper provides some insights into this.

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Purpose of the regional analysis

This joint United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) paper aims to build on an earlier discussion paper, 'Local Government and Social Protection: Making Service Delivery Available for the Most Vulnerable',⁸ to examine the role of local government and local governance in the delivery of social protection programmes. This paper looks to extend beyond that initial discussion, to identify key functions and mandates for local governments, and explore areas where local governments could add value to the delivery of social protection programmes.

This paper focuses on social assistance systems, and will look at: conditional and unconditional cash and in-kind transfers; public works programmes; and emergency related transfers designed to mitigate shocks such as food, financial, and fuel crises, natural disasters, and/or climate-related risks. It does not intend to contribute to any conceptual debate on general social protection issues, such as universal vs. targeted approaches, conditional vs. unconditional or food vs. cash transfers, these will only be discussed to the extent to which they influence the governance dynamics of social protection programmes. This paper does, however, set out a basic conceptual framework for local government and its role in delivering social protection.

7 Richard Batley and George Larbi, "Changing Approaches to Public Sector Management," in *The Changing Role of Government: The Reform of Public Services in Developing Countries* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

8 UNCDF and UNDP, *Local Government and Social Protection: Making Service Delivery Available for the Most Vulnerable*, December 2011, Bangkok Thailand

// This research highlights that, in most countries, social protection programmes are highly fragmented and characterised by poor governance and weak institutional capacity. //

Overall, this analysis aims to:

- i. Map out current institutional and governance arrangements for the implementation of social protection programmes at the local level;
- ii. Provide a general assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of local governments in delivering social protection; and
- iii. Examine the ways in which de facto local level involvement can be improved to make the delivery of social protection more equitable, so that it benefits the most marginalized and vulnerable.

It also aims to identify specific roles local government can play in:

- i. The delivery of social protection services; and
- ii. Linking and coordinating social protection services with a range of other public services and programmes across policy sectors and with non-government actors. Clarifying these issues and improving such arrangements may lead to a more holistic delivery of social services with better outcomes and ensure that social protection services are not delivered in isolation.

Approach

This paper is based on a desk review, and aims to provide an overview of general issues and an examination of social protection programmes in seven countries from across Asia and the Pacific: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Nepal and Timor-Leste.

Documents reviewed included: national social protection and decentralisation strategy papers, operational programme manuals, impact and process evaluation reports, project briefs, progress reports, and key messages delivered by governments, donors and research institutes. In addition, government websites were used in order to better understand local government structures and processes.

For conceptual issues, literature consulted included a range of comparative case studies that looked at the role of local government in the delivery of social welfare, both in Western and Central European countries and in the Asia-Pacific Region. In order to complement and triangulate information on programmes, telephone interviews were conducted with UNDP and UNCDF in-country focal points on decentralisation and/or social protection. In some countries, interviews were also conducted with representatives from government and/or donor organizations involved in social protection.

A functional matrix was developed, to identify the roles and responsibilities undertaken by different levels of government and non-government partners (development partners, NGOs, civil society) in the delivery of services and the functions of social protection programmes (financing, legal framework, targeting, delivery, etc.). This approach allowed for a systematic assessment of the role of local government in various social protection programmes and comparison across different programme types and countries.

This paper is organized into three main sections. The first introduces the concepts of decentralisation and local government, and briefly outlines social protection as a service delivery sector. The second section provides an overview of the role of local government at the frontline of social protection delivery, and discusses context-specific issues that influence the capacity of local government to deliver social protection. Finally, the third section provides a set of recommendations for possible strategic entry points and support options for strengthening local government involvement in the delivery of social protection.

Country and programme selection for review

Countries were selected to provide an overview from across the sub-regions of Asia, to account for middle income and least developed countries, varying geographical features and national contexts, to give a broad picture of needs, realities and priorities. The selected countries all have social protection programmes in place, although there is great variance in programme consolidation and coverage. In some countries, social protection programmes have national outreach (for example, in Indonesia, Bangladesh and Nepal); in others, a number of programmes are in a pilot phase, and only cover a small portion of their target group (for example, the *Bolsa Da Mae* conditional cash transfer programme in Timor-Leste).

In each country a maximum of three social protection programmes was selected for review, which resulted in 19 programmes overall.⁹ This paper focused only on social assistance and non-contributory programmes, including health related transfers (for example, maternity benefits), education related transfers, employment related transfers (for example, public works), emergency related transfers to cope with shocks such as food, financial, and fuel crises, natural disasters, and or climate-related risks. In all, the study included: (i) six cash transfer programmes; (ii) five conditional cash transfer schemes; (iii) six in-kind transfer programmes; and (iv) three public works schemes.¹⁰

The choice of programmes did not take into account the coverage, quality or characteristics of social protection in the selected countries. All countries included in this study have much broader social protection mechanisms in place. These include both non-contributory programmes (which usually target the poorest and most vulnerable groups) and contribution-based mechanisms, such as insurance schemes. The scale of programmes (i.e. whether the programmes are in a pilot phase or fully up-scaled) was not included as a criterion for selection in this research. Programme selection was largely random, subject to available information, but to ensure that each type of programme was represented at least once.

Many countries have a variety of social protection programmes in place that have not been covered as a part of this study. These programmes are not necessarily integrated into a comprehensive and coordinated system of social protection, or administratively and operationally linked. This research highlights that, in most countries, social protection programmes are highly fragmented and characterised by poor governance and weak institutional capacity.

All of the countries studied are undergoing some form of decentralisation, which clearly influences the degree to which local government is engaged in the delivery of social protection. The more devolution and fiscal decentralisation are evident, the more likely it is that local government will be involved in the implementation of social protection.

// This paper focused only on social assistance and non-contributory programmes, which are considered to be the main instruments targeted specifically at the poor and vulnerable, and which are financed from general government revenues. //

⁹ Mongolia was the exception, where only the child money grant was chosen for review.

¹⁰ Among the in-kind transfer schemes there is also a conditional in-kind transfer component, which has been separated out, in addition to the 19 pre-selected ones.

2

Local government and social protection:

analytical and conceptual issues

By exploring the links between social protection and local government this paper aims to bring a new perspective to the debate on social protection. Until now, social protection has largely been dominated by a technical focus on operational aspects. It has been considered a part of the poverty reduction and inclusive growth agenda, rather than as a part of the broader policy sector and integral part of government functions.¹¹ As social protection programmes have been scaled up and consolidated into permanent, often state-driven programmes however, focus has shifted to highlight social protection from a service delivery and governance perspective. This section will discuss some of the key analytical concepts that form the background for this study and provide the structure for this paper.

2.1 Local government, local governance and decentralisation

'Local government,' refers to a specific set of institutions or entities, created through a legal or constitutional act, to deliver a range of specified services within a defined subnational jurisdiction.¹²

'Local governance,' on the other hand, is a broader concept that can be defined as "the way government and other social organizations interact, how they relate to citizens, and how decisions are taken."¹³ This encompasses interactions between local and other government hierarchies in the formulation and execution of policies and informal norms and regulations. It also refers to interactions with non-state institutions, community organizations and networks aimed at increasing citizen participation.¹⁴ Local-level actors include civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and non-state actors that take on various roles and responsibilities that shape local affairs. Non-state actors, including the media, religious organisations and CBOs, provide basic social services and complement state development efforts. Non-state actors may not have a formally recognized role, but are critical local stakeholders that wield significant influence.

'Decentralisation,' is a process through which government functions, powers, and finances are redistributed to lower levels of government. It is considered key to improving governance, and as such has been a major feature of governance reforms over the last two decades. Decentralisation and local government are important to sustained poverty reduction efforts, economic development and improved service delivery – especially to the most vulnerable and marginalized.¹⁵ Decentralisation brings services closer to the people and has the potential to increase citizen participation in prioritising services and the way they are delivered. In principle, this has the potential to improve overall accountability and give greater voice to the users of services, including the poor and vulnerable.

Conventionally three types of decentralisation are distinguished:

- 'Administrative decentralisation,' describes the transfer of authority, resources and responsibilities from central government to local agents or semi-autonomous bodies. Administrative decentralisation has three major forms. 'Deconcentration,' often considered to be the weakest form of decentralisation, is the redistribution of decision-making authority, financial and management responsibilities among different levels of the central government. 'Delegation,' is another form of

11 World Bank, "Poverty Assessment for Bangladesh," *World Bank* (2008): <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/BANGLADESHEXTN/Resources/295759-1240185591585/BanglaPD.pdf>; World Bank, *Local Governance in Developing Countries. Public Sector Governance and Accountability Series* (Washington: World Bank, 2006); UNDP, UNCDF, *Local Government and Social Protection*.

12 World Bank, *Local Governance in Developing Countries*.

13 WHO, *Governance for health in the 21st century* (Geneva: WHO, 2012).

14 World Bank, *Local Governance in Developing Countries*; WHO, *Governance for health in the 21st century*.

15 World Bank, "Strengthening Governance of Social Safety Nets in East-Asia. SP Discussion Paper No. 1116." (working paper, World Bank, Washington, 2011); World Bank, "Making Services Work for the Poor," in *World Development Report* (Washington: World Bank, 2004).

administrative decentralisation and refers to the transfer of authority and responsibility from central government to specialized agencies at the local level which however, remain largely accountable to central government. Lastly, 'devolution,' is seen as a transfer of authority for decision-making, finance and management to local government.

