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Social Accountability in the Delivery of Social Protection

Final Research Report

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Contents

Acronyms

4P	Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program
ATR	Action Taken Report
BFP	Bolsa Familia Programme
BISP	Benazir Income Support Programme
BPC	Beneficio de Prestacao Continuada
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSSP	Child Sensitive Social Protection Programme
CT	Cash Transfer
DFID	Department for International Development
DTR	Decision Taken Report
ESAP	Ethiopia Social Accountability Program
HSCT	Harmonized Social Cash Transfer Programme
HSNP	Hunger Safety Net Programme
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
KAC	Kebele Appeals Committee (in Ethiopia)
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MGNREGS	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
MJF	Manusher Jonno Foundation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OPA	Older People's Association
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territory
PKH	Program Keluarga Harapan
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PMT	Proxy Means Test
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme
PSP	Payments Service Provider
PWD	People with Disabilities
RTI	Right to Information
SA	Social Accountability
SAC	Social Accountability Committee (in Ethiopia)
SASSA	South Africa Social Security Agency
SP	Social Protection
VDC	Village Development Committee (Nepal)
Woreda	District (in Ethiopia)

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

This is the final research report of a project to investigate the potential of social accountability in the social protection sector for improving service delivery and state-society relations. The report brings together a review of the global literature with findings from four country case studies. Key lessons from our research that have implications for policy and practice are the following:

There is no blueprint for successful social accountability in social protection: design needs to be grounded in contextual analysis. There are certain common principles: for citizens to act they need to be informed and mobilised and enabled to interact with providers; and for providers to respond they need the incentives, information, authorities and capacities to do so. However, given that social accountability is an essentially political process, design of any intervention to support it needs to be strongly informed by the context in which it is to operate. This suggests the need for an exploratory approach to design and implementation, grounded in local analysis and with strong monitoring, learning and evaluation alongside.

State response is frequently the weak link in efforts to promote social accountability. Based on contextual analysis, any attempt to strengthen social accountability needs to identify and address the binding constraints in a given context. Positive state response is just as important as citizen action for successful social accountability, but has often received inadequate attention; and frequently (but not always) is one of the binding constraints on successful outcomes. Partnerships between social protection and governance/public sector reform programming are likely to be useful in addressing weak state response.

Support to social accountability needs to take account of the level at which social protection programming decisions are taken: there is little point in establishing a locally-bounded mechanism and expecting it to address programming problems related to issues decided at national level. Social protection design and management is often quite highly centralised, even where implementation is decentralised. So in most contexts, citizen concerns about social protection programmes straddle issues under both local and national control, meaning that integrated approaches to social accountability that link local and higher levels (regional, national etc., as appropriate) are likely to be most effective.

Different types of citizen concern can best be addressed through different types of social accountability mechanisms. Grievance redress mechanisms (GRMs, otherwise known as complaints and appeals mechanisms) have tended to be the default social accountability mechanism for social protection programmes, but are poorly suited to addressing many of the challenges faced by these programmes. A suite of mechanisms – both individual and collective – and each adapted to addressing a particular set of

challenges, is likely to be a better starting point for the design of an effective strategy than a single social accountability mechanism.

Social accountability is not a panacea: other accountability mechanisms are better at addressing certain issues. The value-added of social accountability is mainly in regard to issues that are highly salient to citizens who are marginalised and living in poverty, that is to say, issues that are visible to them and affect them in direct and important ways. This is not an unimportant element of accountability: some of these issues might be invisible through other mechanisms (such as traditional audits or top-down controls). On the other hand, we should not expect social accountability to address the whole range of accountability issues, for example, high level corruption issues that have only indirect and diffuse effects on citizens. Social accountability can more usefully be conceived as one element of an integrated approach to accountability in the social protection sector, which also involves top-down controls.

Whilst intermediaries can play useful roles, there are risks to relying on them too much. The available evidence suggests a strong preference on the part of marginalised citizens for face-to-face interfaces with service providers; but this preference is coupled with various time, logistical and economic constraints to participation that are particularly acute for the poorest and most marginalised. Access to intermediaries is itself gendered and often lower for marginalised groups, and there are sometimes conflicts of interest between marginalised citizens and intermediaries in relation to social protection programming. This suggests that priorities for social accountability in social protection might include: investing more in reaching marginalised citizens directly with key information on entitlements; and (where intermediation is formalised with programme support) training and holding intermediaries to account for their role in representing the most marginalised.

In addition to establishing social accountability mechanisms, attention should also be given to mainstreaming social accountability in social protection programme design. Social protection programme design can constrain or facilitate social accountability. For example, eligibility criteria that are not transparent pose a barrier for accountability. Add-on mechanisms can mitigate, but not entirely make up for the challenges posed by a design that constrains accountability. So, rather than conceiving of social accountability simply as an add-on, stand-alone intervention, wherever circumstances permit, it makes sense to also think about how to mainstream social accountability within programme design.

Improved basic monitoring and documentation of social accountability initiatives will be key to enhanced learning about what works. Without improvements in the generally weak documentation and monitoring of social accountability in social protection, it will continue to be difficult to draw specific evidence-based conclusions about what works. To strengthen social accountability to marginalised citizens, disaggregation of monitoring data by gender, disability status and other context-specific

dimensions of social exclusion will be important.

To unpack the overarching question – what effects do social accountability mechanisms have on the delivery of social protection services and on state society relations – we considered four specific research questions:

1) What can be learned from other service delivery sectors about the use of different social accountability mechanisms?

2) Where social accountability mechanisms have been used within social protection programmes, what are the intended direct and indirect outcomes (at household, community, state levels)?

3) What is the evidence of the impact of social accountability mechanisms in social protection programmes leading to improved service delivery outcomes and strengthening state society relations?

4) Under what conditions have different social accountability mechanisms in social protection programmes been associated with improved service delivery outcomes and the strengthening of state-society relations?

Our key findings in relation to these four questions are as follows:

1) What can be learned from other service delivery sectors about the use of different social accountability mechanisms?

Social accountability is an inherently political process that entails the reorganisation of power between and within groups of citizens and state actors, and shifts in power relations are key to the success of social accountability initiatives. As such, social accountability is a long-term process that requires realistic expectations, incremental change and constant adaptive learning, especially in lower capacity or politically unstable environments (O'Meally, 2013). Engagement between citizens and the state is crucial to achieving the desired results of social accountability activities.

Not surprisingly, given the nature of the process, as well as potentially bringing benefits, social accountability can entail serious costs for citizens, in terms of time and resources; and it also, crucially, poses risks. In their review of one hundred social accountability case studies, Gaventa and Barrett (2010) find that, despite the preponderance of positive outcomes, 25 per cent of documented outcomes are labelled as negative. Risks include: exacerbating tensions and frustrations if the state does not respond (McGee and Kroesschel, 2013); exacerbating existing power asymmetries and closing the space for engagement instead of opening it; reprisals by the state against citizens; and elite capture. In relation to the risk of elite capture, it is important to note that, like other participatory approaches, social accountability mechanisms have often struggled to benefit the poor and, in particular, the poorest (Bukenya et al., 2012).

Whilst new technologies can sometimes facilitate social accountability, they are not a silver bullet. The impact of ICT on citizen voice is generally low, and lower than the impact on other dimensions of governance (World Bank, 2016). Furthermore, these platforms may not benefit people living in poverty and the most marginalised. In Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, the digital divide is very marked, and access depends on gender, income status, location and age, with internet-based platforms primarily serving the elite; mobile phone ownership is much more widespread, but still not universal (World Bank, 2016; Peixoto and Fox, 2016).

2) Where social accountability mechanisms have been used within social protection programmes, what are the intended direct and indirect outcomes (at household, community, state levels)?

Grievance redress mechanisms and community monitoring committees are widespread in social protection programmes and most social protection programmes appear to have such systems in place, at least on paper. The use of structured collective social accountability mechanisms, such as community score cards, citizen report cards, social audits and similar mechanisms, is much less common.

These various mechanisms have been established with a wide variety of objectives in mind, and many have multiple objectives. Some initiatives focus on improving service delivery in general, without narrowly defining the types of improvements that are expected. Where initiatives seek particular service delivery improvements, targeting, coverage and combating fraud and corruption are common areas of focus. Other initiatives aim to build citizen empowerment, and a small minority explicitly set out to bring about fundamental shifts in state-society relations. A key tendency is for objectives to be rather broadly and ambitiously defined, given the generally limited resourcing of the initiatives. Furthermore, social accountability mechanisms rarely appear to be conceptualised as part of a wider approach to programme accountability, nor their objectives nested within a broader framework.

3) What is the evidence of the impact of social accountability mechanisms in social protection programmes leading to improved service delivery outcomes and strengthening state-society relations?

We look firstly at service delivery impacts and then at state-society relations, relating our findings to the type of social accountability mechanism used.

Service delivery outcomes

In practical terms, what constitutes 'improved service delivery' will vary by context, but, conceptually, in line with our definition of social accountability, we take it to involve increased alignment of programme delivery with policy commitments and/or programme rules.

Grievance redress mechanisms (GRMs): Despite their widespread use, there is little reliable evidence of the impacts of GRMs[1]. Monitoring data suggests that some GRMs resolve many tens of thousands of individual complaints every year (see for example Mott MacDonald, 2014 on Pakistan; Ringold et al., 2012 on Colombia; and World Bank, 2014 on the Philippines), which should imply substantial service delivery benefits. However, inconsistencies in the definition of 'complaint' and of what it means for a complaint to be 'resolved' (Sharp et al., 2016; Fox, 2007; World Bank, 2004) mean that this data needs to be interpreted with caution. Reviews from many low-income countries indicate that, in practice, GRMs in social protection programming face substantial challenges in both soliciting complaints and resolving those that are received (OPM, 2015; Mott MacDonald, 2014; Barca et al., 2012; Sharp et al., 2016; Sabates-Wheeler et al., forthcoming; Barrett, forthcoming).

Collective social accountability mechanisms: Regarding social audits in Andhra Pradesh in India, Singh and Vutukuru (2010) find statistically significant increases in the number of days of public works generated; Aiyar (2010), find, following the audits, substantial improvements in the provision of work site facilities required by law; and Afridi and Iversen (2014) find the audits to have been effective at identifying cases of labour-related corruption. In the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia, our case study suggests community scorecards piloted through the Ethiopia Social Accountability Program (ESAP) have had positive impacts in terms of aligning local service delivery with established procedures and standards and in curbing abuses by local officials. In South Africa, our case study finds examples of local officials finding creative locally-adapted solutions to improve the accessibility of services and accelerate processes, in response to concerns raised by citizens.

In general, social accountability mechanisms seem relatively more effective at addressing issues that are highly salient to poor citizens than other important issues that are less visible to them and have less direct effects on them. The most rigorously evaluated example comes from Andhra Pradesh, in India, where, as a result of the social audits within public works programmes, public officials shifted from carrying out labour-related to materials-related irregularities. The latter are harder to detect, have fewer direct effects on workers, and are more likely to involve more senior officials (Afridi and Iversen, 2014). This underpins the need for social accountability to be twinned with other top-down accountability approaches that might be better suited to addressing harder-to-detect corruption.

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[1] Please note that the terms 'grievance redress mechanism' and 'complaints and appeals mechanism' are used interchangeably: complaints are understood as expressions of dissatisfaction where the claimant is unhappy with the service rendered and requests remedial action; appeals as expressions of dissatisfaction with a decision to provide or not provide a service/benefit; and grievances as encompassing both complaints and appeals.

Furthermore, we found most of the positive impacts of social accountability interventions in our case study countries to be locally-bounded. For example, in Ethiopia, we find that the issues resolved through the community scorecard process were limited to those firmly within local control and without budgetary implications, whilst other important citizen concerns about service delivery remained unaddressed. In both Nepal and Ethiopia, when cases of corruption by local officials are identified, sanctions seem often to consist of them simply being moved to another less desirable location – moving, rather than resolving the problem.

State-society relations

Outcomes in this area are somewhat difficult to compare across programmes, as evaluations and reviews have assessed very different dimensions of these relationships, including citizenship, citizen capacity, state legitimacy and citizen trust in the state. But the findings suggest there is potential for positive outcomes.

El Salvador's conditional cash transfer (CCT) programme is among the most ambitious to date with respect to efforts to build citizenship through social protection programming (Adato et al., 2016). The promotion of citizenship was not a separate component, but a key programme goal, and was supported through beneficiary education and committees established at two levels. The education of beneficiaries was found to work well in terms of empowering beneficiaries; and the municipal committees, which were close to the level at which key decision were made, also made an important contribution to substantive programming issues. The community committees worked less well on the whole. Since programme decision-making was highly centralised, community participation ended up being largely limited to involvement in operational issues; and time constraints of both community facilitators and beneficiaries constrained the extent of their engagement (Adato et al, 2016).

Following social audits in Andhra Pradesh in India, 90 per cent of labourers reported increased comfort in approaching local officials; and, when asked why, 60 per cent said it was because increased awareness of the legal underpinnings of the programme had made them more confident. People's perceptions of their capacity to influence officials also changed subsequent to the audits. Before the audits, only 43 per cent felt that they could influence these officials; six months after the audit, this had increased to 90 per cent (Aiyar and Samji, 2009, p. 22). In Nepal, our case study research suggests that citizens with more information and more direct contact with the local officials responsible for running social protection programmes tend to have more trust in those officials. The increased interactions with the state and knowledge about services provided that social accountability initiatives brought about, seem to have also improved the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of citizens.

Our Ethiopia case study suggests important contextual variation even within a country. In both our case study woredas (districts), citizens who participated in the ESAP community score card process cited positive impacts on state-citizen relations, though this played out differently in the two woredas. In one, which has a recent history of citizen protests resulting in violent clashes with the state, improvements were articulated almost entirely in terms of citizen capacity: citizens knowing their rights and being more confident and assertive in making demands on the state. In the other woreda, with no such history, citizens and local officials also described increased confidence of citizens, but here improvements were more likely to be ascribed by citizens to positive changes in the behaviour of state service providers towards citizens (increased legitimacy of the state).

4) Under what conditions have different social accountability mechanisms in social protection programmes been associated with improved service delivery outcomes and strengthening of state society relations?

Answering this question required us to analyse the variations in outcome according to four dimensions of difference: context; social protection programme design; type of social accountability mechanism; and social group.

i) Context: What effect does the political-economic context have on the impact of social accountability mechanisms (including the nature and strength of existing state / citizen relations) and what effect do rules, roles, administrative capacity, incentives, controls and degree of civil society engagement have on the impact of social accountability mechanisms?

We identified three dimensions of context of interest to social accountability: the extent to which citizens' rights are enshrined in law and backed up by a well-functioning legal system; power relations within and between state actors and citizens; and the role of civil society.

Legal System

A right to social protection underpinned by an effective legal system can facilitate social accountability, but is neither sufficient in itself, nor a necessary precondition.

Citizens' knowledge about social protection programmes is more likely to be converted into a sense of entitlement to social protection where rights are part of the political discourse and are underpinned by a legal framework and courts to which citizens have access (Jones et al., 2013; and South Africa case study). Whether or not citizens feel themselves to have a right to social protection is important, because feeling grateful, rather than entitled, is often reported as a reason for inaction in the face of delivery gaps (Barca et al., 2012 and Ethiopia case study).

On the other hand, a sense of entitlement is not in itself sufficient to spur citizen action. Marginalised citizens in South Africa have a very low propensity to raise concerns, despite their widespread understanding of their right to social protection: social hierarchies present in the context seem to constrain citizen action in this context.

Neither do efforts to promote social accountability need to await the development of a right to social protection backed by an effective legal system. Evidence from our case studies in Nepal and Ethiopia demonstrate that it is possible to promote citizen action and realise some positive outcome even in the absence of such a framework, and, through rights training, to build a sense of entitlement to social protection even in these less propitious contexts.

Power relations

Another finding from our research, in line with lessons from other service sectors, is that not only relationships between states and citizens matter, but also power relations within the realm of the state and between groups of citizens. Relations between levels of the state hierarchy can constrain or facilitate positive state response to citizen action. In Ethiopia, the control exerted by higher levels of the state over frontline service providers has enabled social accountability mechanisms to address abuses at the local level, through a process that involves citizens bringing these to the attention of the next level in the hierarchy (woreda level). On the other hand, frontline officials appear to fear raising citizen voice up the hierarchy, in particular when the messages from below contradict top-down targets, meaning that social accountability has had little traction with respect to issues decided at higher levels. In Nepal on the other hand, weak accountability within the bureaucracy makes it difficult for higher officials to sanction local service providers when social accountability mechanisms pinpoint wrong-doing. Here, enabling citizens to articulate problems to higher-level officials is unlikely to resolve the issues in the same way as in Ethiopia. Instead, in Nepal, a key mechanism for citizens to hold local officials to account seems to be to pass concerns through influential local political party leaders, who are in competition to create a good impression with citizens.

Relationships between groups of citizens may be equally important, as citizens tend to relate to the state through the prism of their social group (see Drucza, 2016 on Nepal). In our Nepal case study, we found differences in the perception of the performance of, and trust in, local officials between groups, with high-caste Brahmins being more satisfied than Dalits and ethnic minorities. In India, there is sometimes a conflict of interest between agricultural employers and labourers seeking work on the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) (Vashishtha et al., 2016). MGNREGS offers an alternative source of employment to agricultural workers and thereby fuels fears among employers that it will raise the cost of agricultural labour or cause labour shortages (Thapa, 2015). Rajasekhar et al. (2013) find this structural conflict of interest to have undermined the effectiveness of social audits in many villages in Karnataka.

Civil society

We find that civil society participation in social accountability in the social protection sector tends to be either locally-bounded (as in Kenya, Nepal and Ethiopia), or focused on national level advocacy (as in Brazil and South Africa), but that these different approaches are very rarely combined within a strategic approach, limiting effectiveness.

Drawing on a distinction made by Mansuri and Rao (2013), we also find, across our case study countries, that most of the active civil society engagement in social protection has been of the 'induced' rather than 'organic' variety; that is to say, externally supported, rather than developing in response to local realities. In South Africa, despite strong national advocacy, there is very little grassroots mobilisation around social protection issues. In India, scale-up of social audits has been most successful where it has relied on a state-led top-down participatory process, where citizens participate on the initiative of the state (Aiyar and Mehta, 2013). The social audit model has largely failed to scale up in contexts where the state did not take an active lead in promoting it (Dutta, 2015: 12). Two possible reasons for this that might be relevant to other contexts are: that the complexity of the social audit process means that local citizens require technical support and capacity building to carry it out; and that marginalised people need secure platforms protected from above in order to be able to participate and speak out against local officials and elites (Aiyar and Mehta, 2013).

ii) Social Accountability Mechanism: Are there particular types of social accountability mechanisms that are most appropriate to the delivery of social protection programmes?

There is no one particular type of social accountability mechanism that is best suited for social protection programmes. But there are several relevant lessons:

Firstly, the most appropriate mechanism varies according to the nature of the accountability challenge, which depends in turn on both the design of the social protection scheme and the social protection programming issue(s) that the mechanism is intended to address. Grievance redress mechanisms (GRMs) are very widespread in social protection programmes, and in regard to some problems that affect individual citizens and are amenable to a rules-based solution, such as errors in registration, enrolment or payments, it is difficult to envisage an effective solution than does not include enabling individual citizens to complain. On the other hand, expectations of grievance systems are too ambitious: they are expected to address a wider range of issues than they realistically can. GRMs are particularly ill-suited to addressing 'thick' accountability issues, that is to say more complex challenges, not amenable to a simple rules-based solution, including, for example complaints of exclusion error in the case of poverty targeting (Barrett, forthcoming; Mott MacDonald, 2014; and our Ethiopia case study).

Collective mechanisms, such as community scorecards, social audits and committee-led verification of targeting appear more promising in terms of addressing these 'thick' accountability challenges. However, the use of these approaches has been so

little documented in social protection in low-income countries that the evidence base is very limited. There is a wide range of well-documented positive impacts of social audits in Andhra Pradesh in India, but this is less the case in other states in India and we have no evidence from other countries. The very few reviews we found of community verification/validation of targeting suggest that this might perhaps be a promising approach for correcting errors arising in poverty targeting (Coffey, 2015; and Ethiopia case study) as well as a cost-efficient one (Coffey, 2015), but the evidence base is very limited indeed.

Where social accountability initiatives (whether GRMs or collective mechanisms) are locally bounded they have evident limitations. Without linkages to similar processes of citizen or civil society engagement at state/regional and national levels, effects seem largely limited to the local level. For example, in Ethiopia, when citizens raised concerns that were outside local control, such as premature graduation and payment delays, these were not addressed. Similarly, in Nepal, increased engagement of citizens with local authorities appears to have led to some improvements in the efficiency of that part of the payment process under local control, but has had no impact on the capacity constraints that continue to hinder overall timeliness, because these require national-level decisions. In India, the impacts on corruption have resulted in a displacement of easily detectable wage-related irregularities that tend to be pinned on low-ranking officials, towards harder to detect materials-related ones that require greater power and influence to conduct. All this suggests that strategic initiatives that link local, intermediate and national levels have more promise, though due to very few examples in the social protection sector, there is no firm evidence of their greater success.

> *iii) Social Protection Programme Design: How do programme design features affect accountability within social protection systems, including the choice of instrument (cash transfers, in-kind transfers or public works), conditions, targeting approaches, complementary or layered interventions, timing and value of transfers, the use of third party delivery agents?*

The evidence base is limited, but our main conclusions are that design factors that facilitate social accountability seem to include: simple and easily observable selection/targeting criteria; and straightforward and transparent programme rules and entitlement levels. Factors that impede it appear to be: stop-start funding or explicit quotas that ration access; and (possibly) conditionalities.

On the basis of the available evidence, we are unable to comment on the effects of other design features, such as the timing or value of transfers or the choice of instrument (whether cash, in kind-transfers or public works).

Easily observable selection criteria tend to facilitate citizen awareness and engagement. Evidence from several countries suggests that the use of a proxy means test (PMT) creates challenges for citizens in distinguishing between correct and incorrect

application of targeting rules (Jones et al., 2013; Gazdar and Zuberi, 2014; and Mott MacDonald, 2014). Similarly, whilst the combination of geographical and community-based poverty targeting, in the PSNP in the Ethiopian highlands, results in very pro-poor targeting outcomes (Berhane et al, 2015), it does not produce clear and simple rules of eligibility and our case study suggests that citizens perceive it to be highly discretionary. In contrast, in Nepal, citizens are better informed about the eligibility criteria of the categorically targeted social protection programmes for older people and children than might be expected given the limited local outreach capacity. Accurate information seems to circulate easily within the community by word-of-mouth due to the simple eligibility criteria of these programmes and their high coverage. It is notable that our respondents were much less clear about the eligibility criteria for the disability benefit, which are more complex and less transparent, and that this programme has much lower coverage of its intended target group.

The **complexity of the new rules** governing the relationship between household and transfer size[2] in the PSNP in Ethiopia appears to be one of the factors inhibiting challenge from citizens, as our respondents did not always make a clear distinction between cases that do and do not comply with the rules. We also found, in both India and Ethiopia, that the complexity of public works programmes offered opportunities for corrupt practices (materials-related fraud or use of public works labour for private works) that social accountability mechanisms have been as yet unable to eliminate (Afridi and Iversen, 2014; and Ethiopia case study).

A programme design that provides for clear and consistent eligibility criteria appears more likely to promote a sense of entitlement to social protection than one in which access to the programme is evidently contingent on the vagaries of **stop-start funding or quotas**. In Zimbabwe one respondent pointed out that the concept of social protection benefits as a right was incompatible with the messages they were receiving that the programme might close in their district due to funding shortfalls (Sabates-Wheeler et al., forthcoming). In Ethiopia, in the context of programme quotas in our case study areas that are widely perceived as inadequate to cover all needy households, respondents perceive access to transfers to be rationed – and not as an entitlement for all those meeting eligibility criteria.

In terms of programme operations, opportunities for face-to-face interaction between service providers and citizens are also important, to provide opportunities for citizen feedback and for building relationships of trust. Whilst electronic payments and contracting out of services can both improve effectiveness, these kinds of shifts in operations tend to mean less automatic face-to-face interaction as part of the core programme cycle, with the result that such interactions need to be explicitly planned for and resourced. The nature as well as quantity of the interaction is also important. Jones

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[2] There is a direct correlation between transfer and household size, but only, under new rules, up to a maximum of five household members, at which point transfer size is capped (Ministry of Agriculture, 2016).

et al. (2008) and Cookson (2016) found that the paternalistic way conditionalities are applied and communicated about in the Juntos programme in Peru has disempowering effects. Fox (2007) makes the more general point that the power relationships established within CCTs, between beneficiaries on the one hand and health and education ministries tasked with verifying beneficiaries' compliance with conditions on the other, are highly likely to constrain the power of beneficiaries to hold these providers to account.

> *iv) Marginalised Groups: What mechanisms are most likely to involve and represent traditionally excluded or marginalised groups (with a particular focus on people with disabilities)?*

We have little direct evidence on variations in final <u>outcomes</u> for marginalised citizens between different types of mechanism, so most of the evidence relates to intermediate outcomes – specific links in our conceptual framework.

A widespread finding is that beneficiaries of social protection programmes prefer face-to-face interfaces with service providers, over those dependent on technology. However, the most marginalised face substantial constraints to participation in these interfaces. For example, in Nepal time poverty of marginalised households is one of the key factors leading to their exclusion from key interfaces; and in Ethiopia logistical and economic constraints interact to make it more difficult for people with disabilities to attend community interface meetings. This suggests that, to be inclusive, mechanisms will need to ensure that interfaces are designed around the time, logistical and economic constraints of poor and marginalised citizens.

It could be argued that other interfaces, including technology-based ones, can serve marginalised groups through intermediaries. Indeed, we find that marginalised citizens are more reliant than others on community-based intermediaries for information and for interfacing with officials, and that they value them. On the other hand, intermediation, whilst important, is not a panacea: intermediation is itself gendered, and marginalised citizens may have lower access to intermediaries (Sharp et al, 2016; Gazdar and Zuberi, 2014). A randomised controlled trial in Bihar India, finds that disadvantaged groups benefit less than others from informal information flows around the village about the MGNREGS and sometimes even receive misinformation; and concludes that these groups need to be directly targeted with information (Alik-Lagrange and Ravallion, 2016).

Introduction

The aim of this research is to better understand the effect of social accountability mechanisms on the delivery of social protection programmes and systems, and on precipitating state-society relational change. This report pulls together a review of the global literature with findings from four country case studies to assess the effects that social accountability mechanisms have on the delivery of social protection services and on state-society relations. It addresses four specific research questions:

1) What can be learned from other service delivery sectors about the use of different social accountability mechanisms?

2) Where social accountability mechanisms have been used within social protection programmes, what are the intended direct and indirect outcomes (at household, community, state levels)?

3) What is the evidence of the impact of social accountability mechanisms in social protection programmes leading to improved service delivery outcomes and strengthening state-society relations?

4) Under what conditions have different social accountability mechanisms in social protection programmes been associated with improved service delivery outcomes and strengthening of state-society relations?

For the purposes of our research we define 'social accountability' and 'social protection' in the following ways. **Accountability** concerns the *obligation of power holders to take responsibility for their actions; it is a 'process by which public officials inform about and justify their plans of action, their behaviour and results, and are sanctioned accordingly'* (Ackerman, 2005). **Social accountability** is an approach to building accountability in which citizens are key actors; it refers to *'the extent and capacity of citizens to hold the state and service providers accountable and make them responsive to needs of citizens and beneficiaries'* (Grandvoinnet et al., 2015).

Social protection: DFID defines social protection as *'a sub-set of public actions that help address risk, vulnerability and chronic poverty'* (Arnold et al. 2011). We follow this definition, but, in line with the terms of reference of the research project, our focus will be on non-contributory programmes, including conditional and unconditional cash transfers, either universal or means-tested, as well as public works programmes. As such, the following types of programme fall outside the scope of this review: contributory social protection; social insurance; services (except as complementary to cash transfers); subsidies; and short-term humanitarian cash transfer programmes.

We start, in **Chapter 1**, with an explanation of our methodology. We explain the approach taken in our literature review and case studies and detail our conceptual framework.

Then, in **Chapter 2**, we review the global cross-sectoral evidence base in order to respond to research question one on lessons from other service delivery sectors. We draw primarily on meta-analyses and systematic reviews that are methodologically strong and demonstrate principles of rigour, validity and reliability.

In **Chapter 3**, we address research question two, reviewing existing social accountability mechanisms in the social protection sector and their objectives. The evidence base that we need to respond to this question is largely descriptive. We have numerous documents from low-income contexts, and also draw on evidence from our four case studies.

In **Chapter 4**, we address research question three on the impacts of social accountability mechanisms in the social protection sector. Given that there is not much direct evidence of impact, we use our conceptual framework, as set out in chapter one, to unpack our findings according to five dimensions: information, interface, civic mobilisation, citizen action and state action. The evidence base on which we rely is largely composed of grey literature, including qualitative reviews, evaluations and monitoring reports of medium quality, as well as our own case studies. The evidence is largely drawn from relevant low-income contexts, but most research sub-questions are addressed by a very small number of studies.

Lastly, in **Chapter 5**, we answer research question four, by unpacking our findings to shed light on <u>variations</u> in outcome of social accountability in social protection. We look at the following dimensions of variation: context; social protection programme function and design; type of social accountability mechanism; and social group (including marginalised groups).

Chapter 1: Methodology and Conceptual Framework

1.1 Research Approach

We adopted a theory-based approach to our research. There were two reasons for this choice. Firstly, this approach is well adapted to our research aims: in order to help practitioners improve the effectiveness of social accountability interventions in social protection programming we need to understand more about how, why and in what circumstances social accountability initiatives work, not just whether or not they do. Secondly, the approach responds to the limitations in current research into social accountability in social protection: the literature is limited, sometimes more descriptive than analytical, and most sources address only one part of a complex causal chain. Reviewing only high-quality research and evaluations of impact would generate few findings. A theory-based approach enables us to understand and make sense of the available literature and to draw much more out of it, as even weak sources often shed some light on at least one link in the causal chain. Our conceptual framework is grounded in the wider literature on social accountability and has been adapted to the particular context of social protection.

In assessing the strength of the evidence we followed DFID's 'How-to-Note' (DFID, 2014), and considered all the following:

- The quality of the individual studies constituting the body of evidence.

- The size of the body of evidence (the number of studies).

- The context of the body of the evidence (the range of contexts in which studies have been carried out and how typical these are of DFID focus countries).

- The consistency of the evidence.

Table 1 sets out the parameters we used to define 'high', 'medium' and 'low' quality individual studies, and 'strong', 'medium' and 'limited' bodies of evidence in relation to each of the four criteria listed above. It should be noted that these have been used as a rule of thumb and that the judgement on the strength of evidence has also been made in relation to the particular research question or sub-question being addressed.

Table 1: Criteria for Assessing the Strength of the Evidence

	Low/Limited	Medium	High/Strong
Quality of individual studies[3]	Implementing agency internal programme reports; evaluations with serious data limitations (such as a lack of a baseline) or unclear methodology.[4]	Research, evaluations, reviews or external monitoring reports.	Published meta-analyses and systematic reviews; single studies demonstrating strong principles of rigour, validity and reliability, published in peer-reviewed journals, and of high relevance to the sub-question under consideration.
Size of the body of evidence	Only one or two medium/high quality studies available, each covering just one country.	Three or four one-country studies; or at least two studies covering five or more countries.	Five or more single studies –or a meta-analysis or synthesis study.
Context	Most studies do not come from low-income contexts. Or they all come from just one country.	Several low-income countries are covered.	A wide range of different low-income contexts are covered, including DFID focus countries.
Consistency	There is no consistent pattern in the evidence. Studies contradict each other.	There is a pattern to the evidence. Apparent contradictions can be explained by differences in context/ programme design etc.	Findings are strongly consistent across studies.
Overall assessment	Only one or two medium- or high-quality studies address the particular research question/sub-question. In practice, we found the most common reason for giving this rating to be the size of the evidence base.	Three or more medium- or high-quality studies in a range of low-income contexts reach consistent conclusions regarding the research question/sub-question.	Evidence base is strong on at least three criteria and medium on the other. We did not find examples of strong evidence bases in relation to any of our research questions or sub-questions.

[3] Except for research question two. For the purposes of responding to the descriptive research question two on intended outcomes, internal programme documents and monitoring reports with reliable descriptions of programme objectives can be considered medium or high quality, even if they would not be so considered for the purposes of answering our other research questions.

[4] The use of these reports was largely limited to research question two.

Applying these criteria to our evidence base, Table 2 presents a summary of the quality of the evidence for each research question.

Table 2: Quality of the Evidence

Evidence Base for each of the four research questions Green = strong Amber = medium Red = limited	Comments
1) What can be learned from other service delivery sectors about the use of different social accountability mechanisms?	The evidence base regarding the impacts of social accountability on service delivery outcomes is stronger than that on state-citizen relations.
2) Where social accountability mechanisms have been used within social protection programmes, what are the intended direct and indirect outcomes (at household, community, state levels)?	A rich descriptive evidence base is available to answer this question, including from social protection programme manuals and implementing agencies' internal reports.
3) What is the evidence of the impact of social accountability mechanisms in social protection programmes leading to improved service delivery outcomes and strengthening state-society relations?	Despite the overall severe limitations of the evidence base, there is a medium evidence base on some of our key findings, and these are highlighted in the boxes in section four.
4) Under what conditions have different social accountability mechanisms in social protection programmes been associated with improved service delivery outcomes and strengthening of state-society relations?	Again, despite its overall limitations, there is a medium evidence base around some key findings and these are flagged in section five below.

1.2 Methodology

We used two main research methodologies: literature review and country case studies. These are summarised here. For a more comprehensive account please see the full literature review (Ayliffe et al., 2017) and our individual case study reports (Ayliffe; Aslam; and Schjoedt, all forthcoming).

1.2.1 Literature Review

Our theory-based research approach facilitated the drawing of meaning from a rather sparse and disparate literature.

We drew up lists of both social protection and social accountability terms and used all possible combinations of these terms to ensure a comprehensive search of the literature on social accountability in social protection. As noted above, we did not limit ourselves to peer-reviewed academic articles; we expected much of the relevant information and

analysis to be found elsewhere, so our search also covered programme evaluations, reviews, monitoring reports and manuals, both published and grey literature. On reviewing the outcome of our searches we filtered out all literature that fell outside our definition of social protection in social accountability, as well as any that did not focus on low- or middle-income countries. We then developed a template, covering all key issues of interest, including research quality, and completed this for each social accountability initiative that we identified.

Regarding social accountability initiatives in other sectors we found a substantial evidence base and were able to rely mainly on systematic reviews and meta-analyses. We referred to single-country studies only in relation to issues on which systematic reviews were unavailable, for example in regard to the impacts of social accountability on state-society relations. On the other hand, the literature specifically addressing social accountability in social protection is much sparser. Indeed, social accountability is one of the few dimensions missing from DFID's recent rigorous review of cash transfers (Bastagli et al, 2016), due to the paucity of evidence. We found only two relevant multi-country published studies (Jones et al, 2013; and Pavenello et al, 2016), both of which only partially address our research questions. We found eight relevant single-country research reports in peer-reviewed journals, which we drew upon, though it is worth noting that five of these concern DFID non-focal countries in Latin America. As a result, we used mainly high/medium quality single country evaluation/analytical reports published elsewhere, often as working papers. We also relied on the descriptive content of many documents that did not fit these criteria, such as programme manuals, and programme monitoring reports internal to implementing organisations, to answer research question two on intended outcomes of interventions, as well as to contextualise our other findings. See Table 3 for a quantitative overview of the documents we reviewed.

Table 3: Overview of Studies Reviewed

	Published systematic reviews, meta-analyses, or multiple-country studies	**Single country** evaluations or research reports, published in **peer-reviewed journals**	Robust **single country** evaluations and research reports, **published elsewhere**	**Other, largely descriptive, literature**
Social accountability in other sectors	11	6		
Social accountability in social protection	2	8	41	28

NB. This table excludes country-specific literature that informed the India, Nepal, South Africa and Ethiopia case studies, except where this material is directly referenced in this final research report.

1.2.2 Country Case Studies

We carried out country case studies of two types: desk (one study on India) and field (three studies on Ethiopia, South Africa and Nepal). The purpose of our four country studies was to explore in more depth interesting cases that we expected to generate useful learning points, and we used our conceptual framework to structure our thinking and tease out findings. However, it should be noted that these were small-scale qualitative studies and we faced some methodological constraints (detailed below). Whilst they provided rich contextualised insights that added usefully to the currently very limited literature, the case studies could not realistically plug the major research gaps in this area.