- 'Political decentralisation,' describes the transfer of power to a locally elected body with some degree of autonomy and some revenue raising power. Administrative devolution underlies most political decentralisation and is normally followed by fiscal decentralisation. Political decentralisation is usually based on a constitutional, legal and regulatory framework in order to ensure accountability and transparency.
- 'Fiscal decentralisation,' describes intergovernmental fiscal transfers, the transfer of tax and revenue raising powers to lower levels of government and the transfer of decision-making powers in terms of how such fiscal resources are used. It underpins administrative and political decentralisation processes, enabling local government to play its role. Effective fiscal decentralisation is vital for any decentralisation process to be successful.¹⁶

The distinction is not always clear-cut, with varying levels of local decision-making and central control, varying degrees of upward and downward accountability, and varying ranges of functions and resource transfers. This is also the case in the countries under review, where parallel systems of devolution, delegation and deconcentration co-exist, often leading to tensions. The decentralisation process in Indonesia, for example, has not been accompanied by a re-organisation of administrative tasks, leading to unclear mandates and functions and overlaps between central and local government.¹⁷

Decentralisation and governance reform processes are driven by the specific country context, as is local government's role in the delivery of social protection programmes. In order to better understand current governance challenges, it is therefore important to examine the historical and political processes that have been or are driving local government and decentralisation processes. Most of the countries included in this study have historically been characterised by a highly centralised political system and state administration, where local government either did not exist or never developed any real political or fiscal autonomy, beyond carrying out some limited administrative functions. This path dependency¹⁸ heavily influences the way decentralisation processes evolve; despite decentralisation reforms, many government institutions may continue to plan and implement in a centralised manner. This continued top-down approach to policy making, despite more decentralised policy settings, is also due to deeply entrenched institutional cultures and practices, or what political scientists term the "institutional fit,"¹⁹ which has been shaped for a long time by centralised policy making processes. This organizational culture is hard to change and may make it difficult to implement programmes or policies that run counter to such practice in the long run.²⁰

In most of the countries included in this study, decentralisation or re-decentralisation reforms (for example in Bangladesh and Lao PDR) started recently. Their introduction has sometimes followed profound political crisis, violent conflict and war (for example, in Nepal, Cambodia, Timor-Leste). While this has translated into a high degree of political commitment towards decentralisation in some countries (such as Indonesia and Nepal), in others (such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Mongolia) the political economy does not provide real incentives for major political stakeholders to accelerate decentralisation processes. Decentralisation efforts are perceived by some as an important means of power-sharing between economically, socially, ethnically, religiously or otherwise different regions and provinces. Others perceive the sharing of political power and resources as a potential threat to stability and unity (for example, in Lao PDR, Bangladesh, and Cambodia). These tendencies in the way decentralisation is unfolding have a strong bearing on the ways services are delivered at local level.

16 Zoe Scott and Munawwar Alam, *Resource Guide on Decentralisation and Local Government. Commonwealth Secretariat Local Government Reform Series No. 3*. (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2011); Nick Devas and Simon Delay, "Local Democracy and Challenges in Decentralising the State: An International Perspective," *Local Government Studies* 32, no. 5 (2006): 677-695; UNDP, UNCDF, *Local Government and Social Protection*; Jean-Paul Faguet, "Decentralisation's Effects on Public Investment Evidence and Policy Lessons from Bolivia and Colombia," *Estudios Sobre Desarrollo Humano, PNUD México* 2005-19 (2007).

17 UNDP Indonesia, *The Missing Link. The Province and its Role in Indonesia's Decentralisation* (Jakarta: UNDP Indonesia, 2009).

18 Peter Houtzager, "Introduction: From Polycentrism to Polity," in *Changing Paths: International development and the New Policies of Inclusion*, ed. Peter Houtzager and Mick Moore (Michigan: University of Michigan, 2003).

19 Ibid, p. 3.

20 Ibid; Sam Hickey, "The politics of social protection. What do we get from a 'social contract' approach? Working Paper No. 216." (working paper, Chronic Poverty Research Centre, Manchester, 2011).

“Until now, social protection has largely been dominated by a technical focus on operational aspects. It has been considered a part of the poverty reduction and inclusive growth agenda, rather than as a part of the broader policy sector and integral part of government functions.”

Decentralisation processes have significant implications for the role of the local government in delivering public services, including social protection, in all the countries reviewed in this paper.²¹ While all of them have formally embarked on decentralisation reforms, these processes are often highly fragmented and can, at best, be described as a work in progress. Although improved service delivery is a major reason to embark on decentralisation in most countries, it is also a highly politicized process and fiercely contested by a variety of stakeholders with often contradictory interests. Weak political commitment to effectively implement decentralisation processes is a common feature in many countries, often bringing them to a complete halt.

2.2 Social protection and local government

Social protection broadly consists of the mechanisms and instruments that allow people to cope with social and economic risks and vulnerability. These mechanisms include individual and collective savings arrangements, private and public (social) insurance schemes, redistributive tax-based mechanisms, as well as family and community-based schemes.²²

Non-contributory social transfers are the main social protection instruments financed from general government revenues that are targeted specifically at the poor and vulnerable. They include: unconditional cash transfers (such as old age pensions and disability allowances); conditional cash transfers (such as education grants); in-kind transfers (such as school-based food programmes and health vouchers); and public works programmes. Unlike insurance-based programmes – which are usually managed by specific institutions and organizations (such as insurance funds) – the public sector plays a key role in the delivery of these non-contributory schemes.

The framework of the current analysis is informed by this notion of social protection as part of a broader set of public services provided by the state or non-state actors. This framework considers how social protection programmes are implemented through a set of service delivery functions and sub-functions, which may be assigned to different institutions and stakeholders at various levels of government, including, but not limited to local government.

Issues of accountability, clear functional assignments, mandates and sustainable financing are important prerequisites for the effective delivery of most social services. Issues of coordination and public information are of particular importance for the delivery of social protection programmes. This is especially the case for social protection programmes that require complex institutional and operational arrangements due to their nature and objectives, for example, conditional cash transfers or public works programmes which link both demand and supply side issues.

21 Nick Devas and Simon Delay, “Local Democracy and Challenges in Decentralising the State: An International Perspective,”; Faguet, “Decentralisation’s Effects on Public Investment Evidence and Policy Lessons from Bolivia and Colombia,”; Scott and Alam, *Resource Guide on Decentralisation and Local Government. Commonwealth Secretariat Local Government Reform Series No. 3*.

22 ILO, *Social Protection: A New Consensus* (Geneva: ILO, 2001).

The role of local government in delivering social protection

3


3.1 A framework for understanding the role of local government and non-state actors

Broadly speaking, social protection can be broken down into three sets of service delivery functions:

- Regulatory: setting policies, defining roles and responsibilities, parameters and norms (basic standards for service delivery).
- Financing: providing the finance required to fund programmes and benefit payments.
- Implementation processes: management and administration of programmes.

The following table provides a more detailed summary of this service delivery framework for social protection. It also identifies some of the enabling factors and challenges that underpin or undermine the effectiveness with which such functions and sub-functions are undertaken.

Table 3.1
Service delivery framework for social protection

Focus and scale	Function	Sub-functions	Enabling factors and challenges
Upstream and national  Sub-national and frontline	Regulatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign mandates and responsibilities. • Define standards and norms. • Define operating procedures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy commitment. • Clarity of regulatory framework.
	Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide funding for benefits. • Provide funding for management and implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiscal space.
	Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate efforts. • Monitor and report. • Manage grievance and redress mechanisms. • Provide sensitization and awareness raising. • Identify vulnerable groups (targeting). • Deliver benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political willingness and incentives for key actors to share information and collaborate. • Human resources. • Accountability. • Participation. • Information. • Gender sensitivity.

It is important to note when referring to this framework that service delivery functions and sub-functions can be, and usually are, assigned to different institutions or actors – central government, local government, local line departments, civil society, and the private sector. Decisions on the assignment of such functions can be made in an ad hoc way, or based on rigorous assessment of the comparative advantages of each institution or actor. The various functions are interrelated, and together enable social protection programmes to be delivered successfully. Where one function is not undertaken or is poorly managed,

the effectiveness of other functions will be compromised and the overall delivery will be impeded. For example, inconsistent or unclear definitions of beneficiaries within upstream regulatory functions may compromise the effectiveness of frontline functions (such as targeting).

Looking at the service delivery functions required for social protection programmes and the assignment of roles and responsibilities, it is useful to draw on current thinking on the assignment of functions and responsibilities in intergovernmental systems: the finance and development of policies and regulatory frameworks, or upstream functions,²³ are best assigned to central government; evidence suggests that local government is better suited to implement and deliver social services.²⁴

Evidence from the country studies largely confirms this picture, local government plays an important frontline role in the administration and management of social protection programmes, but is much less involved in design, policy, planning and finance. The major exception to this is Indonesia, where local government has broad political and fiscal autonomy which allows district governors and mayors to develop and design local social protection programmes, in addition to, and complementary to national ones.²⁵ 'Unbundling,' the functions and sub-functions associated with social protection programmes makes it easier to understand the role that non-state actors often play in the delivery of social protection at the local level, particularly where the public sector may have limited capacity to do so.

In some countries, private companies may also enter in a public-private partnership with the government to provide complementary services. The best example of this is when private financial service providers play a role in the delivery of cash transfer payments. In Nepal, for example, the government has entered into a contractual arrangement with a private Nepali bank, to test branchless banking solutions, for the delivery of the cash transfers of an educational grant pilot programme. Other examples include: Cambodia, where the World Food Programme (WFP) is piloting a conditional education grant which uses a private provider to deliver payments; and Bangladesh, where the Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Assets (REOPA) programme uses Union Information Centres (UIPs) through which people can access e-services, which include on-line applications for certain social allowances.

'Informal' or 'traditional' authorities and civil society or CBOs are another set of non-state stakeholders involved in the provision of social protection services. Such institutions fill gaps and bridge functions, especially where local government fails to carry out specific operational functions due to limited capacity or geographic challenges. Informal institutions and civil society groups act as important multipliers with regard to sensitization (for example, in Timor-Leste, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR) and are involved in: targeting processes (for example, in Timor-Leste, Bangladesh, Lao PDR, Nepal); monitoring (school food programmes, voucher programmes, conditional cash transfers); and service delivery (for example, in Bangladesh, Nepal and Timor-Leste).

Donors, national and international NGOs also play an important role for social protection programmes at the local level. They are often closely involved in programme delivery, and manage functions and support local government with technical know-how on monitoring and evaluation, procurement in food programmes or the management of health voucher programmes (for example, WFP in Lao PDR and Cambodia and the Swiss Red Cross in Lao PDR).

23 UNDP, UNCDF, *Local Government and Social Protection*.

24 Scott and Alam, *Resource Guide on Decentralisation and Local Government. Commonwealth Secretariat Local Government Reform Series No. 3*; Devas and Delay, "Local Democracy and Challenges in Decentralising the State: An International Perspective"; World Bank, *Local Governance in Developing Countries*; ILO, *Good Practices in Social Service Delivery in South Eastern Europe* (Budapest: ILO Sub-regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe, 2009); Faguet, "Decentralisation's Effects on Public Investment Evidence and Policy Lessons from Bolivia and Colombia,"; UNDP and UNCDF, *Local Government and Social Protection*; Richard Batley and George Larbi, "Changing Approaches to Public Sector Management,"; Margaret Grosh et al., "For Protection and Promotion. The Design and Implementation of Effective Safety Nets," World Bank (2008): <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SAFETYNETSANDTRANSFERS/Resources/ProtectionandPromotion-Overview.pdf>. In the literature there is a division between "middle-range functions" and "proximate functions" in reference to functions that are best kept with a higher local government tier, for example, monitoring socialization and communication, and functions that require close proximity to potential beneficiaries that should be delegated to the lowest government tier and local authorities.