Our countries were purposively selected on the basis that they have major government-led social protection programmes and interesting social accountability in social protection initiatives; and represent a range of governance contexts. We selected not only a country but also a social accountability initiative or combination of initiatives within a particular social protection programme for in-depth study.

Our key methods were institutional assessment and case studies. We planned to also use process tracing to track a sample of actual concerns raised by citizens through the system, in order to develop a deeper understanding of the ways in which the social accountability process is facilitated and the points at which it is blocked. We used this method to a limited extent in Ethiopia to track issues raised by citizens through the Ethiopia Social Accountability Project (ESAP) pilot. However, we were severely hampered in all three countries by a lack of documentation and high staff turnover. It was often simply not possible to find out who did what in relation to issues raised, as many relevant staff had moved on, and basic documentation, such as meeting minutes and progress reports, was lacking. The serious limits to understanding of social accountability processes posed by the lack of documentation is in itself a useful finding; and a key policy recommendation will be to ensure improved documentation to support rigorous monitoring, evaluation and research.

Key informant interviews (KIIs) at national and local levels, as well as documentary review, enabled us to gain insights into the following institutional issues: political settlements at national level and how these affect social protection; social protection programme design, operations and implementation capacities and how programme systems facilitate or constrain response to citizen concerns; roles and responsibilities of programme implementers, managers and senior decision makers; relationships between national and local levels and authorities at each level; and the culture and policy regarding engagement with citizens.

For case studies, our cases were communities covered by the social accountability initiatives; and we selected two geographic areas and at least two communities within each. In South Africa, we used a purposive methodology to ensure that we included

sites: that both had and had not implemented the Black Sash social accountability project; from both rural and urban areas; and with varying proximity to large cities. In Nepal, we ensured that we selected one site perceived by staff of the NGO implementing organization to have been performing well and one that had been performing less well; as well as one in close proximity to the District capital and/or easily accessible, and one that was more difficult to access. In Ethiopia our geographical selection was more constrained. We needed to select two of the four woredas that had implemented the ESAP, but ensuring political acceptability of the research entailed allowing government to make this choice. Whilst we ourselves selected two kebeles in each woreda, logistical considerations meant that we were obliged to exclude the most remote kebele in each case (though some of our surveyed areas were nonetheless distant from large towns).

In each geographical area, we carried out KIIs with relevant local officials and NGO staff; and within each community, we purposively selected individuals for semi-structured interviews (SSIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). There were variations in purposive selection criteria between contexts, but these always included gender, disability status and social protection beneficiary status. Regarding beneficiary status, we selected people eligible for a range of the programmes or components of programmes that we were reviewing, as well as non-beneficiaries.

In Ethiopia, in order to gain detailed insights into the interventions of interest, we also purposively selected one third of our respondents based on their active involvement in social accountability initiatives: as complainants, or members of social accountability committees (SACs) or community scorecard (CSC) focus groups. All other respondents were randomly selected in relation to their involvement (and generally had not been active in these processes), in order to enable us to gain a sense of the reach of these initiatives. This selection needs to be understood in the context of the design of the CSC intervention. Whilst the whole community was invited to the CSC community interface meeting, the preceding steps of training and work in focus groups to carry out scoring was carried out by community representatives who comprised less than ten per cent of PSNP beneficiaries. The SAC committee was comprised of a subset of these focus group participants and was charged with managing the process and attending woreda-level interface meetings.

In South Africa, initial participants were recruited at the local government offices where they had come to seek assistance, and a snowballing technique was used to reach others. In addition to the core selection criteria of gender, social protection beneficiary status and disability status, an additional purposive selection criterion, in South Africa, was ethnicity. In Nepal an additional purposive selection criterion was caste: we purposefully sampled both high-caste Hindus, Dalits and ethnic minorities. The number and type of interviews and focus group discussions we held is summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Focus Group Discussions and Semi-structured Interviews for Case Studies[5]

Country	Ethiopia	South Africa	Nepal
Number and type of KIIs	23 KIIs In two woredas in two different regions. - staff at two levels of decentralised government (woreda and kebele) - NGO implementing partners.	15 KIIs In four villages in two regions. Included local office managers and staff, customer care centre staff, paypoint agents, local leaders, and CBO members.	31 KIIs In four VDCs in two districts. - staff from two levels of decentralised government (district and Village Development Committee (VDC)) - NGO implementing partners - community leaders.
Criteria for selection of participants in FGDs and SSIs	Location Gender Beneficiary status (PW or DS) Disability status Membership of the SAC Membership of CSC focus group	Location Gender Beneficiary status (which programme benefitting from) Disability status Ethnicity	Location Gender Beneficiary status Disability status Caste
Number of focus group discussions held: male, female, mixed	12 FGDs 5 female 4 male 3 mixed	12 FGDs 8 female 2 male 2 mixed	23 FGDs 12 female 7 male 4 mixed
Number of semi-structured interviews held: male, female, PWD	11 SSIs 6 female 5 male Of which 5 PWDs	12 SSIs 8 female 2 male Of which 2 PWDs	5 SSIs 4 female 1 male Of which 2 PwDs

We recorded and transcribed all interviews and discussions and coded them in line with the five dimensions of our conceptual framework; a sixth dimension related to impacts; and the cross-cutting issue of marginalised groups was the seventh coding dimension.

1.3 Conceptual Framework

1.3.1 Our Sources

As the starting point for our conceptual framework, we used the one presented in the World Bank's flagship study 'Opening the black box: The contextual drivers of social accountability' (Grandvoinnet et al., 2015). Grandvoinnet et al. (2015) propose a novel conceptualisation of social accountability in five constitutive elements as the interplay of both citizen and state action, supported by three mobile elements acting as levers: civic mobilisation, interface and information.

[5] This table excludes KIIs held at national level as part of institutional analysis.

- **Citizen action** is the primary element of social accountability and the basis for citizen-led engagement. It comprises diverse activities and typically includes demand-making (for information, justification or sanctions), protests against injustice and claims for better public goods.

- **State-action** is the second pivotal element of social accountability. State action can be in the form of positive response, for example improved services and reduced corruption, or repression and backlash. While most initiatives have primarily focused on citizen action, it is increasingly clear that lack of positive state action is often what prevents the intended outcomes of social accountability from materialising.

- **Information** flows are essential for an accountable and responsive state. These flows need to take place in various directions; and it is not just content that is important, but also presentation, accuracy, appropriateness to the target group, access and use.

- An **interface** is a locus of interaction between state and citizen actors. What matters are not only the interactions occurring through the interface, but also the processes that lead up to it and those that follow.

- Finally, **civic mobilisation** – action by intermediaries that spurs citizens to action – is often necessary to facilitate citizen 'voice', especially for vulnerable or marginalised citizens. The existence of information and an interface might not be sufficient on their own to trigger action, and civil society organisations (CSOs) often play a critical role in civic mobilisation. State officials may also need to be mobilised in order to seek out and engage with citizens.

The linkages between these constitutive elements are not straightforward and sequencing varies. Social accountability may be initiated by citizens but also by the state, and both state and citizens may initiate the three levers. Information may be made available through state action or civic mobilisation; and mobilisation, in turn, may be catalysed by information. Furthermore, the terms 'citizen action' and 'state action' do not presuppose a monolithic homogenous group of citizens or state actors; both within the state and among citizens there are many actors with diverse interests and preferences at multiple levels – local, regional and national. Power and politics are always important and power dynamics mean that these elements often play out differently for the most marginalised, as compared to other citizens.

In terms of implications for practice, it is important to note that, whilst all these elements need to be present for effective social accountability, they do not necessarily all need to be supported to the same extent by any one social accountability initiative. Contextual analysis is likely to find that elements are already supported to varying degrees, through informal institutions, social protection operations, and/or cross-sectoral initiatives. An objective of contextual analysis will be to identify key gaps and binding constraints, to inform priority areas for support.

1.3.2 Social Accountability in Social Protection: Conceptual Framework

In order to adapt the framework by Grandvoinnet et al. (2015) to the specificities of the social protection sector, we considered two issues: characteristics of the sector that might constrain or facilitate social accountability, or make it play out differently than in other sectors; and variations between social protection programme functions that have implications for social accountability.

Characteristics of the sector

Key issues identified at the outset of our research and their implications for research design were that: social protection beneficiaries tend to be poorer and more vulnerable than the average citizen; social protection programmes often have great reach; social protection is a highly individualised service; and institutional capacities tend to be weaker than in other sectors.

Social protection beneficiaries tend to be poorer and more vulnerable than the average citizen. Social accountability initiatives have often struggled to benefit people living in poverty and, in particular, the poorest (Bukenya et al., 2012). The intended beneficiaries of poverty-targeted programmes are by definition poor, meaning that they are among the least likely to have the voice and power to hold service providers to account (Giannozzi & Khan, 2011), and even universal programmes are usually targeted to specific groups of the population on the basis of some identified vulnerability – old age, orphanhood, disability etc. Furthermore, within groups of already vulnerable beneficiaries, marginalisation of some is compounded by factors such as gender, age, disability status and education, and sometimes also by language, ethnicity, caste or location. Given this, in reviewing what works in social accountability in the social protection sector, we gave particular attention to how processes work for the poorest and most marginalised members of society, and for women as well as men.

Social protection cash transfers often have more reach than other government programmes. Depending on the country, social protection cash transfers may be the only interaction that many beneficiaries have with the state – as is for example the case in Nepal. They provide a very direct and visible way for the state to provide a service to citizens, and, therefore, have great potential to strengthen state-citizen relationships if designed well. This relationship may be stronger in cases where payments are made by the state directly, but weaker in cases where payments are outsourced to private payment service providers (PSPs).

Social protection is a highly individualised service, which may create particular challenges in terms of mobilising citizens for collective action. Social protection programming is sometimes characterised by: substantial variations in individual experiences of the same programme; individualised delivery of benefits limiting opportunities for congregation of beneficiaries; and jealousy between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

- In social protection programmes, problems, as well as benefits, can be highly individualised. For example, a social protection programme can work well for some beneficiary households, but poorly for a minority whose names fail to appear on the paysheet month after month (Sabates-Wheeler et al., forthcoming); targeting might be judged as effective overall, but be experienced very badly by a proportion of households that believe themselves to be wrongly excluded.

- Even when problems are shared – for example when payments are late they are generally late for all beneficiaries – there is a risk that the individualised delivery of social protection might constrain collective mobilisation to demand accountability. Especially when payments are made electronically, there are not necessarily many meetings at which beneficiaries get to know one another and share problems.

- There is evidence from some programmes of resentment and jealousies within communities between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of social protection programmes (MacAuslan and Riemenschneider, 2011; Barca et al., 2015; Pavanello et al., 2016; Jones and Vargas, 2008).

Institutional capacities in the social protection sector tend to be weak. In many countries, social protection is placed within a politically weak social ministry, which may consequently struggle more than other ministries with inadequate funding and staffing capacity (Jones et al., 2013). This forms an important backdrop to the state action dimension of social accountability. Another complicating factor is the extent to which programme functions are contracted out. Contracting out results in a complex web of accountabilities: for example, when payments are contracted out, governments' accountability to beneficiaries for payments will operate via payment service providers that are contractually accountable to government.

Variations between programme functions

We found it useful, rather than looking at social protection programming in a monolithic way, to delve within <u>social protection programme functions</u> and consider whether there were important dimensions of variation that might mean that different social accountability initiatives would work better for some programme functions than others. We identified the following issues:

Certain social protection service delivery failures can be expected to be more salient than others to citizens, and thus lead more easily to citizen action. We might expect delivery gaps in core social protection programme functions, such as payments and exclusion errors in targeting, to be of high importance to the individual or household and to be easily noticeable, as they result directly in the non-receipt of cash. On the other hand, other issues, such as inclusion errors in targeting, corruption or mismanagement of funds, are likely to be less salient – less visible and without direct impact on the individual citizen.

Primary rights-bearers vary by programme function. In social protection programmes, accountability for beneficiary selection is to the whole community/society for ensuring that the eligibility criteria are correctly applied and that those (and only those) who should be defined as eligible are so defined. Key stakeholders include those who believe themselves incorrectly excluded, who are potentially very numerous. On the other hand, in delivery of transfers, accountability of the programme is primarily to households/individuals identified as eligible.

Different types of accountability mechanism might be effective for different programme functions. Here we draw on a distinction made by Aiyar and Walton (2014), and inspired by Pritchett (2014), between 'thick' and 'thin' accountability activities. 'Thin' activities can be delivered by non-discretionary state action and their outcomes can be easily verified; Aiyar and Walton (2014) give as examples the provision of an old age pension and of a guaranteed number of days' of work. 'Thick' activities are more complex and carrying them out effectively requires providers to tailor their actions to the specific conditions in which the task is being implemented, using high levels of discretion. This makes outcomes more difficult to verify, especially by non-specialists. An example given by Aiyar and Walton (2014) is poverty-targeting.

The importance of these distinctions, according to Aiyar and Walton (2014) lies in the fact that accountability activities need to be adapted to the type of activity. 'Thin' accountability activities can revolve around verifying inputs or clearly observable outputs in relation to simple rules, for example through a grievance redress procedure. The information required to underpin accountability of 'thick' activities is far more complex and the emphasis here, Aiyar and Walton (2014) argue, needs to be more on the development of incentives that enable providers to identify creative solutions to problems. Applying this distinction to social protection programme functions, we find a mix of 'thick' and 'thin' activities:

- *Some aspects of social protection programming are clearly 'thin'*: Registration and enrolment of citizens already deemed eligible are 'thin' programme functions, as are payments (though the latter might become a little 'thicker' when complexities are added, for example, when amounts received depend on compliance with conditionalities).

- *Targeting (and exit) could be either 'thick' or 'thin'*: Aiyar and Walton (2014) suggest that poverty targeting is an example of a 'thick' activity: a technical and complex process that requires designing the targeting criteria and process and then collecting a large amount of information to know whether the agreed criteria apply to a household. We may contrast this with some forms of categorical targeting, for example, identifying a person over or under a certain age, which would fit the definition of a 'thin' activity.

- *Softer aspects of service delivery are clearly 'thick'*: Other aspects of social protection service delivery, such as how beneficiaries are treated by service providers, effective delivery of complementary services and selection of public works, are, in social protection as in other sectors, examples of complex and less easily verifiable processes.

For all these reasons, instead of asking how social accountability mechanisms worked for programmes as a whole, in addition to considering variations in programme design (as already suggested in the TORs) in our research we also unpacked the questions to look at how mechanisms worked for particular programme functions.

Taking account of these specificities in the social protection sector, we developed the conceptual framework set out in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Social Accountability in Social Protection – Conceptual Framework

State Action
- Relevant officials have incentives (intrinsic or extrinsic) to address citizen concerns and/or face costs of inaction
- Private sector providers have incentives to address citizen concerns
- Staff who interface with citizens have the authority to resolve the issues, or influence with others who do
- The state has the capacity (staff time and skills) to address the issues
- The state has the financial resources and allocative flexibility to address the issues

Information
- Citizens understand whether they are eligible
- Eligible citizens are aware of their entitlements
- Information is accessible and appropriate to vulnerable and marginalised men and women in poverty
- Citizens know how they can raise a concern
- Local state actors have the information they need to respond constructively to citizen voice

Citizen-State Interface
- Interfaces are accessible and culturally appropriate for poor, vulnerable and marginalised men and women
- Appropriate (possible different) interfaces are available to address different SP programme functions and potential problems (individualised or collective, public or confidential, open to who community or only eligible citizens etc.)
- Interfaces involve state officials with the authority to address citizens' issues (or strong links to those who can)

Civic Mobilisation
- Overcomes challenges of individualised nature of social protection programming
- Overcomes risk of co-option of community comittees by the state
- Overcomes challenge of overburden of the under-resourced community volunteers
- Overcomes disconnects and power imbalances between local and higher levels of state

Citizen Action
- Anticipated benefits of action outweigh costs and risks
- Do not expect reprisals
- Expect state to take positive action
- Issue is important – face costs of inaction
- Voices of the marginalised and excluded are heard – elite capture avoided

Chapter 2: Lessons From Social Accountability in Other Service Delivery Sectors

This chapter responds to research question one, *'What can be learned from other service delivery sectors about the use of different social accountability mechanisms?'*

The chapter presents a review of the global evidence on social accountability in service sectors other than social protection and draws primarily on meta-analyses and systematic reviews that are methodologically strong and demonstrate principles of rigour, validity and reliability. Social accountability approaches have been used in many different sectors to improve outcomes. While each sector presents its own challenges, there are enough commonalities that it is useful to review experiences of strengthening social accountability in other sectors.

While there exists a substantial body of literature on social accountability, not all builds on rigorous evidence and many studies focus on process and input variables. The evidence-base is therefore relatively limited when it comes to impacts on service delivery and state-society relations. There are also some methodological challenges associated with research on impact of social accountability interventions, including: difficult to measure concepts; the long time frames that social accountability interventions require to show impacts; difficulties of attribution, and the important ways in which context mediates outcomes. That said, it has proven possible to tease out some key lessons and we present these in the following paragraphs.

Social accountability is an inherently political process

The capacity and commitment of citizens and state officials are closely shaped by the incentives to which each responds and the room for manoeuvre that each can find. This means that strengthening social accountability is inherently a political process that entails the reorganisation of power across various processes. This focus on power relations, therefore, emerges as fundamental to our approach. The centrality of political analysis also leads to the observation that the implementation and design of social accountability initiatives should be approached from a strategic rather than tactical point of view. A strategic approach to social accountability entails that social accountability interventions are thought of as part of a process of social and political institutionalization and are embedded in institutions, country systems and all stages of the policy cycle (Gaventa, 2008; O'Meally, 2013), rather than being operationalised as a project or discrete intervention – what is referred to as a tactical approach.

It calls for undertaking in-depth political analysis before and during the implementation of any social accountability initiative (Menocal and Sharma, 2008). Such political analysis is able to provide intelligence to inform strategic choices, which take into account specific accountability challenges, the incentives of the various actors involved and the spaces available to them. Pursuing a comprehensive strategy to strengthen

accountability can open up more opportunities for action on the part of both citizens and state and increased entry points for intervention. Many accountability issues cannot be solved by locally-bounded initiatives and require coordinated efforts at multiple levels (Guillan, 2016) involving vertical integration of local, regional and national initiatives (Fox, 2015).

Social accountability can have positive impacts on both service delivery outcomes and state-society relations – but these outcomes vary, because they are heavily mediated by context.