25 There is little documentation on these programmes. To ensure that programmes at subnational level adhere to minimum standards, with regard transfer size, quality of services, etc., 'national blueprints' for social protection can provide a set of minimum requirements for different programme types. Local government may also top-up transfers of national programmes, in order to increase the share that can be distributed at local level. This is the case with the in-kind transfer programme RASKIN.

In the long run, the responsibility for the delivery and finance of social protection programmes should be taken over by government, to ensure sustainability. However, in many countries non-state actors will remain a key partner in service delivery for some years to come. The key challenge will be to coordinate implementation between various levels of government and the non-state actors, in terms of management, monitoring and accountability. It is important to ensure that high quality services are provided consistently, on a countrywide basis, and that services do not become sub-standard when delivered by one actor, rather than another. However, the degree to which non-state actors decide to involve local government in programmes, is driven by efficiency criteria related to the capacity of local government - issues of accountability, political structures and institutions all impact on the decision to engage with government. In countries where corruption and political influence are perceived as a threat to programme outcomes, the choice to limit government involvement is stronger.

3.2 Local government functions in social protection

In the countries covered by this study, the administrative and management tasks delegated to local government mainly concern frontline service delivery functions:

1. sensitization and awareness raising
2. identifying vulnerable groups (targeting)
3. delivering benefits
4. monitoring and reporting
5. managing grievance and redress mechanisms
6. coordination (of services across sectors)

The extent to which local government fulfils these functions, and does so effectively, varies greatly from country to country.

This section provides a more detailed overview of the frontline delivery functions most commonly carried out by local government, and an assessment of delivery performance. While most of these are general functions of local government – important for the delivery of public services in general – some are more specific to social protection programmes, such as payments, coordination and targeting.

3.2.1 Sensitization and awareness raising

“The extent to which potential beneficiaries are informed and politically engaged to make demands on political representatives is likely to determine how responsive they are to the poor and vulnerable.”²⁶

Sensitization and public information are required to increase downward accountability. This is of specific importance in countries where other downward accountability mechanisms, such as local elections, are not in place or have not taken place for a long time (as in Lao PDR, Nepal, and Timor-Leste).²⁷ Local governments, because of their close proximity to potential recipients of social protection benefits, can play an important role, they raise awareness of and disseminate information on programme contents, including access criteria, size of transfers or the next out-payment. As it is the level of government that provides the closest connection between citizens and the public sector, it is theoretically well placed to act as a conduit to provide people with information about social

²⁶ BRAC, *Small Scale Old Age and Widow Allowance for the Poor in Rural Bangladesh: An Evaluation* (Dhaka: BRAC, 2008).

²⁷ In this context, non-government actors, such as NGOs and CSOs, such as health or school committees, religious associations, sport clubs and cultural associations might be particularly apt to take a prominent role to disseminate information. Unfortunately, this study did not come across any evidence in this regard.

“The extent to which potential beneficiaries are informed and politically engaged to make demands on political representatives is likely to determine how responsive they are to the poor and vulnerable.”

protection programmes.

Evidence from this study shows that weak sensitization and communications approaches are major challenges. Communication strategies are often developed at the central government level and do not take into account local realities or involve actors at the local level (see for example, Box 3.1).

Capacity to disseminate information is a problem, particularly in large geographical jurisdictions where local government staffing is often too low to reach out to the whole territory. There is often a lack of training and sensitization measures for local government officials, NGOs or civil society. Added to this, training materials are often written in a style that is difficult for non-expert local government officials and beneficiaries to understand, and many countries do not have information material written in the local languages of minority groups, who are often among the poorest.

Box 3.1

Temporary cash transfer in Indonesia

The **Bantuan Tunai Langsung** (BLT) programme was designed as a temporary unconditional cash transfer for poor households in order to cope with unprecedented price hikes. As of 2008, it had reached around 18.5 million households. The programme has been shown to have had a positive impact on the expenditure pattern of recipients' households, leading to greater health, education and labour outcomes.

The programme design and implementation however, did not take into account governance challenges, including issues of targeting and sensitization at the local level. There was very limited communications between key relevant stakeholders at the national and local levels. Furthermore, a lack of community involvement in the design of the programme resulted in high inclusion and exclusion errors, which led to community-wide tensions, allegations of corruption and protests. The lack of a complaint monitoring, management information systems and social audits made it difficult to improve the programme between 2005 and 2008.

The demand for information should come from citizens and civil society. Where the capacity and awareness of citizens to do this is limited, civil society, including the media, have an important role to play in supporting citizens to be more vocal about their demands. This can trigger the government to be more accountable, and the demand for information is an important accountability mechanism for awareness raising and sensitization of social protection programmes.

A lack of information also poses challenges on the supply side. In many developing countries, government officials often have limited knowledge of how programmes are expected to operate. This makes it difficult for beneficiaries to access or apply for social protection programmes. This slows down operational processes significantly and excludes eligible beneficiaries. Impact assessments reviewed for this paper, note that beneficiaries often receive false or incomplete information, which forces them to return several times in order to access social protection benefits. For example, civil servants involved in the administration of *Program Keluarga Harapan* (PKH) in Indonesia were unaware that beneficiaries eligible for one programme were also eligible for other social assistance schemes; this effectively excluded beneficiaries from accessing full social protection entitlements. Gaps in information also impact grievance and redress mechanisms – to the extent that beneficiaries and even local government officials are often not aware of their existence. The dissemination of information is an inherently political process and serves an important gatekeeping function. This is of particular importance with regard to social protection programmes. For fear of draining public funds or jeopardizing social cohesion, governments may choose to limit information, as evidence from Indonesia or Lao PDR suggests.

Existing media may not always be able to provide people and scattered communities in remote or mountainous areas with access to information. Moreover, poor people usually have less access to radios and televisions than non-poor people (for example, in Bangladesh). At the same time, access to new communications technologies, such as mobile phones, may not be sufficiently widespread to expand

overall outreach. For example, most programmes do not utilize mobile phones to communicate the date and time for the next out-payments or health check-ups.

3.2.2 Identifying vulnerable groups (targeting)

Local government plays a vital role in targeting and identifying beneficiaries for social protection. By virtue of their proximity and access to local knowledge, local governments are better placed than central agencies to identify beneficiaries, and can do so at a lower cost and with more accountability.²⁸ Where information and data on poverty and other social indicators is limited at the subnational and local levels, local government stakeholders – that know their constituencies well – provide an important additional filter for selection to complement household surveys, means-tests and geographic targeting exercises.

In numerous social protection programmes, district, sub-district level and traditional authorities identify potential beneficiaries. For example, the “IDPoor” targeting scheme in Cambodia involved village structures in beneficiary selection.²⁹ Local government also plays a vital role in identifying beneficiaries in categorically targeted programmes. For example, in Nepal, Village Development Committees identify old age pensioners and people with disabilities; a similar approach is taken in Bangladesh. In addition, school teachers, health workers, local school or health committees are often involved in targeting. In Lao PDR, nurses and other health personnel, together with local health committees, identify pregnant and breast-feeding mothers for the maternal health voucher programme. For public works programmes, local government may identify local infrastructure priorities and identify vulnerable people in the community who should be given priority for employment (See Box 3.2). Systems need to be put in place to ensure that decision-makers charged with identifying beneficiaries do not falsify information, to ensure that decisions are transparent and based on actual scenarios.

Box 3.2

Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Assets (REOPA) programme in Bangladesh

The REOPA public works programme employed 24,444 destitute, widowed and abandoned women, to maintain earthen roads, over a two-year tenure under a government social safety net programme. The programme's aim was to improve and sustain socio-economic conditions and food security. 30 percent of wages were kept as mandatory savings, to be used post-employment as a cushion, to protect basic levels of consumption and to invest in micro-enterprises. Impact assessments have shown that the cash transfer during employment was sufficiently high to allow for ample savings to be set aside for productive investments. Habits of saving and investment were also encouraged through a system of rotating inter-lending.

The local government played a critical role in the implementation of REOPA. At the local level, the programme was implemented by Union Parishads (councils), the lowest tier of local government, with line ministry service departments involved at sub-district level. In addition, the local government played a significant role in identifying local infrastructure priorities and selecting beneficiaries. Furthermore, local NGOs assisted the local government to increase community participation and enhance targeting processes, monitoring and oversight. Nevertheless, the local government still had limited institutional capacity, especially to improve pro-poor and gender-sensitive approaches to REOPA. Critical limitations such as a lack of human resources and accountability remained the key challenges.

Local government is also responsible for the collection of information, which is essential for targeting processes. The registration of vital events such as births and deaths is a common function of local government in many countries. While it supports the targeting of social protection programmes, it is also essential for planning and resource allocation for other public services, such as health or education. Moreover, vital registration is important for monitoring, for example, to ensure that deceased people are

²⁸ UNDP, UNCDF, *Local Government and Social Protection*.

²⁹ In each village, villagers select trusted and qualified representatives to form the Village Representative Groups (VRGs), who receive training. The latter starts the selection process using a standardized IDPoor Questionnaire. Before being submitted to the community council for further endorsement, the list of selected beneficiaries is discussed with the village and revised if necessary. A final list, which still can be modified based on individual complaints, is then entered in the unified MIS scheme. Following the verification process, an IDPoor Card is issued, which allows access to a range of programmes, including free access to health care, the social land concession programmes, free access to agricultural input subsidies.

By virtue of their proximity and access to local knowledge, local governments are better placed than central agencies to identify beneficiaries, and can do so at a lower cost and with more accountability.

taken off the recipient list of pension schemes. In several countries local governments are involved in the collection of poverty and other socio-economic data. This is vital to social protection targeting processes and planning at the local level, and also informs central development planning. In Timor-Leste for example, village development committees are trained to prepare simple reports that provide data on the socio-economic situation and development constraints of a village. This information is used for planning purposes at a higher government level.

In many countries, targeting processes for social protection programmes are firmly integrated into the local patronage system. Local government institutions or traditional authorities responsible for targeting may develop their own targeting criteria based on kinship or other traditional patron-client relations, rather than following criteria based on needs or social and economic vulnerabilities. This is of particular relevance for marginalized groups, such as women, migrant workers, orphans, old people, people with disabilities or low caste groups who suffer the most from such exclusionary practices (see, for example, the *Beras untuk Rumah Tangga Miskin* (RASKIN) rice subsidy programme in Indonesia, or the old age pension scheme in Bangladesh outlined in Box 3.3).³⁰ In order to counter elite-capture, some programmes establish additional or alternative (self-) targeting mechanisms to avoid established institutional structures, which are often heavily influenced by party politics. The *Bolsa Da Mae* programme in Timor-Leste has, for example, introduced the possibility of self-application via NGOs and civil society organizations after complaints from potential beneficiaries of nepotism and clientelism.

Box 3.3

Old age pension and assistance programme for vulnerable women in Bangladesh

The programme reaches around 5.3 million pensioners aged 65 and above, and around 360,000 vulnerable and abandoned women, including elderly, disabled and incapacitated women. Its aim is to increase consumption and food security. The programme has had an impact on the size of income of individual beneficiaries, which has in turn resulted in increased food intake and use of health care facilities. Some beneficiaries have re-invested part of the money into income-generating activities. The programme also increased the social position of the persons involved and increased their dignity.

Targeting and selection processes in this programme are highly decentralised and built upon local knowledge and community discretion. While this is considered an efficient way of targeting, incidences of elite capture, nepotism and leakage are frequent, as targeting and distribution processes are firmly embedded in local patronage systems.

There are at times, problems associated with individuals who are charged with identifying vulnerable groups. There have been examples of levying so-called 'programme entry fees' (which are sometimes deducted from benefit payments to recipients), registering ghost workers in cash for work programmes or pocketing pension payments for people who have long been dead. Beneficiaries are often either unaware of these types of leaks or see them as being 'normal'.³¹ Much of this is because beneficiaries have little basic knowledge about social protection programmes, which makes it difficult for them (and others) to monitor and control illicit programme practices or to lodge complaints.

30 World Bank, "Raskin subsidized rice delivery. Public expenditure review (PER); Social assistance program and public expenditure review no. 3," World Bank (2012): <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2012/02/15893857/raskin-subsidized-rice-delivery>.

31 Naomi Hossain and Ferdous Osman, *Politics and Governance in the Social Sectors in Bangladesh 1991-2006* (Dhaka: BRAC, 2007).

It is therefore crucial for the effective delivery of social protection programmes, to make a management information system available, as it allows all stakeholders to better monitor operational processes. In many countries, this is difficult as information is collected and filed manually, which makes processing lengthy. However, some countries are developing electronically-based and comprehensive management information systems. This will allow relevant data sets (for example vital registration) to be linked to social protection programmes and ensure access to the data of different social protection programmes (e.g. in Indonesia, Cambodia). Local government would be the logical point to take responsibility for data entry in order to avoid duplication of work, however, inadequate technical infrastructure and weak capacity are major challenges to this.

3.2.3 Delivering benefits

In the absence of widely available and accessible banking services, local government officials may be responsible for delivering social transfers as cash to beneficiaries. Their presence in most areas and close spatial proximity to beneficiaries makes them cost-effective and relatively reliable payment agents. In Bangladesh for example, the lowest tier of local government (*Union Parishad*) is responsible for the distribution of some cash transfers to beneficiaries. A similar model is in place in Nepal, where old age pension, disability and other 'categorical' allowances are distributed by municipal ward officers in urban areas and village development secretaries in rural areas. However, to minimize leakages and misuse in delivery, accountability mechanisms should be put in place.

In countries with a well established and widespread local banking infrastructure (for example, Indonesia or Mongolia) local government is not involved in the delivery of cash transfers. Cash is accessed directly at local bank branches to which it has been transferred by central level line ministries. In countries where local government is not considered the best option for the delivery of cash transfers, where bank infrastructure is underdeveloped, central government or donor agencies may also consider using cashless (or electronic) payment schemes. Innovative approaches to cash delivery, such as cash cards, mobile banking or the agent-model are offered by an increasing number of private commercial companies or banks. Such options have already been tested in Timor-Leste, Cambodia and Nepal (where a UNCDF supported school stipend programme is currently testing the use of a local agent network to facilitate the delivery of transfers). In Cambodia, WFP is piloting a cash card approach for payments made through a scholarship programme.

While public-private partnership arrangements appear to work well, their cost-effectiveness needs to be carefully assessed, particularly when governments consider how to scale them up nationally. There are clear opportunities for corruption and illicit payments in the physical delivery of cash transfers. Local government actors may oppose the introduction of such innovative mechanisms, as they would lose an additional and reliable, albeit illegal, income source. As a result, they could be disincentivized to properly execute their administrative functions, making matters worse for the poor. However, anecdotal evidence from Nepal suggests evidence to the contrary. In Nepal, the introduction of a mobile banking scheme by UNCDF has been welcomed by many local government officials, because it substantially reduces their already heavy workload.

The involvement of local government, or even local banks, in the delivery of payments does not always make it more convenient, as they often still have to make time-consuming and costly trips in order to get to the nearest bank branch or local government office. This is a particular challenge for those who are too old or physically challenged. In Bangladesh for example, beneficiaries of the old age pension programme are required to collect their allowance in person at the sub-district level office (*Upazila Parishad*) in order to avoid malpractice, such as payments being made to ghost beneficiaries (see also the case of disability allowances in Nepal, Box 3.4).³²

While public-private partnership arrangements appear to work well, their cost effectiveness needs to be carefully assessed, particularly when governments consider how to scale them up nationally.

32 BRAC, Small Scale Old Age and Widow Allowance for the Poor in Rural Bangladesh.

Monitoring and evaluation processes for social protection usually involve all levels of government. However, local government plays a key role in this given its involvement in the management and implementation of social protection programmes.

Box 3.4 Disability allowance in Nepal

The disability allowance was introduced in 1996, it aims to improve the economic vulnerability of disabled and partially disabled people in Nepal. The allowance reaches around 25,000 people across the country. Despite the small size of the allowance, the impact is particularly strong for disabled people - who usually face a higher degree of discrimination and are among the poorest and most marginalized. Similar to the old age pension, the disability allowance suffers major management challenges. For disabled people, who may have mobility problems, it may be difficult to attend an office to apply for, or access, services. In addition, there is a problem with defining the criteria for 'disability,' which opens the allowance to misuse. Furthermore, the budget for the disability allowance is based on a quota, which stops the allowance from being given to all those who are actually eligible, which contributes further to exclusionary practices.

Institutions at the local level are also involved in the delivery of in-kind transfers, such as food items or vouchers for health and education services. In order to ensure that food transfers, especially school food programmes, reach the intended target group, many programmes have started to involve CBOs, such as parent-teacher associations and health or school-feeding committees, which have a particular interest in ensuring that services reach the target group (see for example Timor-Leste, Box 3.5).

Box 3.5 Involving the community in service delivery in Timor-Leste

The WFP supported **National School Feeding Programme** programme was established in 2005. It provides around 230,000 children, in seven districts, with a mid-morning snack. Since 2010, parts of the food delivery to local schools have been controlled by government and there has been a move towards local procurement of food to make the programme more sustainable in the long run. The cooking and distribution of meals is carried out by local schools and school feeding committees, while management, oversight and monitoring is controlled by NGOs contracted by WFP. It is hoped that greater community involvement will improve transparency and commitment and ownership by local schools and communities.

3.2.4 Monitoring and reporting

Monitoring and evaluation processes for social protection usually involve all levels of government. However, local government plays a key role in this given its involvement in the management and implementation of social protection programmes. Local government officials manage administrative information and data, draw up potential beneficiary lists and verify their eligibility. They provide information on application procedures and are involved in case management.³³ Local government officials are involved with monitoring, they collect basic information on financial issues, and submit regular reports to the next higher government level and/or central coordination unit on the function of payments, in-kind transfers or services used. In programmes where electronic management information systems are in place, data entry is typically conducted by local government.

Where programmes have specific access requirements (for example, in Cambodia or Bangladesh where conditional cash transfers are provided in education grants), local government bodies and institutions, such as schools, health centres, health or parent-teacher committees, are also involved in monitoring compliance with conditionality. In many programmes, local government is involved in downward accountability. Sub-

³³ UNDP, UNCDF, *Local Government and Social Protection*.

district or village-level administrations are usually required to make final beneficiary lists public, as a measure of transparency and accountability.

However, reporting and monitoring are not always effective due to capacity constraints. Local government officials, teachers, nurses and civil society committees are often not provided with training on how to fill in reporting forms correctly. Furthermore, basic organizational weaknesses, such as an inability to print and deliver forms on time, have a negative impact on programme operations and lead to delays in delivery of, or adjustments to payments. This is of particular concern in conditional cash or in-kind transfer programmes (for example, in Indonesia, see Box 3.6). Monitoring and evaluation requires a strong commitment on the part of the implementing agency to ensure transparency and accountability. If this is not the case, monitoring processes are unlikely to work efficiently and effectively.

Box 3.6 Monitoring conditionalities in Indonesia

The **Progamem Keluarga Harapan (PKH)** or Hopeful Family Programme is a cash transfer programme provided to poor families, conditional upon the use of locally provided education and health services. The first impact evaluation conducted on the programme showed that the PKH increased income for very poor households and improved health behaviour. Most of the transfer was spent on food, clothes and health. The impact on education was low; enrolment did not increase, nor did child labour decrease.

There were major bottlenecks in the process of verifying beneficiaries' entitlements. There were also difficulties monitoring conditionalities, which led to the collection of incorrect data on beneficiaries and lacking, late and incorrect payments. In addition, there were challenges on the supply-side aspect as the programme only included provinces that were able to cope with the increased demand.

Where the public sector has limited capacity and commitment to properly monitor and evaluate operations, programmes supported by non-government stakeholders continue to develop their own monitoring and evaluation structures. In Lao PDR, for example, WFP employs three full-time staff members to support the monitoring and evaluation processes of the school food and child-mother nutrition programmes. This unit oversees the management information systems of both programmes and develops materials (such as forms and guidelines) used by local government officials for monitoring purposes. The unit also draws up detailed work plans for monitoring processes.

3.2.5 Managing grievance and redress mechanisms

Grievance and redress mechanisms help to improve access to social justice, ensure impartiality and accountability and provide policymakers with a source of information on the effectiveness of their policies.³⁴ Administrative structures within line ministries, the judiciary and other public institutions are the most commonly used grievance and redress mechanisms. Social audits and public hearings are also popular mechanisms employed by the users of services and policymakers to gather information on the effectiveness of services provided. However, the establishment of complaints mechanisms is often not enough; complaints need to be responded to by relevant stakeholders. It is equally important that people are informed about their right to redress and to social protection services – which NGOs, CSOs and the media play a key role in.

34 Varun Gauri, "Redressing Grievances and Complaints Regarding Basic Service Delivery. Policy Research Working Paper 56992011" (working paper, World Bank, 2011).