In her review of transparency and accountability interventions Joshi (2013) examined the impact of different types of social accountability interventions, including information dissemination, score cards, community monitoring and GRMs, and concluded that they have had positive outcomes in education, health and other sectors. She found that the initiatives have been successful in increasing awareness of entitlements and empowering people to demand accountability, claim rights and become more active citizens, but that evidence of impact on actual service delivery quality and accessibility has been mixed. Ringold et al. (2012) find that provision of information is sometimes, but not always, effective in improving accountability of service providers; and that the mixed evidence does not allow them to reach a conclusion regarding the impact of grievance redress mechanisms.

Devarajan, Khemani and Walton (2011), based on their review of social accountability initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa, suggest that there is a strong case for support through information-related initiatives, but that the impact is greatest when higher-level political leadership provides sufficient powers for citizen participation in holding service providers accountable. They also conclude that impacts are heavily mediated by project design and initial conditions of inequality and social cohesion. Gaventa and Barret (2010) examine 100 case studies and conclude that in about one third of cases citizen participation contributed to the strengthening of responsive and accountable states: citizen participation generally led to improved access to state services and resources, greater realisation of rights, and enhanced state responsiveness and accountability.

The role of social accountability in supporting state-society relationships has seldom been the subject of systematic empirical analysis, so there is insufficient empirical evidence and what is available is not very rigorous. Nevertheless, what limited literature is available does point to the potential of social accountability to contribute to strengthening state-society relationships. GPSA (2016) demonstrates in several cases – spanning various sectors including education, health, water and sanitation, municipal services, infrastructure, extractive industries and youth – how social accountability mechanisms led to improvements in citizen trust in the government and increased instances of constructive engagement between citizens and officials. These case studies are based on qualitative evidence, including interviews with project staff in Nigeria, Palestine, India, Uganda, Tajikistan, DRC, Indonesia and Niger.

Numerous other studies have also noted positive impact. Some selected examples include the following: McGee and Kroesschell's (2013) study that synthesises findings from Bangladesh, Nepal and Mozambique finds that externally created spaces for accountability served as 'schools of citizenship' where people learned about their rights vis-à-vis the state and how to participate in governance. Cima's (2013) qualitative review of public audits in Nepal suggests that the audits created the space and the skills that citizens needed to engage with the Government. Faehndrick and Nhantumbo (2012) measured the impact of the governance activities of the 'Governance, Water, and Sanitation Program' in Mozambique and found that they had contributed to increased trust between citizens and government officials. Cornwall, Cordeiro and Delgado (2006) describe how the municipal health council in one Brazilian city is gradually transforming a 'culture of clientelism into a culture of accountability'. Ravindra (2004) notes that citizen report cards in Bangalore, India contributed to increased citizen activism.

Aspects of context that are important include political settlements, civil society and citizen agency and state capacity and incentives

Where social accountability initiatives are not designed in consonance with the context, they will only have a limited impact in improving government accountability. Interventions therefore need to be tailored to the context to ensure that they are able to incorporate available opportunities and entry points and acknowledge constraints. However, understanding how context mediates the effectiveness of social accountability is complex, as there appears to be no straightforward linear relationship between particular characteristics of the context and opportunities for social accountability. While there is consensus that context matters, there is less understanding of exactly which aspects of context matter.

Recently, several guidance frameworks and reviews have emerged to help practitioners analyse critical aspects of context for various social accountability approaches. These include O' Meally (2013), Grandvoinnet et al. (2015), Boeckman (2012) and Bukenya et al. (2012). One lesson that emerges from these frameworks is that the dynamics of power relations that shape social interactions and citizens' agency within society – a complex web of incentives, interests, and political and economic power relations – play a key role in shaping the success of social accountability mechanisms. These power relations themselves are dependent on the nature of political settlements, the history of state-society relations, the influence of civil society, and citizens' agency. This understanding also requires that the focus on dynamics of inequality and exclusion be sharpened to understand the extent to which citizens can engage effectively in or benefit from social accountability initiatives. In the following paragraphs, we briefly discuss each of these dimensions.

Political settlements refer to 'the balance or distribution of power between contending social groups and social classes, on which any state is based' (di John and Putzel, 2009, p. 4) and are reflected in governance institutions and legal frameworks. The commitment of elites to development and the capacity of the state to deliver will be strongly shaped

by the terms of the political settlement, which in turn affect their incentives to promote accountability and to respond to social accountability demands (for example, see Reis and Moore, 2005). It is important to design social accountability interventions that take into account understanding of political settlements.

Civil society is understood as the arena where people associate to advance common interests in both formal and informal organizations. In social accountability, civil society can be a conduit for citizens' voice; and civil society organisations can act as effective 'infomediaries' by collecting, aggregating, translating and disseminating information and data in ways that are understandable and actionable.[6] The capacity of civil society organisations – to manage and use information and to help mobilise citizens and build alliances across society – needs to be taken into account in the design of social accountability initiatives, as it will impact how social accountability interventions are implemented. A related issue is that of the credibility and legitimacy of CSOs. Social accountability initiatives tend to be more successful when the involved CSOs are perceived as credible and legitimate by both the citizenry and state actors (GPSA, 2016).

It is vital to understand the issues of **citizens' agency** to participate in social accountability activities when designing or implementing these approaches. Citizens' capacity and agency – which entail an ability to coordinate collective action, an awareness of their own rights and entitlements, and the incentive to engage with the government – strongly affect how effective the implementation of social accountability activities will be. Citizens' capacity is even more challenged in sectors and policy areas where citizens need specialised knowledge to participate (e.g. in fiscal policy). Citizens' capacity and agency depend in turn on education and income, but most importantly on existing power relations at local, regional and national levels, and on social norms around citizenship and state-society engagement that may discourage people from challenging the status quo.

State capacity and incentives: Effectiveness of social accountability is also mediated by the incentives of the state to respond to citizen demands; and by its capacity to do so. As Joshi and McCluskey (2017) point out, there has been relatively limited research into why and how public officials respond (or do not respond) to citizen demands. They provide a framework for understanding responsiveness, which includes both formal and informal pressure that public officials face from professional peers, from organisational rules and culture, from elites and from citizens. They argue that the way public officials see citizens and their claims – in terms of legitimacy, credibility and level of trust – influences the willingness of public officials to respond to their demands (Joshi and McCluskey, 2017). Vom Hau (2012) finds that it is not just the technical and organisational aspects of state capacity (for example, the level of human, financial and technical resources, and technical knowledge) that are important for social accountability, but also the ability to forge and maintain relationships and build networks with different social actors.

[6] *'Infomediaries' are actors who 'synthesize, translate, simplify and direct information on behalf of others' (McGee and Gaventa, 2010, p. 45).*

Outcomes vary for different social groups

While outcomes are impacted by context, even within the same context the impact of social accountability interventions may be different for different social groups. Social accountability and broader participatory initiatives have struggled to benefit those living in poverty for at least two reasons. Firstly, poorer and more vulnerable individuals tend to lack the time, technical skills and confidence to engage meaningfully with social accountability initiatives (King et al., 2010; Gaventa and Barrett, 2010). Lack of civic agency – that is to say the aspirations, will, capacity and experience to voice points of view and interact – of marginalised and vulnerable groups presents a challenge for these groups to participate (Oosterom, 2009). Secondly, participatory processes are sometimes captured by elites and may reinforce existing inequalities. In traditional societies with informal networks of power, ensuring inclusivity may be even more challenging. For example, poor people may not be part of the networks through which information is disseminated (Grandvoinnet et al., 2015; Hagmann, 2007). Devarajan, Kheman and Walton (2011), in their review of social accountability initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa, conclude that impacts are heavily mediated by initial conditions of inequality and social cohesion that vary across communities. This is linked to the fact that marginalisation is not simply about a lack of economic resources, but is associated with reduced power and influence within local decision-making structures. The same dynamics that create marginalisation in the first place, are likely to make it more difficult for marginalised groups to engage in social accountability processes.

Scholars have suggested various ways to prevent elite capture and to encourage participation from all groups. Gugerty and Kremer (2008) suggest that one way might be to ensure that the type of benefits on offer are of more interest to the socially marginalised than to elites. Menocal and Sharma (2008) suggest that interventions that specifically target marginalised groups are more likely to lead to greater empowerment of these groups. World Bank (2006) found that, in order to prevent elite capture, information on any social accountability project should be 'plentiful, transparent and widely shared'.

Engagement between state and society is important for achieving the desired results of social accountability activities.

Citizen voice is of limited value without state engagement. Some recent reviews have suggested that the initiatives where civil society and government officials cooperated with each other based on shared interest and common goals and built coalitions across state and non-state actors turned out to be the most successful (for example, see ODI, 2015). While it can be difficult and complex, engagement with the government as part of social accountability is possible, and is happening. This engagement starts with identifying champions and pro-accountability actors in the government. Links can be made through formal and informal networks (see for example Tsai, 2007). In some

contexts, these champions exist and are identifiable, while in others this process may not be straightforward. However, even in complex environments, there is often room for constructive engagement to collaboratively solve problems, as relationships are built over time through continuous dialogue (GPSA, 2016).

On the other hand, this does not mean that there is no place for more adversarial forms of citizen action. Disruptive and adversarial approaches can complement state-society coalitions, by creating a space for engagement. Fox (2016) suggests that pro-reformist coalitions within state and society may need 'external pressure' through adversarial forms of engagement, in order to gain leverage. He argues that a combination of collaboration with pro-reform parts of the state and confrontation with those who would block reform might be most effective. Similarly, Gaventa and Barrett's meta-review (2010) found that social movements and campaigns, including public protests, can be key in promoting democracy and development and that their role has tended to be underplayed in donor agendas.

Provision of information alone is not effective in improving accountability of service providers; information does not automatically lead to awareness or awareness to citizen action.

Although information is clearly instrumental to any social accountability approach, it should not be the sole area of focus when implementing social accountability activities. Social accountability interventions have often implicitly assumed that information leads to awareness, and awareness leads to increased voice, and thereafter, citizen action that would stimulate state action. The evidence does not support the idea that such a causal chain is automatic. Information may not be framed in a way that leads citizens to take action; it may not be salient, or citizens may not trust the source of information. In cases when information leads to awareness, a number of barriers may prevent citizens from taking action, such as fear of reprisals, a culture that discourages complaining, or social norms that disempower citizens. Even when citizens take action, service providers and officials may ignore citizen voice, or even meet it with reprisals, or, despite goodwill, find their ability to respond constrained by a lack of capacity or resources. Therefore, interventions that combine the promotion of voice with efforts to build an enabling environment for collective action and to strengthen institutional responsiveness seem to be the most effective (Fox, 2015).

This suggests that the 'short route' of accountability (as proposed in the 2004 World Development Report), in which citizens hold service providers directly to account, might not be quite so short after all. Its effectiveness depends on synergies with mechanisms that create incentives for citizens to act and for providers to respond positively to citizen voice, or impose sanctions for failure to respond appropriately.

Social accountability is a long-term, iterative process and requires long-term commitment and realistic expectations.

Social accountability is a complex, non-linear process. Social accountability requires changing attitudes and behaviours, which takes time. Since attitudes and behaviours are shaped in part by the legacies of previous engagement between citizens and state actors, social accountability requires an iterative approach with incremental shifts. This allows for institutional learning, where each intervention is able to take advantage of what was learned in earlier interventions.

It is important to keep this in mind when planning social accountability initiatives and measuring progress. There is a need to identify intermediate outcomes, be realistic about what social accountability mechanisms can achieve within one cycle and be modest about goals. As social accountability interventions shape the context over time in complex and unintended ways, there is a need for constant adaptive learning. An incremental approach is especially important in lower-capacity or politically unstable environments (O'Meally, 2013).

Social accountability can also entail serious costs and risks that must be weighed against potential benefits.

Social accountability activities entail costs, not only in resources, but also in terms of the time of all their participants. More crucially, however, social accountability poses risks. Firstly, there is a risk that social accountability can create expectations on the part of citizens to which the state is unable or unwilling to respond, giving rise to tensions, frustration and grievances (McGee and Kroesschell, 2013). This may, in turn, lead to distrust of the state and to apathy. Secondly, the risks of elite capture, misrepresentation of special interests and manipulation remain. Social accountability initiatives can exacerbate existing power asymmetries and perpetuate perceptions of injustice among groups. This may close the space for citizen engagement, instead of opening it. Thirdly, social accountability can replace existing, perhaps more legitimate or sustainable, structures and mechanisms for accountability. Fourthly, new social accountability structures can run the risk of fragmenting communities and creating tensions, because social accountability interventions can create 'losers' in communities by redistributing social and political power. Fifthly, and perhaps most critically, the state may respond to citizen voices through reprisals against citizens, worsening, rather than improving, their situation. Gaventa and Barrett's review of 100 social accountability case studies found that, of 830 documented outcomes, 25 per cent were labelled as negative. These included feelings of disempowerment, denial of access to state services, increased community conflict and violent reprisals against citizens (Gaventa and Barrett, 2010).

Technology can sometimes facilitate social accountability, but is not a silver bullet.

Increasingly, new information and communication technologies (ICT) are being used to facilitate citizen feedback to state service providers. However, the World Development Report 2016, 'Digital Dividends', based on a meta-analysis of 23 ICT platforms that aim to project citizen voice to improve service delivery, concludes that the impact of technology on citizen voice is generally low (and lower than the impact on other dimensions of governance, such as free and fair elections) (World Bank, 2016). The report also suggests that these platforms can make a technical contribution to increasing the capacity of policymakers and senior managers to respond to citizens, but only where the commitment to respond already exists. Certain institutional features of the initiatives appear to promote responsiveness, including public disclosure of citizen feedback, government involvement with the ICT platform in either a lead or partnership role, and associated offline civic mobilisation (Peixoto and Fox, 2016).

There is also the question of whose voices are heard through such platforms. In Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, the digital divide is very marked, with internet access varying widely according to gender, income status, location and age, and internet-based platforms often primarily serving the elite. Even in Latin America and Europe the digital divide persists: in Europe, the use of e-Government services varies markedly according to household income (World Bank, 2016; Peixoto and Fox, 2016). Mobile phone ownership is far more widespread and potentially empowering in low-income countries, but even access to and the ability to use mobile phones is not universal.

Chapter 3: Mapping of Social Accountability in Social Protection Programming

This chapter addresses research sub-question 1: ***Where social accountability mechanisms have been used within social protection programmes, what are the intended direct and indirect outcomes (at household, community, state levels)?***

- *What are the different mechanisms that have been used in social protection programmes, e.g. grievance redress mechanisms, score cards, social audits etc.?*

- *What are the key problems or weaknesses that these mechanisms have been introduced to address?*

- *What are the intended outputs, outcomes and impacts (if any) in terms of improving service delivery outcomes?*

- *What are the intended outputs, outcomes and impacts (if any) in terms of strengthening of state society relations?*

Section 3.1 discusses the objectives of social accountability mechanisms in the social protection sector and section 3.2 provides an overview of the types of mechanisms that have been used.

3.1 Key Objectives of Social Accountability Mechanisms

Social accountability initiatives in the social protection sector have a wide range of objectives and we find many initiatives with multiple objectives. This diversity is one of the factors that makes drawing generalisable conclusions so difficult. That said, there are a few patterns that emerge from this cataloguing of objectives. Firstly, it is notable that the objectives of social accountability initiatives are often rather broadly and ambitiously defined, given their generally limited resourcing. Secondly, social accountability initiatives are rarely conceptualised as part of a strategic approach to citizen engagement or programme governance: complementarities with each other and with other citizen participation, empowerment or wider governance initiatives at different levels (local, regional, national) are not commonly spelled out. Thirdly, objectives appear to depend somewhat on the source of support. For example, amongst the initiatives on which we found documentation, those supported by the World Bank tend to have a strong focus on reducing fraud, corruption and inclusion errors, whilst NGO-led ones were more likely to focus on empowerment and extending access to social protection.

In line with the research questions, we group objectives of existing initiatives according to whether they are predominantly oriented to improving service delivery or promoting state-citizen relations, while recognising that there are important cross-overs between the two.

Improving service delivery

General service delivery improvements

Frequently, initiatives aim to inform improvements in the social protection sector, without narrowly defining the nature of the improvements expected or sought. For example, in Ethiopia, the stated objective of the ESAP cross-sectoral programme is, *'to strengthen the capacities of citizen groups and government to work together in order to enhance the quality of basic public services delivered to citizens'*[7]. And the social protection specific pilot had as one of its aims *'to improve service delivery in the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) for service users'* (PSNP Social Development Task Force, 2015). In South Africa, the Mikondzo Government project has as its mission to expand and leave a positive service delivery footprint by bringing all its services to the people, with a particular focus on citizens living in remote communities; and Black Sash's Community Monitoring and Advocacy Project (CMAP) had the key objective of collecting detailed and accurate information about service delivery, and using this information to advocate for improvements at the public facility level. Similarly, Nepal's Local Governance and Community Development Programme (LGCDP) has improved service delivery as one of its four objectives.

Where initiatives detail specific service delivery objectives, targeting and coverage, and reducing fraud and corruption are common areas of focus.

Improving targeting or coverage

An objective of the Harmonised Social Cash Transfer Programme HSCT community verification of targeting in Zimbabwe is to *'improve the quality and accuracy of the targeting process'.*

Some initiatives aim primarily to improve access and reduce exclusion errors. The South African Government's Integrated Community Registration Outreach Program (ICROP) that dispatches mobile units for one-stop service delivery are aimed at reaching marginalised people and reducing exclusion errors. Similarly, Save the Children's regional Child-Sensitive Social Protection Programme in South Asia, including in Nepal, has as its explicit objective to improve the lives of children, by increasing access to social protection programmes (Smith and Watson, 2015); and HelpAge International's work with older people's associations has as one of its three objectives to help older people access existing services and schemes (Livingstone and Knox-Vydmanov, 2016).

On the other hand, several World Bank-supported Conditional Cash Transfers have as a key objective the reduction of inclusion errors. In the Argentinian 'Jefes y Jefas' programme, social accountability was combined with other measures to reduce inclusion

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[7] *http://esap2.org.et/about-us/objectives/*

errors (World Bank, 2007), and the main indicator of success was the number of ineligible beneficiaries removed from the beneficiary lists. Similarly, the Colombian 'Familias en Accion' programme established a combination of grievance mechanism and community committees with the dual objectives of detecting fraud and reducing inclusion errors (Bassett et al., 2012).