// The establishment of complaints mechanisms is often not enough; complaints need to be responded to by relevant stakeholders. It is equally important that people are informed about their right to redress and to social protection services. //

Not all programmes examined in this study have redress mechanisms in place (for example, the school meals programme in Cambodia and the maternal health voucher scheme in Lao PDR). Like monitoring activities, grievance and redress mechanisms are some of the least developed features across all programmes and countries. Where they do exist, they often do not work or are not used. Often beneficiaries and local government officials are unaware that these mechanisms exist and there is a lack of training for the latter on how to handle and process grievances.

Some programmes have developed informal grievance channels, such as village chiefs or trusted people in the community (for example, leaders of religious associations or women's clubs) who substitute for, or complement formal grievance and redress mechanisms. In the BLT programme in Indonesia, for example, the village level provides an entry point for grievance and redress, even though formal mechanisms are in place. Another example is in Bangladesh, where, although the old age pension has no formal complaints mechanism in place, village chiefs and UP Chairpersons play an informal role in terms of handling grievances and redress.

These types of local and informal mechanisms are of particular importance in rural areas. Although informal grievance and redress mechanisms may sometimes be contested, some social protection programmes include them to ensure greater downward accountability on the part of the public sector institutions that are supposed to handle complaints. In Mongolia for example, the Child Grant Programme, has established Livelihood Support Councils, which include both local officials and village representatives, in response to grievances.³⁵

3.2.6 Coordination (of services across sectors)

As a key service provider, local government coordinates efforts across different public services. This role is of relevance for all services including social protection programmes, as it can significantly improve specific sector outcomes within health, education, agriculture and employment. Linkages between social protection programmes and other public services are a concern in several of the countries included in this study.

The introduction of cash transfer programmes often leads to a sharp increase in demand for services, particularly in the health and education sectors. Such social protection programmes usually require beneficiaries to meet certain requirements in order to receive their cash transfers, including regular health check-ups or school attendance. Therefore, coordination needs to be strengthened between stakeholders and providers of health and education services, to ensure that the increase of demand is met with sufficient supply (for example, that new schools are built and teachers are recruited to cater for an increase in demand).

Box 3.7

Coordination of educational services across sectors in Nepal

The Social Protection Pilot for Scholarship Programmes, which covers the two far western districts of Nepal, aims to coordinate and streamline scholarship programmes provided by different line ministries and government levels. The programmes are all conditional cash transfers that target dalits, girls, children with disabilities and other disadvantaged children. The pilot aims to strengthen local governance for delivering social protection programmes, including management, delivery, monitoring and increased downward accountability. Other key priorities are: to increase coordination of services across different line ministries at local level; and to improve targeting efficiency of scholarship programmes, especially with regard to exclusion based on caste and poverty. The pilot provides a financial top-up to existing scholarship grants, to improve the impact of programmes and school attendance rates.

While the main focus of the initiative is on the education grant programme, the pilot will also contribute to strengthening the social security system as a whole. To achieve the established governance goals of the pilot, Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD) is working closely with the Ministry of Education (MOE) to ensure close coordination and linkages between local bodies and local education departments during implementation.

³⁵ This paper does not specifically examine the role of CBOs in strengthening grievance and redress mechanisms. This should be explored further to determine how this could improve the delivery of social protection programmes at the local level.

Effective coordination ensures that services are delivered within and across different sectors at the right time, and properly sequenced to increase their impact (see Box 3.7). In the case of programmes related to disaster risk management or food security, coordination becomes particularly relevant where social protection measures have proven to be an effective instrument in tackling seasonal food insecurity, that complement other food security measures such as agricultural programmes that aim to improve the productivity of farmers (see Box 3.8).

Box 3.8

Strengthening livelihoods for food-insecure households in Cambodia

The **Productive Assets and Livelihoods Support (PALS)** Programme, is a public works programme currently being piloted. It targets ten communes in five districts, and aims to promote livelihoods and provide regular employment opportunities for food-insecure and vulnerable households, especially in the lean season. Commune councils lead a participatory process through which communities select assets that contribute to higher agricultural productivity, increase access to markets and social infrastructure, and improve resilience to climate shocks. The programme intends to engage with selected communities for an extended period of time, to achieve greater impact, provide predictable employment opportunities and promote sustainable change. The WFP supported programme, which is a re-design of the 20 year-old **Food for Assets (FFA)** programme, also has an important governance component, it is designed to ensure that key responsibilities will be taken over by provincial government and commune councils, to strengthen the management capacity of the subnational level, in line with Cambodia's decentralisation and de-concentration policy.

Local government may also facilitate coordination, by providing citizens with harmonised procedures and processes for accessing services and benefits. Examples of this, in the form of one-stop-shops or single-window approaches, are currently being piloted in Bangladesh and Cambodia. In countries where the health and education sectors are highly centralised, the coordination role of local governments is usually limited. At the same time, it can be difficult for local government to manage and coordinate both the supply and demand sides linked to social protection. Conditional cash transfer programmes, for example, may only, or largely, be implemented where sufficient public services exist for beneficiaries to comply with conditionalities, which usually leaves out the poorest districts. This is the case for Indonesia's Hopeful Family Programme.

In some countries local government bodies oversee and coordinate line ministries' activities, but may not be able to exercise proper authority – particularly when budgetary resources continue to be channelled through line ministries. In such circumstances, local government bodies have little influence over sector development plans, which may not always reflect local priorities. The ability of local governments to take on this role often depends on how clear decentralisation policies are, and how effectively they are being implemented on the ground. In addition, coordination and oversight may be compromised because local government often lacks the financial, technical and managerial capacity to engage in complex planning processes.

The coordination of services also involves non-government actors, which, in many countries, provide a substantial share of public services at the local level. In some countries, there may be existing rules and regulations to ensure that non-government actors register their services and align themselves with public sector policies and priorities, though the extent to which these are enforced varies. A common mechanism at the local level, where decentralisation laws and strong local governance practices exist, is to include non-government actors in key planning meetings.

// The introduction of cash transfer programmes often leads to a sharp increase in demand for services, particularly in the health and education sectors. Therefore, coordination needs to be strengthened between stakeholders and service providers to ensure that the increase of demand is met with sufficient supply. //

3.2.7 Summary

There is a correlation between the level of programme complexity and local government involvement. When targeting mechanisms and management arrangements are more complex (as is the case for conditional cash transfers, public works programmes, food programmes or mixed programme types) there is more potential for local government to play a role (see Table 3.2). Other factors – such as decentralisation reforms, overall intergovernmental arrangements, local government capacity, local government incentives – are also important to determine the extent to which local government is involved in social protection programmes.

A threefold typology can be used to characterise the extent to which local government is involved in social protection programmes:

1. Local government has no role, or only a very limited one, in the delivery and management of social protection programmes (e.g. Timor-Leste, Lao PDR).
2. Local government has a coordinating role with respect to social protection programmes, but delivery functions are largely centralised (e.g. Bangladesh, Nepal, Mongolia).
3. Local government is largely responsible for the management and implementation of social protection programmes (e.g. Indonesia).

Local governments have significant managerial and implementation responsibilities for social protection programmes in countries where they enjoy a high degree of political, fiscal and administrative autonomy (for example, in Indonesia) and where robust control and oversight mechanisms (for example a unified management information system, minimum standards for transfers and/or quality of education and health services) are in place at the national level to ensure that local government plays its role.

Evidence from the countries involved in this study indicates which types of responsibilities local government may have in delivering social protection programmes. These are summarised in table 3.2.

Table 3.2:
Local government involvement in social protection operations

Programme type			
In-kind transfers	Targeted programmes	Conditional programmes	Public works
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ targeting ✓ procurement of food ✓ preparation ✓ distribution ✓ monitoring & reporting ✓ basic financial monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ targeting ✓ monitoring & reporting ✓ distribution & delivery (optional) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ targeting ✓ monitoring of conditionalities ✓ general monitoring & reporting ✓ distribution & delivery (optional) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ targeting ✓ selecting activities ✓ skills training ✓ provision of building material ✓ payments ✓ monitoring ✓ basic fiscal monitoring

Regulations and formal arrangements for social protection programmes may assign implementation and management responsibilities to local governments, although weak capacity often means that local governments are unable to carry out such tasks, which limits them to a coordination role while major delivery functions remain centralised. This is the case for district and local branch offices of the Ministry of Social Solidarity in Timor-Leste's *Bolsa Da Mae* programme, which play a minimal role in delivering social protection services. Accountability issues, such as widespread corruption or leakage problems, may also prompt donors or central government to re-centralise service delivery functions and to limit the role of local government in social protection programmes.

Even if local government works well, certain service delivery functions may be contracted out for reasons of efficiency or transparency (for example, monitoring, evaluation or the management of beneficiary payments).

3.3 Underlying challenges and enabling factors

This section looks at some of the challenges and enabling factors that underlie the extent to which local government involvement in social protection is (or is not) effective. Some of these are ‘external’ to local governments and are thus linked to the overall policy and institutional environment; others are ‘internal’ to local governments and relate to the ways in which they work and operate.

3.3.1 Policy commitment for social protection

Processes and structures that make social protection a key and integral element in long-term poverty reduction and inclusive growth need to be in place. Distinctly articulated national strategic frameworks for social protection and social policy do not need to be in place, although this is the case in some countries (such as Cambodia and Bangladesh). Other national strategies, such as national poverty reduction plans or sector-specific strategies (for example, Timor-Leste’s Education Strategy, or the National Safe Motherhood Programme in Lao PDR) may also provide a framework to strengthen the effectiveness of social protection programmes and ensure national ownership.

Broad national development plans and strategies are important for social protection policies because they establish common goals and objectives that are shared and agreed upon across all government sectors and line ministries. This provides a strategic framework for cooperation and coordination. These goals and objectives are usually underpinned by progress indicators and benchmarks, which provide incentives to increase cooperation and coordination and strengthen outcomes. National strategies often make institutional shortcomings more visible and increase the pressure on government or other stakeholders to act. In Cambodia, for example, the national social protection strategy has revealed shortcomings in monitoring and reporting on social protection interventions. National strategies may also put pressure on non-governmental actors to cooperate with government. In Cambodia, the national social protection strategy – which has achieved high levels of national ownership – has encouraged some donors to seek increased cooperation with government partners (for example, the WFP supported national school meals programme). The long-term goal is to hand over programmes to respective line ministries. A focus on social protection as a national development priority may also provide an entry point for improved monitoring of non-state actors and service providers.

“Broad national development plans and strategies are important for social protection policies because they establish common goals and objectives that are shared and agreed upon across all government sectors and line ministries.”

3.3.2 Coordination

Effective and efficient coordination is an important enabling factor for social protection service delivery and, at the same time, a major challenge. A holistic approach to coordination requires both ‘horizontal’ coordination between government sectors and ‘vertical’ coordination between different levels of government. Multi-sectoral coordination must go beyond the public sector to include, non-government stakeholders, CSOs, private, not-for-profit and commercial agencies and service providers.