Combating fraud and corruption

Examples with reduction of fraud and corruption as a key objective include GRMs in the following programmes: the Argentinian Jefes y Jefas programme (World Bank, 2007); Mexico's Prospera programme (Hevia de la Jara, 2008), which focuses particularly on reducing vote buying; and the SAGE programme in Uganda, which aims to address the threats of manipulation and abuse that threaten its political legitimacy (Republic of Uganda, 2012). A key objective of the social audits in MGNREGS in India has also been to minimise leakage and wastage of public funds (Aiyar and Mehta, 2013).

State-citizen relations

Many social accountability initiatives also seek specific outcomes in terms of improving relationships between the state and citizens.

Citizen Empowerment

HelpAge International's older citizen monitoring approach to social accountability in social protection has three aims. As mentioned above, one is to improve service delivery. The others are to empower older people to claim their rights, and to use monitoring data in influencing policy, legislation and service delivery so they better respond to the needs of older people (Livingstone and Knox-Vydmanov, 2016). In Kenya, the NGO-supported rights committees have as one of their key aims *'ensuring community members are aware of their rights and responsibilities and the process for complaints'* (OPM, 2015). In Zimbabwe, the second stated aim of community verification of targeting in the Harmonized Social Cash Transfer Programme (HSCT) is to increase the participation, accountability and ownership of the programme by communities (Coffey, 2015).

Fundamental shifts in state-society relations

A small minority of social accountability initiatives explicitly set out to bring about fundamental shifts in state-citizen relations. El Salvador's CCT programme 'Red Solidaria/Communidades Solidarias Rurales'[8] took a particularly intentional approach to citizenship promotion, reflected in discourse preceding the project implementation and programme design (Adato et al., 2016). Another example is the Juntos programme in Peru, which aims at changing the paternalistic relationship between the citizenry and the state, such that citizens start to demand that the state fulfils their social and economic rights (Jones et al., 2008).

[8] The programme name was changed to 'Communidades Solidarias Rurales' in 2009.

3.2 Overview of Social Accountability Mechanisms in Social Protection Programmes

In addition to our own case studies, we have reviewed thirty social accountability initiatives in social protection, some of which include more than one mechanism. A summary of these is presented in Table 4 below.

Grievance redress mechanisms and community monitoring committees are widespread and most social protection programmes have such systems in place, at least on paper. The use of structured collective social accountability mechanisms, such as community score cards, citizen report cards and social audits, is much less common, their use having been largely confined to one-off exercises or pilots; though there are a few exceptions, most notably the use of social audits at scale in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme (MGNREGS) in India.

For the purposes of this chapter we divide the various social accountability initiatives we found into three broad categories. We describe these below, as well as explaining how our case studies fit within them:

Grievance redress / complaints and appeals mechanisms. These enable individual citizens to lodge complaints about programme delivery and seek remedial action; as well as to appeal programming decisions, such as about who is and is not eligible for the programme. Feedback is received from individuals, and responses are given to individuals: in other words, these mechanisms structure citizen action, state response and interface in an individualised way. Our Ethiopia case study covered the Kebele Appeals Committees, the grievance redress mechanism of the PSNP (though it was not our primary focus).

Structured collective social accountability mechanisms: community scorecards, citizen report cards, and social audits. These mechanisms promote collective citizen feedback on service delivery (in a meeting or collated from a survey) and state response is to a group of citizens and aimed at addressing common concerns. Awareness-raising, civic mobilisation and interfaces between state and citizens are an integral part of the mechanism. The tools differ in how issues and priorities are identified and in the nature of the interface:

• Citizen report cards use a survey to collect citizen feedback, and then aggregate survey findings which may be debated face-to-face and/or through media channels (making them suitable for use at either local or national scale);

• Community score cards use a community-based qualitative process of problem and priority definition, followed by face-to-face meetings between citizens and service providers to discuss priorities and jointly develop action plans;

• And social audits involve community-led investigative work, on completion of which findings are shared and publicly discussed with service providers.

Our Ethiopia case study had a primary focus on the ESAP that used community score cards and similar mechanisms; and our South Africa case study looked at the Black Sash Community Monitoring and Advocacy Project (CMAP) and Citizen-Based Monitoring (CBM) that use a citizen report card type approach.

Community committees and similar mechanisms. We group here a range of mechanisms established to raise citizen awareness and/or create opportunities for engagement between state and citizens: beneficiary monitoring committees are a common example. This group of mechanisms do not in themselves structure citizen action and state response and are often used in conjunction with and to support GRMs. Our Nepal case study looks at two programmes that incorporate a range of such mechanisms, the NGO-led Child-Sensitive Social Protection Programme (CSSP) and the state-led Local Governance and Community Development Programme (LGCDP). We also include in this category the Integrated Community Registration Outreach Programme (ICROP), a state-led citizen outreach initiative in South Africa.

Table 5: Examples of social accountability mechanisms in social protection programmes

Social Accountability Mechanism	Examples of use in Social Protection
Grievance mechanisms	**Argentina**: Grievance mechanism in the Jefas y Jefes de Hogar Desocupados. **Bangladesh**: Grievance mechanism in the Income Support Programme for the Poorest (ISPP). **Brazil**: Grievance mechanisms in Bolsa Familia, the BPC and other programmes. **Colombia**: Grievance mechanism in the Familias en Accion programme. **Ethiopia**: Kebele Appeals Committees (KACs): grievance mechanism in the PSNP. **Indonesia**: Grievance mechanism in the PKH and other programmes. **Kenya**: Grievance mechanism in the HSNP. **Lesotho**: Complaints mechanism in the Cash and Food Transfers Pilot Project (CFTPP). **Mexico**: Grievance mechanism in the Prospera programme. **Nigeria**: Grievance mechanism in the Child Development Grant Programme (CDGP). **Pakistan**: Grievance mechanism in the BISP. **Philippines**: Grievance mechanism in the Pantawid Pamilya Pilipino Program. **South Africa**: Grievance mechanisms in various programmes, as well as citizens and civil society using the courts to secure access to social security. **Zimbabwe**: Grievance mechanism in the HSCT programme.

Social Accountability Mechanism	Examples of use in Social Protection
Structured collective social accountability mechanisms: community score cards, citizen report cards and social audits	**Bangladesh**: Public meetings in Save the Children's Child-Sensitive Social Protection Programme. **Bangladesh**: Public hearings organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation. **Dominican Republic**: Use of community scorecards in the Solidaridad programme. **Ethiopia**: Community scorecards piloted in PSNP. **India**: Use of social audits in MGNREGS. **Malawi**: Community scorecard pilot. **Philippines**: Community scorecards in the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program by the Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government (CCAGG). **Philippines**: Social Audits in the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program by the local NGO Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government (CCAGG). **South Africa**: Black Sash (NGO) Community Monitoring and Advocacy Project (CMAP) and Citizen Based Monitoring (CBM). **Multiple countries**: Pilots of various social accountability initiatives by the Africa Platform for Social Protection in Kenya, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Zambia and Uganda.
Community committees, outreach and similar initiatives	**Bangladesh**: Community committees in Save the Children's Child-Sensitive Social Protection Programme (CSSP). **Bangladesh**: Community committees established by Manusher Jonno Foundation. **Kenya**: Beneficiary Rights Committees under the Hunger Safety Net Programme. **Nepal**: Women's groups established by Save the Children to monitor the child grant and other programmes as part of the Child-Sensitive Social Protection Programme. **Pakistan**: BISP Beneficiary Committees. **Peru**: Community committees in Juntos. **South Africa**: Integrated Community Registration Outreach Programme: state-led citizen outreach through mobile units. **South Asia**: Save the Children's Child-Sensitive Social Protection (CSSP) programme implementing awareness raising, capacity building and advocacy activities in Nepal, India and Bangladesh. **Uganda**: Older people monitoring groups in the SAGE old age pension **Zambia**: Civil society advocacy and capacity building programmes in relation to social protection. **Zimbabwe**: Child Protection Committees. **Multiple countries**: HelpAge International's Older Citizen Monitoring programmes in Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambique, Pakistan and Tanzania.

The following sections briefly review each type of social accountability mechanism.

3.2.1 Grievance Redress / Complaints and Appeals Mechanisms

Perhaps due to the highly individualised nature of social protection, individualised accountability mechanisms, such as GRMs, have been widely used in the social protection sector. Fox (2007) highlights this association between individualised programming and individualised social accountability mechanisms in relation to

Mexico. A complaints system has been set up for the Prospera conditional cash transfer programme, which contrasts with existing, more collective forms of accountability around community programmes, in particular the active monitoring committees that operate around the Rural Food Supply Programme (Fox, 2007).

Most social protection programmes include some type of mechanism for receiving and addressing complaints, at least on paper. However, it is recognised that many of these are not functional (Barca et al., 2012); and they vary widely in terms of how well they document and follow up on complaints. For example, registration and categorisation of complaints has enabled the number and type received to be tracked in relation to the Pantawid Pamilya Pilipino Program in the Philippines (World Bank, 2014), the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) in Pakistan (IDS, 2013) and the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) in Kenya (http://www.hsnp.or.ke/); but even such basic information is unavailable for many other countries we reviewed, including Ethiopia, Zimbabwe (Sabates-Wheeler et al, forthcoming), and Indonesia (Barca, 2012).

A wide range of interfaces have been established by GRMs, including helpdesks, complaints boxes, hotlines, SMS and web-based systems. Mobile complaints units are sometimes used to promote access, as in Mexico's Prospera programme (Devereux and Mhlanga, 2008; Ringold et al., 2012), and Zimbabwe's HSCT (Ayliffe, 2016). Complaints handling may be contracted out to a private sector call centre and/or CSOs may play a role: for example, in the Dominican Republic CCT programme Solidaridad, the Government created a 'social network' (Red Social) of community-based organisations to receive and forward complaints to the relevant authorities (Barca et al., 2012); and in Kenya's Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) NGOs have been responsible for managing the complaints mechanism, including through the establishment of community 'rights committees'.

3.2.2. Structured collective social accountability mechanisms: community score cards, citizen report cards and social audits

The use of these tools in the social protection sector has, to date, been rather limited, but there are a few examples. In the Dominican Republic, community scorecards were introduced to enhance citizen oversight of the Solidaridad conditional cash transfer programme (World Bank, n.d.; World Bank, 2015b; Park, 2014)). In Bangladesh, the NGO Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) has used community scorecards to ensure effective participation of communities in monitoring the delivery and impact of social protection programmes (READ, 2015). The Social Protection Actors Forum has carried out a pilot project in Zimbabwe, Kenya, Ghana, Zambia and Uganda, using social audits and community scorecards to assess implementation of social protection programmes (SPAF, n.d.).

In Ethiopia, the ESAP has supported the use of a range of social accountability tools, including community scorecards and citizen report cards, in several basic services

sectors, though not until recently in social protection. In 2015, this approach was piloted in social protection, through a collaboration between ESAP and the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in four of the country's nearly 700 rural woredas (PSNP Social Development Task Force, 2015), and this has since scaled up to 19 woredas. Under an agreement that has required special dispensation, due to legal restrictions on CSO engagement around rights[9], CSOs are contracted to carry out ESAP facilitation, involving rights-based training, focus group discussions, interface meetings between citizens and local officials and the development of action plans.

In South Africa, Black Sash, in collaboration with community-based organisations, led a citizen report card type process. Community monitors collected data from citizens at the South Africa Social Security Agency (SASSA) offices on their experiences with service delivery. Then Black Sash processed and analysed the data and presented it back to the communities in a way that made sense for them, including through posters and handouts; the compiled data was used as a starting point for dialogue between stakeholders and for the eventual development of improvement plans.

One of the largest and best documented examples of social audits is in the Indian public works programme MGNREGS. The Act underpinning the programme creates a legal requirement on the Government to organise annual social audits, though the extent to which this has been implemented varies across different states. It has been most widely implemented in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Here, a local social audit team is recruited and trained and then verifies labour expenses and other issues through visits to workers. A public hearing is held with implementing officials to discuss the audit findings, where complaints are read out, testimonies verified and accused officials given an opportunity to defend themselves. A Decision Taken Report (DTR) is then created in which the responsibility for each confirmed wrongdoing is pinned on one or more programme functionaries (Afridi and Iversen, 2014). Until 2010, the mechanism for redressing issues raised by the social audit was weak. The Andhra Pradesh government has since established a Vigilance Office responsible for follow-up action (Aiyar et al., 2013). However, according to Pande and Dubbudu (2017) this office 'lacks adequate independence from the agency it needs to investigate, as well as power and resources to fulfil its mandate.'

3.2.3 Community Committees and Similar Initiatives

Local committees, comprising representatives of either the entire community or beneficiaries of social protection programmes are widespread; they generally have a range of information, control and accountability functions, with the mix varying between programmes. A few examples are highlighted below.

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[9] *Charities and Societies Proclamation 621/2009 of 2009.*

Peru's conditional cash transfer programme *'Juntos'* has established 'Committees on Supervision and Transparency' both at the national and local levels (Barca et al., 2012). Their mandate, set out in the programme's statute, is to *'supervise the accomplishment of Juntos' objectives in order to ensure efficiency of public spending, especially according to 'stakeholder and beneficiary perspectives'* (Barca et al., 2012, p. 126). In Brazil's Bolsa Família programme, social accountability mechanisms called 'Social Control Councils' help with beneficiary selection and conditionality monitoring (Lindert et al., 2007). Similarly, the Mexican CCT 'Prospera' uses 'Community Promotion Committees' to establish a link between beneficiary families, staff of education and health institutions, and programme coordinators. The aim of the committees is to provide a mechanism for beneficiaries to raise requests and suggestions, foster community development, and promote social accountability and transparency of the programme. The members are volunteers selected from among the beneficiaries, and committees exist in every community (Hevia de la Jara, 2008).

In Zimbabwe, Child Protection Committee members supervise payments, support beneficiaries in raising complaints and review the outcomes of the HSCT's simplified proxy means test (PMT) targeting mechanism (Coffey, 2015). In the BISP, more than 40,000 Beneficiary Committees have been recently established in order to gather beneficiaries to discuss issues relating to BISP and update them on various aspects of the programme (Gazdar and Zuberi, 2014). In Kenya, community 'rights committees' have been established with the support of an NGO (HelpAge International) and have been responsible for: mobilising communities for programme activities; ensuring community members are aware of their rights and responsibilities and the process for raising complaints; receiving and recording complaints; and overseeing the payments process to reduce the risk of fraud. Members are usually nominated by the local chief and confirmed at a community meeting (OPM, 2015).

In Nepal, Save the Children's CSSP created Single Women's Groups (essentially groups for widows), who were invited to participate in awareness-raising and training activities, and were linked to district level Single Women's Federations. It also strengthened Local Social Protection Coordination Committees (LSPCCs) and supported local officials to hold public hearings. The Government-led Local Governance and Community Development Programme (LGCDP) established Ward Citizen Forums that have a role in promoting social accountability across sectors, including in social protection. Unlike in many countries where these kinds of mechanisms have supported citizens to engage with a grievance redress system, in Nepal they operated independently, as the social protection programmes we reviewed have no formal GRM.

HelpAge International has supported the organisation of older people to improve implementation of old age pensions in many countries, including Bangladesh, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda (Livingstone and Knox-Vydmanov, 2016).

Chapter 4: Impacts of Social Accountability in the Social Protection Sector

This chapter addresses research question three on the impacts of social accountability mechanisms in the social protection sector: **What is the evidence of the impact of social accountability mechanisms in social protection programmes leading to improved service delivery outcomes; and strengthening state society relations?**

In section 4.1 we look at the direct evidence of impacts, firstly on service delivery, then on state-society relations. Given the limited direct evidence on impacts, we then find it useful, in section 4.2 to use our conceptual framework to unpack the pathways through which we expect impacts to come about and to analyse actual outcomes along five dimensions of social accountability: information; civic mobilisation; interface; citizen action and state action.

4.1 Impacts of Social Accountability in Social Protection

4.1.1 Service Delivery Impacts

In practical terms, what constitutes 'improved service delivery' will vary by context. Conceptually, in line with our definition of social accountability, we take it to involve increased alignment of programme delivery with policy commitments and/or programme rules.

Grievance mechanisms are one of the most widespread types of social accountability mechanism in the social protection sector, yet there is surprisingly little available evidence of impact. Despite the extensive evaluation of social protection programme impacts, GRMs have received limited attention within these evaluations. Monitoring data suggests that some of these mechanisms resolve many tens of thousands of individual complaints every year (see Mott MacDonald, 2014, on Pakistan; Ringold et al, 2012, on Colombia; and World Bank, 2014, on the Philippines), and this would suggest substantial service delivery benefits for the citizens concerned.

On the other hand, inconsistencies in the definition of 'complaint' or 'grievance' and in terms of what it means for these to be 'resolved' create challenges for the interpretation of this data. We earlier defined 'complaint' as an expression of dissatisfaction with a service; 'appeal' as an expression of dissatisfaction with a decision to provide/not provide a service, coupled with a demand for a changed outcome; and 'grievance' as covering both. However, there exist GRMs in which information requests or updates are counted in the complaints data (Sharp et al, 2016; Fox, 2007; Mott MacDonald, 2014); or in which a complaint is considered resolved simply because it has been referred to the department responsible for taking action (World Bank, 2004), or because an informal complainant has been provided with information on how to raise a formal complaint (Fox, 2007).

Given the limitations of the quantitative data, it is important to note that qualitative reviews tend to identify substantial limitations in the impacts of GRMs, both because citizens face important constraints in raising their concerns and due to limitations in state response to those concerns that are raised (Barca et al., 2012; OPM, 2015; Barrett, forthcoming; Sabates-Wheeler et al., forthcoming; Sharp et al, 2016). Greater effort has been directed to addressing constraints to citizen action, but even when these are successfully overcome, weaknesses in *state response* often obstruct the pathway through which GRMs are expected to lead to improvements in service delivery (Barca et al., 2012; OPM, 2015; Barrett, forthcoming; Sabates-Wheeler et al., forthcoming).

The evidence on service delivery impacts of ***collective social accountability mechanisms*** is somewhat promising, although the evidence base is very small. Regarding social audits in Andhra Pradesh in India, Singh and Vutukuru (2010) found statistically significant increases in the number of days of public works generated; and Aiyar (2010), found substantial improvements in the provision of work site facilities required by law, following the audits. On the other hand, there were no improvements regarding payment delays (Singh and Vutukuru, 2010).