Where several ministries are involved in the management of one social protection programme, coordination is more of a challenge. Deeply entrenched silo culture among sectors is a major inhibitor to coordination, that limits information sharing and the pooling of human and financial resources. Acting as vertical silos, line ministries and other agencies tend to operate independently of each other. In Timor-Leste, the *Bolsa Da Mae* programme has tried to overcome this; they use existing thematic interministerial working groups (for example, on gender-based violence) for monitoring purposes and for the exchange of data and information. Similarly, in Lao PDR, UNICEF has developed cross-sector cooperation around thematic fields (such as food security or child protection).

// In practice, it can be challenging to maintain coherence between national and local levels; there is a lack of operational clarity and national policies and strategies must be translated into effective programmes at the provincial and local levels. //

Strong leadership and political commitment for social protection is important to facilitate cooperation. Indonesia has been through a rapid decentralisation process. As a result, all key government responsibilities and functions, including the provision of basic social services and social protection, are devolved to provincial and district levels. Local governments in Indonesia have the autonomy to manage their own development priorities at the local level. This provides a critical opportunity for local governments to design and implement social protection initiatives that are responsive to specific local needs. In practice, it can be challenging to maintain coherence between national and local levels; there is a lack of operational clarity and national policies and strategies must be translated into effective programmes at the provincial and local levels. Anecdotal evidence suggests that strong political leadership at provincial and district levels improves implementation, helps to ensure efficiency and the availability of quality services. Where elected and other officials at the subnational level have access to significant fiscal resources (as is the case in Indonesia), there is more incentive to establish and implement local social protection interventions. This is also the case in the school food programme in Cambodia, where variations in programme outcomes have been attributed to the degree of interest and political commitment to the programme shown by different provincial governors.

For civil servants, coordination with other sectors usually means more work. If there are few incentives for civil servants to work across different sectors, or there is little awareness of the benefits of cross-sector coordination in the long run, public officials are unlikely to be motivated to engage in multi-sector activities.

3.3.3 Clear mandates and functions

Unclear, poorly defined or loosely regulated assignment of functional responsibilities across central and local governments impedes the delivery of social protection services and leaves different tiers of government without a clear mandate to act.³⁶ A clear definition of responsibilities is essential to establish accountability frameworks and to determine oversight and quality assurance mechanisms. A lack of clear functional mandates impedes capacity to strengthen the role of local government as a service provider and coordinator of public sector and non-state services. This makes it difficult to hold local government accountable for the delivery of quality social protection services (see, for example, the experience with BLT in Indonesia).

In Bangladesh, the 2008 Zila Parishad Ordinance gives discretionary powers over social welfare up to the Zila Parishad (District Council) and to the specialized Chittagong Hills Parishads, but not to the lowest tier of government, i.e., the Unions. In some countries there are no regulatory frameworks at all, in others, regulatory overlaps exist which blur roles and responsibilities. In Indonesia, for example, social protection is defined as a shared responsibility between different government layers (central-local), which can create confusion and lead to duplication of efforts. At the same time, non-governmental actors implement their programmes in a non-regulated context, and often develop their own operational structures, without any or very limited coordination with local government. Under such circumstances, monitoring becomes an almost impossible task (see, for example, the case of Cambodia).

In the absence of clear mandates, regulations and norms, local governments may begin to develop their own rules and regulations, including targeting and distribution mechanisms. Communities may develop their own criteria for the selection of beneficiaries, which may focus less on poverty and be based on local power relations.

³⁶ This phenomenon also has historical roots. The British and French models of decentralisation give line ministries a strong role in local service delivery, which is carried out by centrally appointed field officers. Local governments must coordinate their actions with these field officers. They have substantial autonomy over purely local functions, but limited access to revenue instruments. See: World Bank, *Local Governance in Developing Countries*; WHO, *Governance for health in the 21st century*.

This can lead to major inclusion and exclusion errors, which almost certainly run counter to actual programme goals. In Indonesia's BLT cash transfer programme and subsidized rice programme (RASKIN), the distribution of benefits that took place at the community level did not favour the most vulnerable, who were the intended target group (see Box 3.9).³⁷ However, such targeting practices do not necessarily produce entirely negative consequences for the poor. In Bangladesh, Nepal or Timor-Leste for example, local government officials use their payment authority to re-allocate transfers to a larger set of beneficiaries, including poor households in the community which were not initially targeted, despite being eligible.³⁸

Box 3.9 Re-distribution of rice in Indonesia

The **Beras untuk Rumah Tangga Miskin (RASKIN)** Rice for the Poor Households Programme, is an in-kind transfer programme that sells rice at below-market prices to vulnerable households, in order to smooth consumption difficulties. As of 2010, the programme had reached 17.5 million people. Its impact has been low considering programme costs. Local level implementation practices do not only favour eligible households, but rice is often shared among many or all households, which reduces the impact on poor households. Furthermore, there are no clear functions and mandates between the different agencies responsible for the programme, which makes it difficult to improve programme performance and raise incentives. The lack of a proper comprehensive monitoring scheme that looks into all programme steps, in particular distribution down to the household level, provides an additional challenge.

Local adaptations of procedures may sometimes prove to be useful innovations. Innovations in service delivery are often developed at the local level in response to implementation challenges. These kinds of innovation are an iterative process, through which social protection programmes are fine-tuned or evolve in pragmatic ways and respond to operational challenges. As programmes are implemented, rules, regulations or operational procedures may be found to be inappropriate or poorly adapted to on-the-ground realities – and local adaptations to them can thus be seen as pragmatic responses. At the same time, important areas that need regulation might have been overlooked.

3.3.4 Participation

Non-governmental or non-state actors are often involved in the implementation of many social protection programmes. The participation of civil society and other non-governmental actors in social protection programmes ensures oversight of frontline service providers at the district/sub-district levels. This is of particular importance in contexts where local level downward accountability mechanisms are weak or under-developed. Local participation, including the involvement of civil society and CBOs, is critical to ensure that social services and social protection programmes are responsive to local needs and demands. Evidence from the review suggests that the participation of local actors in the implementation of social protection programmes provides opportunities for innovation and experimentation with regard to service delivery.

// Local adaptations of procedures may sometimes prove to be useful innovations. Innovations in service delivery are often developed at the local level in response to implementation challenges. //

37 World Bank, "Bantuan Langsung Tunai (BLT) temporary unconditional cash transfer. Public expenditure review (PER); Social assistance program and public expenditure; review no. 2," World Bank (2012): <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2012/02/15893823/bantuan-langsung-tunai-blt-temporary-unconditional-cash-transfer>.

38 Naomi Hossain and Ferdous Osman, *Politics and Governance in the Social Sectors*.

// The decentralisation of responsibilities may foster greater downward accountability, but upward accountability must also be improved. Effective and robust monitoring and oversight mechanisms, managed at the national level, need to be in place to ensure that locally managed services are provided to acceptable standards. //

3.3.5 Accountability

Downward accountability mechanisms strengthen the responsiveness of local government in the delivery of social protection services. It is important to make citizens aware of social protection programmes, and empower them to exercise their right to access services, to improve government accountability and create public demand for services. An impact evaluation of the school stipend programme in Bangladesh, for example, shows that fewer transfers go ‘astray’ or are subject to wrong doing when local communities and beneficiaries are provided with more information about the programme.³⁹

The decentralisation of responsibilities may foster greater downward accountability, but upward accountability must also be improved. Effective and robust monitoring and oversight mechanisms, managed at the national level, need to be in place to ensure that locally managed services are provided to acceptable standards. IT-based monitoring and reporting systems that allow central government to assess local service delivery are one way to strengthen the oversight function of central government. Another way, which is used by Indonesia, is to provide and monitor benchmarks for national minimum standards for service delivery.

3.3.6 Human resources

Local government officials have a key role to play in the coordination and delivery of social protection and other public services, however, staffing levels are typically low, officials are often over-worked, have few incentives and limited skills sets. This impedes service delivery and social protection schemes. Decentralisation processes have shifted responsibilities to lower tiers of government, but this has not – in most cases – been accompanied by a concomitant re-allocation of financial or human resources. This results in a serious mismatch between programme requirements and realities at the ground.⁴⁰ This is aggravated by the limited capacity of local government officials, who are often poorly trained and have few opportunities to upgrade their knowledge and skills. This also compromises the ability of local government to provide effective public services.

Social protection programmes that involve local government officials from the outset, in an incremental way, appear to show promising results in the long-term. The WFP supported school food programme in Cambodia, the voucher programme in Lao PDR, the Human Development Social Protection Pilot in Nepal, and the UNDP supported REOPA programme in Bangladesh, show that some donor organizations and NGOs are already committed to facing such long-term challenges. Several programmes have donor and development-partner support, but local ownership should be further encouraged to ensure the social protection agenda is in line with national and local level development priorities. To build long-term commitment and ownership, capacity of local government officials must be strengthened.

3.3.7 Financing

The assignment of major administrative responsibilities for social protection to local government implies there should also be a provision of adequate financial resources to fulfil this task. In most developing countries, the central government is the major source of funding for social protection programmes. This is a reflection of the greater levels of fiscal resources available to the central government and the general principle that a redistributive fiscal role is better suited to central, rather than local government.⁴¹

39 Naomi Hossain and Ferdous Osman, Politics and Governance in the Social Sectors.

40 Nick Devas and Simon Delay, “Local Democracy and Challenges in Decentralising the State: An International Perspective”.

41 UNDP, UNCDF, *Local Government and Social Protection*.

National governments in developing countries face major fiscal constraints, however, and may not be willing,⁴² or able, to provide the local government with sufficient funding to cover the full costs of social protection programmes. This can compromise the ability of local government to implement social protection programmes in line with policy and procedures. In Nepal, for example, Village Development Committees (VDCs) rarely receive enough transfers from central government to provide all eligible beneficiaries with old age pensions, disability allowances or other types of cash transfer. As a result, and given limited own-source revenues, VDCs have little choice but to 'ration' benefits by selecting some, but not all, eligible recipients and excluding others. Such exclusion reflects poorly on VDCs but can be attributed to inadequate fiscal resources, rather than to mismanagement or targeting errors.

Beneficiary payments are not the only area impacted by insufficient funding, other direct and in-direct administrative costs linked to programme delivery are not taken into account when responsibilities are moved to the local level. Targeting processes, field visits for monitoring and evaluation purposes, communication and socialization campaigns, and cash delivery all create additional financial costs for local governments. Even when administrative budgets are made available, they are often not based on a formula weighted for costs against, for example, the number of beneficiaries served and area of distribution/coverage. Further, additional budgets may be needed to recruit additional staff to manage and deliver social protection functions, and again the need may vary from area to area.