In our Ethiopia case study we found that the community scorecard pilot project (ESAP) seemed to have positive effects in terms of aligning local service delivery with established procedures and standards and in curbing abuses by local officials. The project contributed to improved implementation of gendered public works provisions; reduced illegitimate demands for additional unpaid work from beneficiaries; and in a few cases improved the payment experience. This was achieved largely through raising the awareness of all stakeholders of PSNP standards and by providing unique local interfaces for engagement between citizens and service providers. Furthermore, as part of core PSNP programme operations, there is an opportunity at the end of the community-based targeting exercise for citizens to raise complaints about exclusion and for these to be reviewed. This resulted in changes in beneficiary lists in all case study kebeles. In Nepal, payment delays occurring at local level appeared to have reduced, possibly as a result of social accountability initiatives. In South Africa, issues of poor accessibility of offices and high transport costs previously raised by citizens have been addressed through the government citizen outreach programme.

On the other hand, there are limitations in the scope of the impacts recorded, even with apparently successful collective social accountability mechanisms.

- **Whilst social audits have been rather effective in detecting corrupt practice, they have not deterred it**: there has been no overall reduction in corrupt practices as a result of the audits (Afridi and Iversen, 2014). In general, social accountability mechanisms seem relatively more effective at addressing issues that are **highly salient** to poor citizens than other important issues that are less visible and have less direct effect on them. The most rigorously evaluated example comes from Andhra

Pradesh, in India. Aiyar and Mehta (2013) find that the majority of respondents in social audits highlight wage-related issues, even though most irregularities actually relate to materials. As a result of the social audits, there has been a shift within public works from labour-related to materials-related irregularities that are more likely to involve senior officials, but no overall reduction in irregularities over time (Afridi and Iversen, 2014).

• Furthermore, we found most of the positive impacts of social accountability interventions in our case study countries to be **locally-bounded**. For example, in Ethiopia, we find that the issues resolved through the community scorecard process were limited to those firmly within local control, without budgetary implications and that did not compete with other local imperatives; whilst other important citizen concerns about service delivery remained unaddressed. In Nepal, payments are still late, due to late transfer of funds from the central to local level, which in turn is caused by lack of capacity locally to submit updated beneficiary lists to the central level in time. Solving this issue requires hiring more frontline officials, something that can only be resolved through action at the national level, again underlying the limitations of locally bounded initiatives. In both Nepal and Ethiopia, when cases of corruption by local officials are identified, sanctions seem often to consist of them simply being moved to another less desirable location, meaning that citizens living in these 'undesirable' locations risk having their geographic disadvantage in access to services compounded by the presence of under-performing staff.

4.1.2 Impacts on State-Society Relations

There are various mechanisms through which social accountability mechanisms might be expected to strengthen state-society relationships. For example, they might reinforce the *social contract* between state and citizens and build citizenship, since all accountability approaches require some identification of who is accountable to whom and for what. They might build the *legitimacy* of the state, understood as its functional legitimacy through improved service delivery, and/or its political legitimacy, by allowing the space for engagement, negotiations and consultations at various levels of government. They might also improve capacities – of citizens to make demands on the state, of the state to respond and of both to collaborate. We used this framework and consider literature and case study evidence on all these dimensions of state-society relations. However, the findings are quite diffuse, as most studies consider only certain dimensions and no meaningful comparisons across countries or between different programme design have been possible.

El Salvador's CCT programme is among the most ambitious to date with respect to efforts to build citizenship through social protection programming (Adato et al., 2016). The promotion of citizenship was not a separate component, but a key programme goal.

There were two main channels through which the programme intended to promote citizenship. The first was monthly training of beneficiaries on issues such as gender equality, participation and community organization. The second was through the establishment of community and municipal committees, which included representatives of beneficiary households and were intended to constitute a system of representation of beneficiaries, enabling them to monitor service provision, channel their requests and complaints, and interact with the institutions involved in programme delivery. An evaluation carried out in 2009/10 found that the training worked well in terms of empowering beneficiaries, especially women; and the municipal committees, which were close to the level at which key decision were made, also made an important contribution, debating substantive programming issues (Adato et al, 2016). The community committees worked less well on the whole: the fact that programme design was highly centralised meant that the type of beneficiary participation promoted was, in practice, largely limited to operational issues (helping at paydays, assisting beneficiaries to write letters to explain why they could not meet conditions etc.), rather than involvement in programme decision-making, as had been initially envisaged (Adato et al, 2016). Furthermore, in some communities, facilitators were dubious about the added value of these committees, either because existing organisation was strong, or because it was weak due to underlying insurmountable constraints; and, given the existing time constraints of both themselves and beneficiaries, did not prioritise work to strengthen them (Adato et al, 2016).

In Nepal, our case study research suggests that citizens with more information and more direct contact with the local officials responsible for running social protection programmes tended to have more trust in those officials. The increased opportunities for interaction and improved access to information offered by the social accountability initiatives, seem to have improved the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of citizens. In South Africa, we observed that when citizens knew social grants were coming from the state, they considered this an indication of government caring about them, though many beneficiaries did not know that these grants were coming from the government, partly because payments are outsourced to a private provider. In Andhra Pradesh in India, 90 per cent of labourers reported increased comfort in approaching local officials following the social audit; and, when asked why, 60 per cent said it was because increased awareness of the legal underpinnings of the programme had made them more confident. People's perceptions of their capacity to influence officials also changed subsequent to the audits. Before the audits, only 43 per cent felt that they could influence these officials; six months after the audit, this had increased to 90 per cent (Aiyar and Samji, 2009, p. 22).

Evidence from Ethiopia suggests substantial contextual variation in impacts on state-citizen relations, even within a country. In both our case study woredas, citizens who participated in the ESAP community score card process cited positive impacts on state-

citizen relations, though this played out differently in the two woredas. In one, that has a recent history of citizen protests resulting in violent clashes with the state, improvements were articulated almost entirely in terms of citizen capacity – citizens knowing their rights and being more confident and assertive in making demands on the state. A few respondents identified positive changes in the attitude of service providers, but there was also mention of resistance of providers to the more active citizenry, and the key positive change alluded to was that citizens remained assertive even in the face of negative response.

> *'There may be consideration and blame from some officials, as if we are initiating the community to ask, but whatever the case may be, we will never stop'* (SAC Committee member[11] Kuyu woreda).

In the other woreda, with no such history of clashes with the state, citizens and local officials also described increased confidence of citizens, but here improvements were more likely to be described in terms of positive changes in the behaviour of state service providers towards citizens (increased legitimacy of the state).

> *'At the very beginning, the woreda and kebele office did not give recognition to ESAP. But now they consult the SAC [Social Accountability Committee] for every activity in the PSNP. The office invites SAC members when they talk about the budget of the kebele. The woreda office recognises the SAC and shares everything about the safety net programme'* (PW beneficiary, Shebadino woreda).

4.2 Outcomes of Social Accountability Mechanisms

In this section, in order to better understand the pathways through which impacts of social accountability initiatives in social protection do (or do not) come about, we unpack these to look at the five constituent elements of social accountability: **information, civic mobilisation, interface, citizen action** and **state action**.

4.2.1 Information

This section looks at the information dimension of social accountability, reviewing the aspects highlighted in our conceptual framework as particularly important in supporting social accountability in the social protection sector:

- That citizens are made aware of their eligibility (or ineligibility) for the programme;
- That those who are eligible are aware of their entitlements;
- That citizens know how they can raise a concern, if they have one;
- That all this information is accessible and appropriate to all citizens, including both women and men, people with disabilities, older people and marginalised groups; and
- That citizens perceive social protection as a right.

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[11] See section 1.2.2 for a brief explanation of the SAC committee membership and purpose.

Key Findings: Information

Information campaigns often have positive effects on citizen knowledge about social protection programmes. (Aiyar and Samji, 2009; Smith and Watson, 2015; Berhane et al., 2015). Strength of the evidence: medium.

But there is wide variation between citizens in terms of programme knowledge, with marginalised citizens being distinctly less well-informed, including vulnerable women in Pakistan (Gazdar and Zuberi, 2014) and people with disabilities in India (World Bank, 2007a). Our case studies in Ethiopia, South Africa and Nepal all suggest wide variations in programme knowledge: older people, people with disabilities, and people from marginalised castes or ethnic/language groups were markedly less well informed than others. Strength of the evidence: medium.

There may be risks associated with the high reliance of marginalised groups on 'infomediaries'. Our case studies suggest that in both Ethiopia and Nepal marginalised people rely more heavily than others on intermediaries to access information. But knowledge does not always diffuse unproblematically within communities or even households. Two studies in India indicate that knowledge diffusion works markedly less well for disadvantaged groups (Alik-Lagrange and Ravallion, 2016) and for women (Dutta et al., 2014) Strength of the evidence: limited (two studies, single context)

Programme knowledge does not automatically translate into a sense on the part of beneficiaries that they have a right to social protection benefits. This sense of entitlement seems to be strongly influenced by the governance, cultural and programmatic context (Jones et al., 2013; Sabates-Wheeler et al., forthcoming, and our case studies). In South Africa, with a strong culture of rights, most of our case study respondents perceived their social protection transfers as entitlements, but this was not the case in either Nepal or Ethiopia. Furthermore, the sense of entitlement is tied up with cultural perceptions of who deserves support and why (Ethiopia and South Africa case studies). On the other hand, there is some suggestion that rights training may help build a sense of a right to social protection (Nepal and Ethiopia case studies). Strength of the evidence: medium.

Outcomes of Information Campaigns

Information campaigns have been an extremely common element of social accountability within the social protection sector. These have included public communication activities (such as radio and television broadcasts), targeted information awareness raising campaigns, as well as efforts to increase transparency in programme administration. There is evidence of positive outcomes on citizen knowledge. The social

audits in India have been effective as mechanisms for increasing information, even though this has not been their main purpose. A panel survey of the social audits of the MGNREGS carried out in Andhra Pradesh state in India found, after just the first round of social audits, a 57 percentage point increase in those who knew about the specific entitlement to 100 days' work (Aiyar and Samji, 2009). A qualitative evaluation of Save the Children's Child Sensitive Social Protection Programme (CSSP) in Dungapur, India found that almost all the respondents had heard about the state caregiver social protection scheme for the first time through CSSP awareness-raising activities (Smith and Watson, 2015). And an evaluation of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia, found that active information dissemination meant that the majority of households that had been 'graduated' off (exited from) the programme knew the official criteria for graduation (Berhane et al., 2015) (though this did not mean that these criteria had been respected).

In programmes for which citizens need to proactively apply, information campaigns have sometimes been associated with substantial increases in programme access and coverage (though it is impossible from the available evidence to determine causality or quantify the impact of the information campaigns). For example, the CSSP cited above was assessed to have contributed, through information provision and support with the application process, to the inclusion of 36,000 new beneficiaries in relevant programmes in Bangladesh (Smith and Watson, 2015). Registration rates in the CCT Familias en Acción programme in Colombia are highly sensitive to how proactive the local government is in providing information and facilitating the registration process (World Bank, 2013). And the Bolsa Familia in Brazil from its outset in December 2003, in the context of a massive information campaign, succeeded in adding to the programme 2.7 million new households by June 2006 (Lindert et al., 2007).

Variations across programmes in knowledge about how to raise a concern are associated with provider commitment to establishing such mechanisms and informing citizens about them. For example, in their review of four programmes in Indonesia, Barca et al. (2012) found that almost no beneficiaries were aware of the formal grievance mechanisms, which the authors link to weak commitment at the national level to establishing such mechanisms, and very limited awareness-raising. In Zimbabwe, on the other hand, where in scripted pre-disbursement speeches on each pay-day beneficiaries are informed about and encouraged to use the complaints desk, the majority of surveyed beneficiaries were aware of it (Sabates-Wheeler et al., forthcoming).

Accessibility of Information to all Citizens

The distribution of information is often very uneven, with marginalised citizens being distinctly less well informed than others. The dimensions of marginalisation vary between context and include older age, disability, minority language status, gender and education.

Amongst the respondents in our Ethiopia case study, we found wide disparities in knowledge about the programme, with older citizens, people with disabilities and direct support beneficiaries (households without labour capacity) being markedly less well informed about the programme than others. When asked about the level of transfer she received, one older female direct support beneficiary with a disability replied, *'I receive what they give me'*; and this was typical of responses we received to this question from direct support beneficiaries. In South Africa, due partly to a language barrier, Somali refugees lack access to the information about social protection programmes that reaches other eligible citizens.

In Nepal, we identified multiple dimensions of exclusion from information. Dalits (low caste people) and indigenous people tend to have less information about the programmes and processes than high-caste Hindus, and in the case of indigenous people this is again partly due to a language barrier. Older people, those without literacy skills, and people with disabilities are also less well-informed. These dimensions of exclusion compound each other, because Dalits and indigenous people who are older or have disabilities are least likely of all to be literate or (in the case of indigenous groups) to speak the dominant language.

Surveys in rural Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu in India have found that 94 per cent of households including a person with a disability are unaware that there is a minimum budgetary quota for people with disabilities in public works schemes (World Bank 2007a, p. 111).

A point of interest is that in both Ethiopia and Nepal the marginalised groups who are least well informed also seem more reliant than others on intermediaries to access information.

> *'We got the information from the community. It was posted on the notice board at kebele level. Those who can read the notice disseminated the information for the whole community'* (PWD direct support beneficiary of PSNP, Ethiopia).

Whilst such 'infomediaries' often serve a useful purpose, processes of information diffusion within a community merit close examination and cannot be assumed to be unproblematic. For example, in our Ethiopia case study, whilst in theory those who participated in the ESAP rights-based training were supposed to share their new knowledge with other community members, we found no evidence of such spill-over effects amongst our respondents.

More robust evidence on this issue comes from Bihar in India. There, a randomised controlled trial was conducted around a film that aimed to promote knowledge of the MGNREGS. The film increased programme knowledge and there were also strong spill-over effects through knowledge sharing to people who did not see the movie themselves, accounting for about one-third of the average impact of the knowledge impacts. But, crucially, this **knowledge diffusion process was very much weaker for disadvantaged groups** – defined in terms of caste, landholding, literacy, or

consumption poverty – than for others. There was even some indication of negative spill-over effects for illiterate and landless households, suggesting the strategic spread of *misinformation* to these groups (Alik-Lagrange and Ravallion, 2016). Another study, also in Bihar, found that programme knowledge was lower for women than for men and that sharing of information between men and women, even within the household, appeared to be weak (Dutta et al., 2014). These two studies suggest the need for caution in assuming that knowledge will indirectly reach women or marginalised groups via intermediaries.

Sense of Entitlement to Social Protection

Another finding is that the relationship between programme knowledge and sense of entitlement to social protection benefits is quite weak and heavily mediated by other factors. Governance, cultural and programmatic contexts appear to strongly influence the extent to which programme knowledge translates into a sense of entitlement. For example, according to Jones et al. (2013), despite far higher levels of detailed programme knowledge among beneficiaries in Uganda and Kenya than in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt), beneficiaries in the oPt are more likely to view the transfer as an entitlement, perhaps because there is a strong rights-based culture supported by active civil society engagement. In the African countries surveyed, beneficiaries typically see the transfers as a gift – from political leaders, or even from God.

Similarly, in our cases studies, we found that many of the beneficiaries of old age grants we spoke to in South Africa, a country with a strong rights-based legal framework, perceived the grants as their right,

> *Grant money is our right. It was deducted for a long time from our parents.*
> (Mbekweni, FGD)

In Nepal and Ethiopia, on the other hand, despite good programme knowledge, people did not tend to connect their benefits with concepts such as 'rights' or 'entitlements': the main terms used in Nepal to describe the benefits were that the government took 'pity' on poor people, that the government was 'generous', or that the benefits were provided as a sign of respect. In Ethiopia, beneficiaries of unconditional transfers (direct support) were particularly unlikely to see PSNP transfers as an entitlement or to think they had a right to complain if the transfers stop,

> *It is gift given to me from God…. They have the right to pay me or hold it back whenever they want* (male PWD DS beneficiary, Fura, Shebadino).

Public works beneficiaries appeared to concur with the **perception of a lesser entitlement of direct support beneficiaries to programme transfers, as compared to those on public works**; and, to the extent that public works beneficiaries felt that they themselves had a right to transfers, they grounded this in the fact that they had worked for their wages, rather than on any sense of obligation of the state to provide social protection. Indeed, **the poverty focus of the programme appeared to actually**

diminish the sense of entitlement. Asked whether she felt she had a right to ask for the transfer if it was refused, one public works respondent replied,

> *If it is the wage for work I did for an individual, I have a right to ask. But this is a government support for the poor…Due to this I see the transfer as a gift…I thank them very much.* (PW beneficiary, Birriti, Kuyu).

Even in South Africa **perceptions of the entitlements are conditioned by social norms around who is deserving of assistance**. Whilst, as noted above, in this context, access to the old age grant is seen as a right, we found caregivers in receipt of child grants to be less likely to perceive these as an entitlement, possibly due to prevalent narratives (unsupported by the evidence) that child grant recipients are lazy and have children in order to access the grants.

On the positive side, evidence from our Ethiopia and Nepal case studies suggest that, **even in less propitious contexts, training on rights might help build an understanding of entitlements to social protection.**

> *Before ESAP, people feared to ask about their rights. Rather people tried to raise their issues through someone else or through a middle-man. However, as people discussed so many things in ESAP people started to ask about their rights frankly. So, people are requesting the service providers frankly the service they need.* (FGD with FHH PW participants, Wuye Gose, Kuyu, Ethiopia)

> *Before no women used to go to the VDC office but these days it's not the same situation. Because of the awareness and empowerment programmes of different social organisations, women became aware of their rights, the laws, and where to go when they have problems, and that they should also participate in decision-making.* (Ward Citizen Forum Coordinator, Deupur VDC, Nepal).

4.2.2 Civic Mobilisation

This section considers what the key stumbling blocks are to citizens raising concerns, and whether and how civic mobilisation helps overcome some of the specific challenges that arise in the social protection sector. In strengthening civic mobilisation for social protection programmes, there is a need to:

- Overcome challenges related to the individualised nature of social protection programming, (people may not have an incentive to come together around what are usually individual grievances);

- Avoid co-option of community committees by state actors;

- Avoid relying on overburdened and under-resourced community volunteers; and

- Overcome disconnects and power imbalances between local and higher levels of the state.

Key Findings: Civic Mobilisation

Committees formally established under social protection programmes are often fairly weak in terms of mobilising collective engagement with providers around problems faced with social protection programmes. They often serve as intermediaries between citizens and GRMs, but rarely go beyond this. They sometimes end up serving a primarily top-down function (Fox, 2007; and our Nepal case study), or even as powerful local gatekeepers (Jones et al., 2013). *Strength of the evidence: medium.*

Community-based and local civil society organisations seem rarely to step 'organically' into a civic mobilisation role around social protection. We found no examples in our case studies of existing local groups or associations stepping into this role; and evidence from the social audits in India suggests that the anticipated 'organic' participation of civil society has rarely materialised. Most of the examples we find of active civic mobilisation in relation to social accountability in social protection are highly formalised: either state-led or donor-funded. *Strength of the evidence: limited (these community-level processes are not well-documented).*

Civic mobilisation initiatives in the social protection sector rarely operate strategically, in a way that links local level mobilisation with regional and national advocacy. Initiatives are most often either locally bounded (as, for example, in Kenya, Ethiopia, Bangladesh and Nepal), or involve higher level advocacy, as in Brazil. Rarely do they do both. HelpAge's campaigning around social pensions stands out as an example of an integrated social accountability initiative that combines local level mobilisation with regional and national advocacy (Leutelt, 2012). *Strength of the evidence: medium.*

The exclusion of marginalised groups with regard to access to information extends to civic mobilisation. In our Ethiopia case study, only a minority of beneficiaries benefited directly from civic mobilisation efforts and there was no evidence of spillover effects on the awareness of the most marginalised. *Strength of the evidence: limited (few studies).*

Community Committees

In several countries we found examples of community committees that promote engagement between citizens and the state, and are valued by marginalised citizens, including in Zimbabwe, Pakistan and Nepal. However, **these structures tend to play an information or intermediation role (channelling information down or individual concerns and complaints up) rather than a civic mobilisation role** as such. We cover the roles of these committees as infomediaries or intermediaries in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.3 respectively.

Here we look specifically at the extent to which they mobilise citizens to collective action, but we find few examples. In Nepal, the effectiveness of women's groups established as part of the CSSP varies. Two groups in our research area had lobbied actively and successfully to receive some of the funds that are earmarked in the district budget for vulnerable groups. However, most groups seemed limited to an information dissemination role and some not to be functioning at all; it was not clear what factors explained these variations. In Zimbabwe, there is some evidence that the Child Protection Committees (CPCs), in addition to raising individual complaints, do sometimes report collective problems; for example, CPCs raised collective concerns about pay points being too distant. However, such collective problems often go unreported by committees, largely because there is no specific forum for the CPCs to raise such issues with programme staff (Sabates-Wheeler et al., forthcoming).

One limiting factor frequently cited in reviews of the roles played by beneficiary and community committees is **inadequate resourcing**. Members, who are often volunteers and poor themselves, may find it difficult to leave their own economic activities to dedicate substantial time to working voluntarily for others, and their activities can be constrained by lack of funds to cover running costs, for example, airtime to call programme staff (Sabates-Wheeler, forthcoming; OPM, 2015). In relation to the rights committees of the HSNP, OPM (2015) conclude that, *'The substantive set of responsibilities placed on rights committee members (e.g. mobilisation, complaints handling, payment oversight) is not consistent with a voluntary position.'* (OPM, 2015, p.2).

Perhaps even more importantly, in some contexts, **these committees do not perceive themselves as existing to represent citizens**, but rather as serving a top-down function. Fox (2007) finds that in Mexico, 86 per cent of locally elected volunteers do not consider themselves to be representatives of the beneficiaries and concludes that the variations on this system established under both the Oportunidades and its successor Progresa programme '*served to represent the programme to the participants rather than vice versa'* (Fox, 2007, p. 276). And Jones et al. (2013) find that the 'Permanantes' community volunteers in Mozambique serve as powerful local gatekeepers, restricting people's access to independent information about social protection programmes and limiting their ability to raise grievances. We also found this to be a challenge with Ward Citizen Forums in the Nepal case study, with these sometimes functioning more as a mechanism for disseminating information from decision-makers to citizens, than as a tool for citizen empowerment and social accountability.

Informal Community Organisations

We looked for, but **did not find in any of our case study countries, examples of existing community-based organisations stepping into a civic mobilisation role**. In both our South Africa and Ethiopia case studies, even though there are active local associations that bring together social protection beneficiaries (luncheon clubs and street committees in South Africa and burial associations in Ethiopia), respondents were

clear that social protection issues are not discussed in these or any similar fora. In both countries, reasons for this included a segmentation of areas, *'each issue has its own proper place to be raised'* (SSI female PW beneficiary, Birriti, Kuyu, Ethiopia case study). Perhaps this lack of engagement in a potentially contentious area is unsurprising in Ethiopia where civil society space for policy engagement is heavily constrained. In South Africa it appeared to be related to hesitancy of beneficiaries to discuss with community members issues that they felt to be personal.

It is interesting here to consider the distinction between 'induced participation' – extrinsically promoted by powerful actors and 'organic participation' driven by intrinsically motivated local actors (Mansuri and Rao, 2013). **Most of the examples we see of civil society participation in social accountability appear to be of the 'induced' variety.** For example, in India, scale-up of social audits has been most successful in Andhra Pradesh, where it has relied largely on a state-led top-down process. Citizens participate actively and this happens on the initiative of the state (Aiyar and Mehta 2013). The limited extent of organic participation of civil society in implementation of the audits is somewhat surprising because MGNREGS originally grew out of a successful 'organic' civil society movement, spearheaded by the civil society organisation MKSS. The Act was largely designed to provide the tools and incentives for this kind of organic participation to take place within implementation of the MGNREGS. However, the model has largely failed to scale up in contexts where the state did not take an active lead in promoting it. In general, it seems that entrenched corruption and elite capture, including often of civil society organisations, has posed too high a barrier to civic mobilisation for the social audits to overcome. Especially in the poor northern Indian states, such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, elites maintain control over government institutions through 'concealment of information, discriminatory patronage, and secrecy', despite the Right to Information Act and other rights-based legislation (Dutta, 2015: 12).

Externally-Supported Mobilisation

Apart from social audits in Andhra Pradesh, other country examples we have of successful induced civic mobilisation include: Kenya, where HelpAge International was contracted to support and build the capacity of community-level Rights Committees within the Hunger Safety Net Programme (OPM, 2015); and Ethiopia, where a network of NGOs funded by the World Bank and other donors facilitates the use by communities and local officials of collective social accountability tools as part of the ESAP, and provides training on social accountability and rights.

Perhaps surprisingly, given the level of formalisation of much of the civic mobilisation support around social accountability and the national presence of many of the CSOs involved, it seems that **CSOs tend to play important roles in *either* community mobilisation or in advocacy at higher levels, but rarely link the two**. For example, in both the Kenya and Ethiopia examples outlined above, as well as in Nepal, civic mobilisation is largely limited to the community and local levels. In Nepal, the CSSP

has tried to establish a national social protection network, but it has not been very successful and has not followed up on the issues identified in the community level work. In Bolsa Familia, in Brazil, on the other hand, civil society organisations and investigative journalists have taken advantage of top-down controls and transparency initiatives to engage directly with higher level officials to successfully advocate for improvements, but without the active engagement of beneficiaries themselves (Sugiyama, 2016). Similarly, in South Africa, civil society tends to focus on advocacy at the national level and they have been able to effect some changes through the court system. In addition to resolving the issue of deductions mentioned above, civil society has successfully advocated for the upper age limit for child benefits to be increased to eighteen years and for reductions in the documentation requirements. However, these organisations do not tend to have a strong presence at the local level and this advocacy has not been linked to grassroots mobilisation.

The only example we found of a vertically integrated social accountability approach operating at multiple levels is that of HelpAge International, which has run a successful global advocacy campaign on the provision of social pensions, combining global and national advocacy with bottom-up campaigning by Older People's Associations (OPAs). Through its network of national and local affiliates, HelpAge helps set up and strengthen OPAs, supports them with information on current entitlements and then enables these associations themselves to set the agenda for advocacy in their countries (Leutelt, 2012). Leutelt attributes the success of HelpAge's advocacy at country level to: being perceived by partner governments as a valuable hub of knowledge and ideas; its twin-track approach, successfully combining references to globally made commitments (top-down) with local demand and protests (bottom-up); and its long-term strategic approach, whereby it builds informal relationships and waits for windows of opportunity to emerge (Leutelt, 2012).

Marginalised groups

Whilst the cases above provide some positive examples of citizen mobilisation, when we look at the most marginalised citizens we find a less encouraging picture. For example, in Nepal the aim of the Ward Citizen Forums is to bring communities together, so that collectively they can exert more influence on local officials to be responsive to citizens. However, the unequal power relations between social groups means that the Ward Citizen Forums tend to be dominated by high-caste Hindus.

In Ethiopia, only a small number of community representatives participate in ESAP civic mobilisation activities. ESAP has well established procedures for promoting representation of different social groups in this process, including people with disabilities, and also encourages the participants to share their learning with others. On the other hand, participants are chosen by communities on the basis of their capacity to represent them, and so are unlikely to include the most marginalised; and, although ESAP participants told us they shared their learning with others, we did not find any awareness of the process or recollection of such knowledge transfer among

any of our respondents who had not directly participated. The extent to which civic mobilisation really reaches the most marginalised is, therefore, questionable, underlining the challenges faced in trying to overcome systemic social exclusion. The limited participation of people with disabilities in the process was confirmed by participants:

> *No, people with disabilities did not generally come and they did not speak unless someone who knows them raised their concerns. There was one woman with a disability who came to the meeting and just sat down as if she came for some ceremony. She did not speak. She did not speak about the problems she faces* (female PW beneficiary, Wuyu Gose, Kuyu).

Thus, it cannot be assumed that learning by community representatives will necessarily trickle down to the most marginalised.

4.2.3 Interface

For citizens to raise their concerns, they need not only information about their entitlements, but also an accessible 'interface' where they can engage with the state providers. These interfaces might include: organised meetings where the community comes together for discussions with providers; one-to-one meetings where citizens can raise complaints face-to-face; or a hotline or messaging service enabling citizens to lodge concerns or complaints at a distance and sometimes anonymously; as well as informal meetings between citizens and providers that happen in the normal day-to-day running of the programme. This section considers the interfaces that exist to enable engagement and we consider the issues highlighted in our conceptual framework:

- Whether the interfaces are accessible and appropriate to all the citizens they are supposed to serve, including marginalised people, in terms of physical access, affordability of access, technology, language, cultural appropriateness etc.; and whether they mitigate elite capture.

- Whether the most appropriate interfaces have been selected for the various different social protection functions and designs.

- Whether interfaces are appropriately multi-layered (local, sub-national and national levels), such that they engage those state officials having decision making power over the issues of key concern to citizens.

Key Findings: Interface

In low-income countries, citizens who are vulnerable and living in poverty tend to prefer face-to-face and informal interfaces over ones that depend on written communications or access to technology. There is evidence to this effect from Indonesia (Barca et al., 2012 and Ranganathan, 2008), Pakistan (Mott MacDonald, 2014), Zimbabwe (Sabates-Wheeler et al., forthcoming), India (Ranganathan, 2008), and Kenya (OPM, 2015). *Strength of the evidence: medium*.

Intermediaries, who are generally educated and have higher status, often play key roles in channelling to the state the concerns of marginalised citizens, but there may be risks in over-reliance on intermediation. Intermediaries, including traditional, community and religious leaders, politicians and teachers, can play useful roles (OPM, 2015; Gazdar and Zuberi, 2014; our case studies). On the other hand, issues of power relations and social exclusion still play out: marginalised citizens may have lower access to these intermediaries than others (Gazdar and Zuberi, 2014; Sharp et al., 2016; and Nepal case study); and the extent to which the interests of relatively powerful intermediaries and marginalised citizens align or diverge in relation to social protection programming needs to be taken into account (Ethiopia case study). *Strength of the evidence: medium.*

The utility of interfaces between citizens and local state officials can be constrained by the lack of authority of the latter to resolve their issues, especially where local officials feel that their voices are not heard within the state hierarchy, and where there are no equivalent interfaces between citizens and state at regional/national levels (Fox, 2016; Sabates-Wheeler et al., forthcoming; Jones et al., 2013). *Strength of the evidence: medium.*

<u>Preferred Interfaces</u>

A key theme in the literature is that **poor and vulnerable citizens tend to prefer face-to-face and informal interfaces over more formal ones that depend on written communications or access to technology**. Evidence from Barca et al. (2012) indicates that social protection beneficiaries in Indonesia have a strong preference for face-to-face discussions over other channels (such as complaints boxes, complaints forms and SMS system or helpline). Similarly, in Pakistan by far the most frequently used of the available grievance channels are visits to programme offices, *'because this offers the chance of a face-to-face interaction and suits the profile of the beneficiary'* (Mott MacDonald, 2014 p. viii). The findings from Zimbabwe are similar: Sabates-Wheeler et al. (forthcoming) found a strong preference for existing mechanisms that involve face-to-face interactions with local programme staff and community committees, over all other types of interface. This was partly because citizens identified these as the people with the power to address their concerns – they saw little point in raising their issues with a third party. Surprisingly,

this preference persisted even among those with unresolved complaints that they had previously raised in this way.

On the other hand, face-to-face interfaces might not work so well for certain types of concern. For example, in Zimbabwe, public face-to-face interfaces were not seen by respondents as appropriate for raising sensitive complaints (about such things as inclusion error, or suspicions of fraud or corruption). A similar issue was noted in Nigeria: community complaints resolution mechanisms often worked well – except in regard to sensitive complaints (Sharp et al., 2016). This suggests that it will often make sense to establish a range of interfaces, including, but not limited to, face-to-face ones (Barca et al, 2012).

There are various types of face-to-face interface. They can depend on citizen initiative or be actively facilitated; and be individual or collective. Advantages and disadvantages of these variants depend on the context and the issues being addressed. In South Africa, we found that mechanisms that pro-actively seek feedback, such as citizen report cards, are more likely to be effective than mechanisms that rely on marginalized citizens taking the initiative, because of a marked and widespread reluctance amongst beneficiaries there to raise issues proactively with Government officials. In Ethiopia the structured collective interface created through the ESAP community scorecards process added value, as they enabled some citizens to raise sensitive concerns that they had not felt comfortable raising previously in other face-to-face interactions.

Technology-based Interfaces

The South African Government has an impressive and streamlined grievance system that can be accessed by phone. However, very few of our respondents even knew about it and those few who did (generally younger people) reported access challenges,

> *We are aware of the SASSA toll free number but it is not free for cell phone users. There are no phones in the area. The Councillor allows people who come to him to seek assistance to use his office telephone but when we try it, it is not usually answered* (FGD, Samora).

In Zimbabwe, older beneficiaries listed poor eyesight or illiteracy as constraints to the use of mobile phones for raising concerns (Sabates-Wheeler et al., forthcoming). In Indonesia, beneficiaries were concerned that they did not know who would be at the other end of a phone line; and the poorest households do not, in any case, have access to a phone (Barca et al, 2012). Sharp et al. (2016), looking at the Child Grant Programme in Nigeria, found that several issues limit the utility of the telephone-based interface of the grievance mechanism that has recently been established there: the absence of full-time staff to operate the hotline meant that the phone was not always answered; calls were not free; and the use of phones in the target communities was limited by patchy network coverage, lack of electricity for charging phones, and general lack of familiarity. In Nepal, where the programme has no grievance mechanism, local officials related how they sometimes receive calls about late payments. However, it is not clear how many use this opportunity, as no records are kept; and again, from our interviews with beneficiaries, it

is clear that most either lack a phone, do not have the numbers of the officials, or would not dare to call officials directly.

Despite these challenges, there are circumstances in which mobile phone interfaces are reportedly preferred by some groups. In Zimbabwe, for example, there is some enthusiasm among members of the community committees, who tend to be more educated than beneficiaries, for mobile phone or letter-based systems, particularly to raise sensitive concerns (Sabates-Wheeler et al, forthcoming).

<u>Intermediaries</u>

It might be argued that marginalised citizens do not need to engage directly with technology, as they can rely on **intermediaries to do this on their behalf. Indeed, in many countries, intermediaries support marginalised citizens by channelling their concerns to service providers**. For example, in the Kenya HSNP, Rights Committees play an important role in channelling complaints to the office (OPM, 2015); and Gazdar and Zuberi (2014) find that the more active of the BISP Beneficiary Committees provide information about the complaints and grievance process to others. In Mitchell's Plain, South Africa, all members of our FGD agreed that, *'The councillors, community leaders and church leaders can effectively assist with interacting with SASSA.'* In Nepal, key intermediaries include local political party leaders, leaders of women's groups, Ward Citizen Forum Coordinators, Government Social Mobilisers, and other people who are respected in the communities, such as teachers or chairs of School Management Committees. Due to lack of confidence, people often seek to be accompanied by an intermediary even for very simple issues, such as to register births. In our Ethiopia case study, we found that, for most citizens, direct engagement with service providers occurs only at the lowest (kebele) level, whereas many of the issues raised by citizens require action at woreda level. Some citizens, who are aware of this and who are able to travel, visit the woreda office, but many others are unable to make this journey and are reliant on representatives to interface with woreda officials on their behalf.

However, **there are risks in a heavy reliance on intermediaries to raise the concerns of marginalised citizens**. Firstly, there is some evidence that marginalised citizens have lower access than others to intermediaries, despite their often heavier reliance. For example, in our Nepal case study we found that, whilst political leaders are important intermediaries, Dalits and people from indigenous groups often lack representation with these leaders.

> *'Even if we are in the political party, we do not hold good positions. We do not have any influential leaders from the Danuwar community in any political parties. We are ordinary party members, but we cannot influence or make any decisions'* (Indigenous community member, Kavrepalanchowk).

In Pakistan, women are highly dependent on the intermediation of men to raise their concerns about social protection programmes, due to the gendered roles in the socio-cultural context, but disadvantaged women have lower access than others to informal male intermediaries (Gazdar and Zuberi, 2014). In Nigeria, women are similarly

dependent on male intermediaries, but here it is because men are more likely to have the literary skills required to take on the roles of programme volunteers who record complaints (Sharp et al., 2016); and the predominance of male volunteers within the programme is found to constrain women from raising complaints (Sharp et al., 2016).