The same kind of fiscal constraint also applies to the ability of local government to provide public goods and services. Very few local governments in developing countries can, or are allowed to, mobilize significant local revenues, and are therefore dependent on intergovernmental fiscal transfers from central government to finance the provision of local public goods and services. Such transfers are usually insufficient to meet all local needs and priorities. This constrains the ability of local government to ensure that the supply-side public services meet demand, especially when demand increases because of social transfers and social protection programmes. Being able to match supply to demand implies that local governments enjoy considerable discretion over the ways in which they spend – for example, meeting an increase in demand for health services with an increase in spending on public health facilities as opposed to schools or rural roads. In practice, however, local governments usually only have discretionary powers over a limited proportion of their total revenues. Usually, a larger proportion of what they receive as intergovernmental fiscal transfers is earmarked for spending on specific sectors, or specific types of expenditure within a given sector. This can constrain their capacity to be responsive and to match variations in demand with a flexible supply side response.

In some countries, increased funding is made available for local education services where schooling conditions are less favourable than in other areas (for example, the school improvement plan in Bangladesh). Such innovative and needs-based public finance mechanisms make it more likely that adequate services are provided in poorer or more disadvantaged areas – and thus improve social development outcomes. In others, such as Nepal, a higher proportion of intergovernmental fiscal transfers is allocated to local governments in the form of block grants, for which spending is largely discretionary, which allows local government to mix-and-match supply and demand. Social protection functions that have been devolved to the local government level must be matched with the fiscal decentralisation. Sufficient resources must be allocated, to allow local government to perform its role in delivering social protection to targeted beneficiaries.

⁴² Willingness to fully fund social protection is largely a reflection of the extent to which competing budgetary priorities (such as security, education, and infrastructure) reduce the available 'fiscal space' to finance social transfer programmes.

// Local governments usually only have discretionary powers over a limited proportion of their total revenues. Usually, a larger proportion of what they receive as intergovernmental fiscal transfers is earmarked for spending on specific sectors, or specific types of expenditure within a given sector. This can constrain their capacity to be responsive and to match variations in demand with a flexible supply side response. //

“Many programmes specifically target women or girls, but often fail to include gender-specific vulnerabilities in their need assessments and frequently do not consider vulnerability through a gendered lens.”

3.3.8 Information

Information that can help to identify the poorest and most needy, in order to provide them with appropriate services, is useful. Across Asia and the Pacific, information on social conditions at the subnational level is patchy, or for some countries does not exist at all, partly because local governments do not have the capacity to collect information on a routine basis. In Lao PDR, the government – with support from UNICEF – has started to help local governments carry out social indicator surveys that are disaggregated to the household level. Due to their physical and social proximity to potential beneficiaries, local government institutions have a potentially important role to play in data collection processes. In Timor-Leste, for example, government has trained local traditional authorities and development committees to collect and provide information on local development priorities.

Vital registration is an important function of local government, which can be used to facilitate the implementation of social protection and other social services. The national pension scheme in Nepal or the WFP supported mother and child nutrition programme in Lao PDR, for example, use a mix of geographic poverty targeting and vital registration data. Information and knowledge management in social protection involves data collection, as well as sharing experiences and practices across, and within, countries and regions. This is especially important when the local level provides opportunities for adaptation, innovation and experimentation. It is important to Document innovative approaches to the implementation of social protection programmes in capacity- and resource-constrained contexts, as this is useful to countries and local governments in similar situations.

3.3.9 Gender sensitivity

Gender issues merit special consideration in discussion of social protection as women are a particularly vulnerable and marginalized group among the poor, given the endemic discrimination that they face in most of the countries covered in the study. Women face particular difficulties in accessing and benefitting from social services such as health and education,⁴³ and they tend to be less informed than other poor people about social protection programmes and social services, resulting in a greater degree of exclusion and more reluctance to make a complaint or seek redress. Even in programmes where they are defined as the main target group, women tend to benefit less from social programmes due to specific intra-household relations. In terms of gender vulnerabilities, women across Asia and the Pacific are over-represented in the informal economy, and so are less likely to be enrolled in formal social insurance programmes. Women are also more vulnerable to the impact of climate change, and generally have fewer resources to mitigate risks or to cope with the aftermath of weather-related crises. Compounding these problems is the fact that women and young girls are more vulnerable than men to experiences of gender-based violence. In response to these challenges, more efforts are required to ensure social protection programmes are more gender-sensitive and address gender-specific vulnerabilities.

Many programmes specifically target women or girls, but often fail to include gender-specific vulnerabilities in their need assessments and frequently do not consider vulnerability through a gendered lens. In doing so, programmes may reinforce traditional gender roles and responsibilities, and thereby compromise women’s ability to strengthen their economic and social position within society. In addition, while programmes may have a gender-specific objective, impact studies do not necessarily provide gender-sensitive data, or examine the impact of programmes with regard to gender-relations.⁴⁴ Indeed, this gender specific focus should be mainstreamed into all social protection programmes.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ UN Women, *Resilience for All? Towards Gender-Responsive Social Protection in South-East Asia* (Bangkok: UN Women APRC, 2013).

Local government, as a key entry point for and provider of most social protection programmes, must strengthen the gender dimension of social assistance. Gender-sensitive delivery mechanisms that can help women better access social protection services include: family friendly schedules for out-payments; and efforts to raise awareness and provide women with information on their social protection rights. There is often a major gap, however, between gender-responsive design and actual programme implementation. Awareness and capacity to deal with gender issues are typically low at the local level, which demonstrates a disconnection from the central level.⁴⁵

To make gender-sensitive implementation measures successful, training must be given to service providers, to raise awareness among civil servants, and other stakeholders who implement programmes at the local level, including traditional authorities and NGOs involved in targeting, registration or service delivery. For cash transfers this also includes representatives of banks or other commercial partners involved in out-payments. Successful programme implementation also depends on the gender awareness of the community itself. Being informed about basic programme content and specific gender-related objectives is important for beneficiaries and the community as a whole, to strengthen a gender-sensitive environment and enable programme interventions to increase their impact.

Gender vulnerabilities are partly reflected in a range of programmes in the countries included in this study. The school stipend programme for poor girls and indigenous children in Cambodia, *Bolsa Da Mae* in Timor-Leste and the mother and child nutrition programme in Lao PDR all explicitly target women, girls and indigenous children. While women are participants in most of the public works programmes examined in the study, in Bangladesh, the REOPA programme specifically targets women from extremely poor households. The focus of most of these programmes is to provide employment and income-earning opportunities, in order to mitigate food insecurity and strengthen access to health and educational services, (see Box 3.10).

Box 3.10

Strengthening maternal health in Lao PDR

The **Safe Motherhood Voucher Scheme**, which operates in two districts, is carried out by two NGOs - Lao Red Cross (LRC) and Swiss Red Cross (SRC) - which are contracted by the Ministry of Health/Provincial Health Office to manage and account for the voucher scheme, and verify the services reportedly delivered by the health providers and their reimbursement. The overall objective is to reduce maternal and children under 5 morbidity and mortality in the targeted districts. The scheme has reached out to more than 4,000 women. The scheme aims to remove financial barriers to the access of reproductive and child health services.

“To make gender-sensitive implementation measures successful, training must be given to service providers, to raise awareness among civil servants, and other stakeholders who implement programmes at the local level, including traditional authorities and NGOs involved in targeting, registration or service delivery.”

⁴⁵ Ibid.

4 Strengthening local government involvement in social protection

Local government has a role to play in the delivery of social protection services but, as outlined in Chapter 3, there are challenges to effective service delivery. These challenges are not limited to local government alone, but apply across all tiers of the intergovernmental system; likewise, they are not specific to social protection, but should be part of public sector service delivery arrangements in general. Without substantial reform processes at all levels of government, efforts to strengthen the role of local government in social protection are likely to be of limited value. They are nonetheless crucial to ensure social protection services are delivered in efficient, effective and equitable ways. This section of the paper examines some of these issues and identifies and describes key entry points to strengthen the role and effectiveness of local government in the delivery of social protection programmes and services.

4.1 Coordination of supply and demand

It is important to work across sectors with different stakeholders, to match the demand for and supply of services, to improve the impact of social protection, especially in relation to its long-term impact on poverty reduction.

Figure 4.1
Recommendations to match supply and demand

Focus and scale	Interventions
Frontline and subnational	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build human resources: Sufficient human resources are required to manage social services in an efficient way.• Provide technical know-how: It is important to strengthen the technical know-how of local governments in order to increase involvement in planning and budgeting of local or regional development.• Improve data availability: Data on the social, economic and demographic conditions at local level and household level must be available in order to identify needs and design and deliver good services accordingly.
Upstream and national level	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarify functions and mandates: Clear intergovernmental mandates and functions for social protection are needed in order for local government to deliver social protection programmes.• Provide sustainable and equitable financing: Adequate financial resources are required for local governments to address local needs and priorities. Resources need to be allocated in an equitable manner to address subnational disparities and inequalities, specifically with regard to basic services, such as health, education and social welfare services.• Foster political commitment to social protection at the national level: Political commitment for social protection at the national level is a pre-requisite for stronger commitment for social protection at local level.

4.2 Strengthening monitoring and evaluation

Continuous monitoring of the performance of social protection programmes provides an evidence-based framework to see if progress is being made, and where amendments or modifications are needed to improve system performance.

Figure 4.2
Recommendations to improve monitoring and evaluation

Focus and scale	Interventions
Frontline and subnational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical training: Training is needed to strengthen the capacity of local staff for reporting and monitoring, including but not limited to data entry processes and the collection of basic data on social, health and education indicators at the subnational level. • Strengthen technical infrastructure: To increase efficiency and transparency monitoring processes must be simplified, for example, through electronic reporting mechanisms. • Implement Management Information Systems: The development of Management Information Systems, that allow for the integration of data from different social protection programmes, and follow up on beneficiaries in a timely manner, will make the delivery of social protection more efficient.
Upstream and national level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplify monitoring processes: Many programmes have their own independent monitoring systems, which lead to overlaps. There is no coordination in terms of monitoring across programmes, agencies and thematic sectors. • Develop and enforce regulatory frameworks: This will assist non-government actors to implement programmes and services, and enable local government to better plan for local services and coordinate non-governmental service provision.

4.3 Strengthening human capacity and technical infrastructure

Adequate human resources are critical for effective and efficient delivery of services. Without sufficient and qualified staff, able to respond to local needs, it is difficult to deliver services in a timely and adequate way. Human resources need to be supported by an adequate technical infrastructure.

Figure 4.3
Recommendations to strengthen capacity and infrastructure

Focus and scale	Interventions
Frontline and subnational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical training and capacity building: Technical training is needed so that people can carry out basic functions, such as filing applications, collecting data, reporting and monitoring, as well as coordination, management and planning. • Develop technical infrastructure: Infrastructure is needed to support service delivery activities. Without a working infrastructure (e.g. computers, phones, and internet access) local government cannot work effectively. This is of particular importance in countries where geography is a challenge; technology may provide one way to bridge distances. • Increase awareness and sensitization: It is important to increase awareness and knowledge of social protection to improve effective delivery of the programmes.
Upstream and national level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide incentives: Establish clear incentives for local government bodies to deliver high quality services. Questions as to whom incentives should target (local institutions as a whole and/or individual officials) need to be carefully looked at in this context. • Reform bureaucracy and increase human resources: Decentralisation of services also means decentralisation of human resources. This unfortunately has not happened in all countries, where civil service reforms often lag behind decentralisation processes.

4.4 Strengthening delivery and modernizing payment systems

The efficient and effective delivery of payment services reduces overall fiduciary risks, limits corruption and improves access to inclusive financial services.

Figure 4.4
Recommendations to improve payment services

Focus and scale	Interventions
Frontline and subnational	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide financial literacy training: Provide technical training for beneficiaries to enable them to better utilize social payments and to demand better financial services.• Improve monitoring capacity: Improve local government officials' capacity to ensure that transfers are delivered to the right person (spot-checks, etc.).• Improve information dissemination processes: Improve basic programme contents and regular programme processes (e.g. out-payments, registration processes, etc.).• Test and experiment with innovative delivery solutions: This may help to increase outreach and reduce the role of local government to a monitoring function.
Upstream and national level	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop systems of sanctions for misuse of funds and provide incentive mechanisms: These will help to improve the performance of the local governments. Civil service reforms need to place greater emphasis on rules and regulations to prevent civil servants from misusing funds or misappropriating social transfers. At the same time, incentive mechanisms must be put in place to reward and encourage effective and efficient performance.

4.5 Strengthening social accountability

Making information available about the main features of a social protection programme (including its objectives, basic eligibility criteria, the size of transfers, as well as basic operations, including delivery points and dates) is key for implementers and beneficiaries. Well-informed implementing agencies are better equipped to deliver services in a more efficient and effective way. Information also provides an important downward accountability mechanism for beneficiaries, households, and communities.

Figure 4.5
Recommendations to strengthen social accountability

Focus and scale	Interventions
Frontline and subnational	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase participation: Stronger involvement of communities in the development of communication strategies is important, to make sure that any information disseminated raises the interest of local communities, is disseminated on time and in ways that are appropriate to specific ethnic, regional or linguistic contexts.• Develop Training for Trainers: This will improve dissemination of information through civil servants.• Use technological innovations: Use of new media can help to disseminate important information on, for example, delivery dates, changes in prices (for example, with the subsidized rice programme in Indonesia) or timelines for cash or food for work programmes. This is especially important for remote or isolated areas.
Upstream and national level	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop adequate socialization strategies: Information strategies that are sensitive to cultural and linguistic variations are important to increase awareness of and access to services.

4.6 Strengthening capacity of local government to identify the poor

Local government's proximity and closeness to local communities enables it to identify the needy and vulnerable. This is of particular importance to gender-sensitive targeting. Local government also plays an important role in the collection of routine household-level data to improve targeting processes (for example, vital registration).

Figure 4.6

Recommendations to improve local government ability to identify the poor

Focus and scale	Interventions
Frontline and subnational	<p>Disseminate information: Dissemination of information about basic programme parameters will increase the targeting capacity of local government officials and strengthen downward accountability.</p> <p>Improve data availability and collection: Strengthen capacity to collect information and carry out routine data collection processes to increase knowledge and understanding about subnational socio-economic conditions in order to complement national targeting processes.</p> <p>Provide training on gender-sensitive targeting and data collection: Increased awareness of gender issues at local level is important in order to make local government more responsive to gender aspects in social protection.</p>
Upstream and national level	<p>Implement Management Information Systems: This is important in order to support targeting processes.</p> <p>Improve targeting methodologies and policies: These are important in order to make targeting more efficient and increase the capacity of programmes to reach out to the poor. There is also a critical need to create a coherent linkage between the local database/methodology for targeting, with the unified database at the national level, especially for the nation-wide social protection scheme. Regular update of the beneficiary selection process must be put in place with closer engagement with local governments.</p>

4.7 Implementing grievance and redress mechanisms

Grievance and redress mechanisms guarantee basic fairness in social protection programmes, and allow policymakers to see if programmes work effectively. They also provide an important mechanism for downward accountability.

Figure 4.7

Recommendations to implement grievance and redress mechanisms

Focus and scale	Interventions
Frontline and subnational	<p>Establish grievance and redress mechanisms where they do not exist: The important role of non-state stakeholders as trusted agents for complaints mechanisms, including "traditional complaints" mechanisms, needs to be taken into account when creating these mechanisms.</p> <p>Strengthen the demand-side of grievance and redress: Work with NGOs and other non-government stakeholders as brokers in order to strengthen the demand-side.</p> <p>Strengthen responsiveness of formal complaint mechanisms: To do this, provide training and raise awareness of local government officials.</p>
Upstream and national level	<p>Create effective complaints procedures: Effective complaints procedures are important in order to be able to respond in time to complaints.</p>

Annex 1: Programme overview

Country	Name	Programme type	Coverage & costs	Donor involvement	NSPS	Major governance challenges
Bangladesh	REOPA (Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Assets)	Cash for work plus skills transfer (national programme)	24,444 women Taka 77.69 crores (USD 99,568,358)	UNDP/European Union	Under way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity strengthening efforts are challenged due to high election turn-over of government officials Excessive workload of local government representatives Lack of accountability Lack of pro-poor and gender-sensitive attitudes and organizational culture
Bangladesh	EGPP (Employment Generation for the Poor)	Cash for work (national programme)	742,500 persons/year Taka 1000 crores (USD 128,161,100.00)	Government/World Bank	Under way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fast implementation has left local government unprepared to implement programme, and caused shortages in design (targeting, complex monitoring and payment systems, etc.) Excessive workload of local government Public works selected not part of local development plan
Bangladesh	Old Age Allowance for the Poor and Assistance Programme for Vulnerable Women	Unconditional cash transfer (national programme)	5.3 Mio. and 4.8 Mio. Taka 891.00 crores plus Taka 331.2 crore (2010)	Government	Under way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leakage problems in delivery Elite capture of targeting processes
Cambodia	CEESP Targeted Assistance for Education of Poor Girls and Indigenous Children	Conditional cash transfer (education programme)			■	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No findings yet
Cambodia	PALS (Productive Assets and Livelihoods Support)	Cash for Work (pilot)	3,000 Households (planned) No information on costs	WFP	■	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No findings yet
Cambodia	School Meal and School Stipend Programme	In-kind programme with conditional cash/food component	610,000 pupils (USD 60,985,762.00) (2011-2016)	WFP	■	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low capacity of local government officials Political commitment towards programme varies greatly across regions
Indonesia	BLT (Bantuan Tunai Langsung)	Targeted Temporary Unconditional Cash Transfer	18.5 Mio. Households (USD 1.5 billion) (2008)	Government	Vision 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fast implementation leading to targeting inefficiencies Lacking grievance and redress mechanisms Failed socialization

Country	Name	Programme type	Coverage & costs	Donor involvement	NSPS	Major governance challenges
Indonesia	RASKIN (Subsidized rice programme)	Targeted in-kind transfer	17.5 Mio. People IDR 15.7 trillion	Government	Vision 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeting of programme has high inclusion errors Leakage of funds No clear mandates and functions and no incentives to enforce them Monitoring lacks downward accountability Lack of updated information Gender issues in terms of distribution
Indonesia	Hopeful Family Programme (PKH)	Conditional cash transfer (health and education programme)	1.5 Mio. Households (USD 1.8 billion)	Government	Vision 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient supply side
Lao PDR	Health Voucher Programme for Expectant Mothers and Under 5 Children	Targeted in-kind transfer	More than 4,000 women and Under 5 Children (USD 75.299)	SRC/LRC and Medecins du Monde, Government of Luxembourg	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lacking capacity on part of local government M&E Lacking decentralisation – no clear mandates and functions for local government No grievance and redress mechanisms
Lao PDR	Mother and Child Nutrition Programme	Targeted in-kind transfer	9,600 children Under 2 and 3,500 pregnant and lactating mothers	WFP	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low capacity of local government structures No grievance and redress mechanisms
Lao PDR	National School Meals Programme	In-kind transfer	157,800 pre-primary and primary school children and their families 6 Mio. USD/yearly	WFP	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low capacity of local government structures Low incentives on part of local government to take over No grievance and redress mechanism
Mongolia	Child Money Programme	Unconditional universal cash transfer	953,068 children 168.6 billion MNT (approx. USD 116 million)	Government	Under way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No clear donor coordination and support of programme in one direction M&E Highly centralised government structure
Nepal	Education Grants	Targeted conditional cash transfers (education programme)		UNCDF, World Bank and UNICEF	■	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unclear targeting Delivery mechanisms Coordination between local government and education sector

Country	Name	Programme type	Coverage & costs	Donor involvement	NSPS	Major governance challenges
Nepal	Disabled Pension (DP)	Universal unconditional cash transfer	Ca. 25,000 people RS. 9.74 billion together with OAP	Government	■	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unclear targeting Delivery mechanisms Lacking socialization and downward accountability
Nepal	Old Age Pension (OAP)	Universal unconditional cash transfer	1,131,977 people RS. 9.74 billion together with DP	Government	■	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unclear targeting Delivery mechanisms Lacking Information and socialization Lack of downward accountability
Timor-Leste	<i>Bolsa Da Mae</i>	Conditional Cash Transfers (Pilot education programme)	11,000 Households or 15,150 children (USD 4,955,000)	UNDP, World Bank, UNICEF	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of coordination across demand and supply side Low institutional capacity for operational support Lacking adequate delivery mechanisms Lack of monitoring system
Timor-Leste	Elderly and Invalids Social Cash Transfers	Social cash transfer	90,000 people 35 Mio. USD	Government	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of adequate payment mechanisms Targeting (especially disability grant)
Timor-Leste	School Feeding Programme	In-kind transfer	230,000 children	WFP	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low capacity at local level for operational support

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