Secondly, the risks of reliance on intermediaries may be exacerbated by programme design features that place marginalised households and their potential intermediaries in competition with each other for access to limited programme resources. For example, in the Ethiopia PSNP, in the context of quotas widely seen by our respondents as inadequate to cover all needy households, citizens are effectively in a zero-sum game: inclusion of one household would mean no access, or reduced transfer levels for another. Notably, some of the ESAP direct participants with whom we spoke, whose training made them potentially well placed to serve as intermediaries for the most marginalised, had themselves raised appeals and complaints regarding the inclusion in PSNP of their own household.

Local versus multi-level interfaces

Where interfaces are limited to the local level, social accountability outcomes may be constrained by a lack of authority or incentives of frontline staff to either respond directly to identified issues or to influence their superiors to do so. **If decision-making power over key programme design and operational issues resides at higher levels within the state, a series of interfaces will be required for the furtherance of social accountability: either between citizens and the state at multiple levels**, and/or **within the state itself between local service providers and decision-makers at sub-national and national levels**. Whilst this challenge is widely noted in the literature, we found few references to attempts to address it.

Fox (2007) compares two social accountability approaches in Mexico: one employing an individualised (complaints) mechanism around an individualised cash transfer programme (Oportunidades); and the other a collective committee-based approach around a community programme (the Rural Food Supply Programme). He concludes that the Oportunidades complaints mechanism, by confining the interface to an individual beneficiary and complaints handler, provided answerability only for individual problems and then only for easily resolvable ones. It was locally bounded and did not touch higher levels of the state where key decisions were often taken, and it did nothing to shift power relations between citizens and the state. By contrast, the existence of interfaces between citizens and state at not only local, but also regional, state and national levels (backed up by the possibility of mass protest) gave the Rural Food Supply's collective mechanism louder voice and shifted the incentive structure for local administrators, increasing the costs to them of ignoring citizen demands.

In Nepal, social accountability initiatives have tried to involve higher-level officials, but with varying degrees of success: it seems to depend on the personal interest of the officials to participate, and possibly on the status of the implementing NGO partner in the local community. In the Ethiopia ESAP2 programme, the need to involve higher level

officials has also been recognised and the attempt to address it has involved woreda and even regional and zonal staff directly in interface discussions between citizens and local officials (Nass and Girma, 2015). However, their participation is not consistent – it depends on the travel distances involved – and was quite weak in our case study woredas. In any case, there are no examples from our case studies of zonal or regional authorities taking action at their levels in response to concerns raised by citizens: ESAP is perceived very much as an initiative to exact <u>local</u> accountability and the involvement of officials from higher levels seems to be viewed as a way to better exact this, rather than a means to hold these higher officials themselves accountable.

4.2.4 Citizen Action

This section looks at citizen action: the extent to which those citizens who have concerns take action; whether this varies between different types of concern or different groups of citizens; if they act, how they do so; and if they do not, why not.

Key Findings: Citizen Action

Issues with high saliency that affect poor citizens directly are the most common types of concern raised through social accountability mechanisms. An analysis of the limited data available on types of complaint raised suggests that two of the issues most commonly raised issues are exclusion errors in targeting and problems with payments (World Bank, 2014; Mott MacDonald, 2014; Ringold et al., 2012). In the Indian social audits of the MGNREGS, wage-related issues that affect beneficiaries directly are far more frequently raised than materials-related ones (Afridi and Iversen, 2014). *Strength of the evidence: medium.*

Citizens often face substantial costs and risks in raising concerns and these can deter action. Key factors that prevent citizens raising their concerns include: feeling grateful and that they have no right to complain; a fear of reprisals; a fear of state inaction, meaning that engaging will not be worth the effort; a lack of trust in local providers; and negative feedback loops when previous issues remain unresolved (Barca et al., 2012). The fear of reprisals is widespread in Uganda, Kenya and Mozambique (Jones et al., 2013) and Ethiopia (our case study; and Cochrane and Tamiru, 2016); and we see examples of reprisals against those perceived as too vocal in India (Down to Earth, 2013; Ehmke, 2015; World Bank, n.d) and Ethiopia (PSNP Social Development Task Force, 2015; and our case study). *Strength of the evidence: medium.*

Marginalised citizens often have a lower propensity than others to take action. The greater constraints faced by marginalised citizens in relation to information, civic mobilisation and interface appear to feed through into a reduced likelihood that they will raise their concerns (Ethiopia and Nepal case studies). *Strength of the evidence: limited.*

Common Concerns Raised

We found that those concerns most often raised by citizens about social protection programming are those that are: most salient to them, that is to say, most visible and affecting individual citizens directly; and around which there is not a high degree of sensitivity nor fear of backlash.

According to the limited data we have from grievance systems globally, the most frequently reported complaints include exclusion errors (in targeting) and problems with payments: both of which have obvious direct effects on individual citizens. For example, in Colombia, 80 per cent of complaints about Familias en Accion were related to non-payment of benefits (Ringold et al., 2012); and in the Philippines' Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4P) CCT programme targeting exclusion errors constituted more than 60 per cent of complaints (World Bank, 2014). Similarly, in Ethiopia, in both our case study woredas, the issues that our respondents were most likely to have raised as concerns with kebele officials were those with direct negative impacts on them: targeting exclusion error; transfer levels lower than household entitlements; and (especially in Kuyu) forced 'graduation' (exit) from the programme. We see a similar pattern in the social audits in India. Complaints related to the provision of labour, which directly affects households, made up 87 per cent of all complaints in the social audits examined in Andhra Pradesh. This was despite the fact that most of the actual fraud in the programme happened in relation to materials, not labour (Afridi and Iversen, 2014).

On the other hand, even when issues are salient, a high level of sensitivity may impede reporting. In Zimbabwe, many local programme staff and beneficiaries feel that inclusion of better-off households in the programme is a substantial problem, and yet beneficiaries are hesitant to complain about this out of fear of backlash, in particular through witchcraft. As commented by one member of a community committee, *'In these parts, witchcraft is a reality. I do not want any harm to befall my children as a result of it being known that I recommend that household X be removed'* (Sabates-Wheeler et al., forthcoming, p. 33). In Nigeria's Child Grant programme, the number of complaints recorded in the category 'misconduct' is very low, and no complaints at all were recorded in the category 'abuse and exploitation' in the first year of operation of the complaints mechanism, apparently due to a reluctance to report such issues (Sharp et al., 2016).

Constraints on Citizens Raising Concerns

Key factors likely to prevent citizens raising their concerns include: feeling grateful and that they have no right to complain; a fear of reprisals; a fear of state inaction meaning that engaging will not be worth the effort; and negative feedback loops when previous issues remain unresolved (Barca et al., 2012). Our case studies and literature review confirm all of these factors to be important, though to varying degrees across contexts.

Feeling grateful

Even when well aware of a divergence between service delivery and programme provisions, some beneficiaries never raise their concerns, because they feel they have no right to complain – they feel grateful. This is linked to the sense of transfers being a gift, rather than an entitlement. For example, a household in Ethiopia with five household members but receiving transfers for only three of them commented,

> *I have not asked them. I don't know why they targeted only three members of my household… I appreciated them even for targeting three of us (temporary DS beneficiary, Ramada, Shebadino).*

Fear of reprisals

Fear of victimisation and removal from the programme is also an important constraint on citizen action in many contexts. This is reported by Jones et al. (2013) to be widespread among social protection beneficiaries in Uganda, Kenya and Mozambique. According to one beneficiary in Mozambique, 'If we complain and they discover who complained, we will be put out of the programme' (Jones et al., 2013, p. 50). In India, a key barrier to citizen action is that marginalised groups in some states face very real risks of adverse consequences if they protest against corruption. Several activists involved in conducting social audits have been beaten or murdered (Down to Earth, 2013; Ehmke, 2015; World Bank, n.d). The World Bank noted that fear of reprisals was a main barrier to organising social audits in Orissa (World Bank, n.d.); and, because of such issues, in Andhra Pradesh the state provides police protection during the social audits (Dutta, 2015).

Fear of reprisals is also an important issue in Ethiopia,

> *I fear being harmed by them [the kebele officials] in every respect. They are more accepted people among the higher officials than me, so they can accuse me with different things distorting my appeal letter as I am illiterate (Female complainant, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

> *We fear they will cancel us from the programme. If we accuse them, they will punish us (PW beneficiary, Ramada, Shebadino).*

These fears seem well-founded, given the admission by officials in one of our case study woredas that, under pressure to meet graduation quotas, they had forcibly 'graduated' households that complained too much; and this is also documented in the PSNP Task Force's own report of the ESAP process (PSNP Social Development Task Force, 2015).

> *In Ethiopian year 2005, Woreda Food Security sent us a letter saying that five people need to be graduated. We sent them a letter stating that there is no one who full fills the graduation criteria. Then they emphatically wrote back to us telling us to pick up five people disregarding the criteria. We then selected those individuals who are perceived to be 'dida' [meaning those who challenge Service Providers]*[12]

[12] Ibid, page 50.

The Task Force's report presented the openness of officials to citizens in admitting forcible graduation in an entirely positive light, based on the understanding that the specific household mentioned as graduated in this way was subsequently re-integrated. However, our enquiries found that the household was not after all re-integrated, nor were any sanctions applied to officials involved in the case. This puts the admission in a rather different light: rather than a positive example of admitting a mistake, it could be understood by other households as a warning from officials to keep quiet or face being removed from the programme.

Fear of state inaction/negative feedback loops

Evidence from India suggests that regular feedback and real-time grievance redressal is important for demonstrating to citizens that the social audit process is worth engaging in. Aiyar (2010) describes how, when citizens saw that issues raised through the social audits got resolved, their interest in participating immediately increased. One month after the social audits, the vast majority of labourers, 87 per cent, said that they would not conduct social audits on their own. However, six months later, after there had been follow up on the findings of the audits, 95 per cent of the same labourers surveyed said that they were ready to conduct a social audit on their own (Aiyar, 2010).

Conversely, in Ethiopia, it was reported that,

> *Individuals give up and do not appeal when they see that someone else's appeal has gotten no response. Thus they will become hopeless, expecting that their appeal will not get any answer either* (FGD PW men Birriti, Kuyu).

In South Africa, we observed a generally very low propensity of citizens to raise concerns about the social protection programmes, even when they faced serious issues, such as disruption in payments, receiving smaller payments, or procedural hurdles. This is curious, given that these citizens were the most likely amongst our focus group countries to state that these transfers were a right, rather than a gift, there are avenues available to them to raise their concerns and that they did not raise fear of reprisals. Here, it seems to relate to a lack of citizen agency and mobilisation: the option of complaining does not always occur to people. For example, a woman in Samora related issues she was having with the Foster Care Grant. When asked if she had complained anywhere, she replied 'no' and that it had not crossed her mind. It is notable that social accountability initiatives in South Africa do not have any provisions for mobilisation and that within these communities there were no examples from any other sector of collective action for the welfare of the community.

Marginalised Groups

The propensity to raise concerns is often lower for marginalised groups. This is the result of an interplay between individual characteristics (education, confidence, literacy, access to technology), and structural factors, such as social norms and institutions. In Ethiopia we found a fairly active citizenry in both our case study woredas, but the propensity to raise concerns varied. Our case study respondents characterised those

most likely to raise concerns as follows,

> *A small number of people – those who have participated in different meetings and have some education* (Male PW beneficiary, Birriti, Kuyu).

> *A person who appeals is one who is acceptable and confident, and can be successful and get an immediate response. But the one who has no confidence cannot be successful and get a response for his appeals on the same date but is told to come back later* (Complainant, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).

Marginalised citizens, including the poorest and those with disabilities, face both practical and social constraints to voicing their concerns, for example inability to travel to the kebele office, as well as a lack of confidence in speaking out in front of those who are better off.

> *I am poor and blind. A person who has no eyes also does not have hand and leg. So who will take me there? [to the kebele to complain] The children love money so if I have money I will give them and they will take me there, but if I don't have I remain at home, as the children are not willing* (female PWD, Birriti, Kuyu).

> *You asked why we did not claim our rights… it is because of our deep rooted harmful tradition of feeling shamed to speak in front of people…fear to speak to rich people* (ESAP FGD participants, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).

In Nepal, lack of education combined with cultural differences can make it difficult for the poor, especially for indigenous people, to articulate their concerns,

> *We are from the Danuwar community. We talk straight to the point with a loud voice. So, when we talk in a straight forward manner, people in the meetings think that I am drunk, though I am not* (Rai Ward Citizen Forum member, FGD7).

Rajasekhar et al. (2013) found that in Karnataka women are not active participants in social audits, which is problematic considering that many MGNREGS beneficiaries are women. On the other hand, Shankar and Gaiha (2011) document how in Andhra Pradesh participation has changed over the years: previously, only upper castes and local elites felt able to complain, but now there is large-scale participation and women and lower caste groups are also able to speak to officials. Similarly, in our Nepal case study, several respondents mentioned a positive evolution in the confidence of women to approach the local officials,

> *Before no women would to go to the VDC office, but these days it's not the same situation. Because of the awareness and empowerment programmes of different social organisations, women became aware of their rights, the laws, and where to go when they have problems, and that they should also participate in decision-making* (Indigenous community leader, Kavrepalanchowk).

4.2.5 State Action

State action is the second primary element of social accountability and positive state action is a prerequisite for realising social accountability. Since the absence of state action is often the key barrier to effective social accountability initiatives, it is important to consider exactly when and why officials respond to demands or requests and when and why they do not. Potential determinants of state action in the area of social protection include the following:

- Relevant officials (and private providers where relevant) have incentives (intrinsic or extrinsic) to address citizen concerns and/or face costs of inaction;
- Staff who interface with citizens have the authority to resolve the issues, or influence with others who do;
- The state has the capacity (staff time and skills) to address the issues; and
- The state has the financial resources and allocative flexibility to address the issues.

Key Findings: State Action

Incentives and constraints faced by local officials clearly influence their response and are highly context specific (see Ethiopia, Nepal, South Africa and India case studies). The main conclusion is that context-specific analysis of these factors should underpin design of any social accountability initiative. *Strength of the evidence: medium.*

State response is the weakest link in many grievance systems and resolution rates are often low (Mott Macdonald, 2014; OPM, 2015; Sabates-Wheeler et al., forthcoming). Even systems with apparently high resolution rates might not be all they seem, as a case is sometimes defined as 'resolved' simply because basic information has been provided (Sharpe et al., 2016; Fox, 2007), or the case is referred on to another agency (World Bank, 2014). *Strength of the evidence: medium.*

'Thick' accountability issues are difficult to resolve through grievance mechanisms. In particular, complaints mechanisms seem ill-adapted to the resolution of poverty targeting exclusion errors (Mott MacDonald, 2014; Barrett, forthcoming; Barca et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2013). *Strength of the evidence: medium.*

To date, social accountability mechanisms seem to have been most effective in addressing issues that are both highly salient to communities/beneficiaries and under local control. Limited local authority combined with a lack of upwards influence within the bureaucracy severely constrain the extent to which issues decided at higher levels can be addressed through locally-bounded social accountability mechanisms (Fox, 2007; our Ethiopia and Nepal case studies; Afridi and Iversen, 2014). *Strength of the evidence: medium.*

<u>Incentives and Disincentives to State Action</u>

The broader social accountability literature tells us that the need within ruling coalitions to maintain certain types of relationships both horizontally (with other elite factions) and vertically (with organized social groupings) in order to preserve stability and survival can create strong incentives and room for manoeuvre to respond or not to given demands, and that these may vary by sectors or over time (Bukenya et al., 2012). For elected officials in certain contexts, elections and political competition may also create incentives to explore mechanisms of engaging with citizens and responding to their demands. Aid flows may also impact incentives of political elites to be more responsive to local citizens (Booth 2012). Joshi and McCluskey (2017) provide a framework for understanding responsiveness of bureaucrats, which includes both formal and informal pressure from professional peers, from organisational rules and culture, from elites and from citizens.

However, there is very little evidence in the literature about incentives for state response to citizen voice in the social protection sector. Given this, we draw here mainly on our case study evidence. Our case studies provide interesting variation in which types of pressure is most important for officials: e.g. in Ethiopia top-down pressure from within the bureaucracy seems to trump citizen demands; in Nepal local party leaders are very influential; and in South Africa and India the courts underpin incentives for state action, though in India state-level political dynamics lead to substantial variations in how these play out.

In **Ethiopia**, our interviews highlighted some of the constraints and incentives facing local officials in responding to citizen voice. Firstly, it seems that the kinds of things that managers are prioritising in assessing job performance are punctuality and achievement against the pre-determined plan. Responsiveness to citizen voice does not yet seem to figure within the performance assessment framework.

> Interviewer: *How does your manager evaluate your job?...*

> Respondent: *He sees my plan as well as my achievement. He checks how many kilometres I plan to let public works beneficiaries do with soil bunds, etc. So, over time he sees my achievement… They see if I am punctual. So, if I am punctual it means I respect my job* (woreda official, Kuyu).

Importantly, kebele officials also mentioned specific <u>disincentives</u> to raising citizen concerns up the state hierarchy, particularly when citizen voice contradicts centrally-driven targets. The starkest example was when salaries were suspended until graduation quotas were met. One kebele was told that they should 'graduate' 85 per cent of beneficiaries. Kebele officials protested that there were not sufficient households that met the criteria. However, this argument was rejected and punitive measures taken against officials who did not follow the instructions,

> *They suspended our salary until we did the graduation. They said we should graduate according to the quota system* (interview with kebele official).

Following this, the officials graduated people according to the quotas. Apart from this extreme example, more generally, raising citizens' complaints upwards does not seem to be positively viewed, according to this comment from a different kebele official.

> Interviewer*: When people raise concerns about the things you were mentioning, such as delay of payment, why they have to do other work etc., how do you tell these complaints to the woreda officials? Is this through a formal letter or…?*
>
> Respondent*: As a DA if I complain a lot they may assign me to another area.*

In **Nepal**, the incentives for local officials to respond to people's demands seem generally weak, and people do not have any obvious means of pressurising them[13]. This issue is exacerbated by weak upward accountability, so that, even if citizen concerns were articulated to higher officials, it is not obvious that the latter could hold the local officials to account. A key resource, though, is the local political party leaders, who can usually make the local officials act according to their requests, as otherwise they are able to obstruct their work and sometimes to use their political connections to have the official moved to an undesirable posting. Political party leaders are not themselves accountable to the population. However, the competition between leaders from the different parties means that they seem keen to make a good impression, including by helping people to access social protection programmes. On the other hand, as in all clientelist political settlements, governance in Nepal is ruled more through personal networks than through the rule of law, and the incentives for officials/party leaders to respond vary depending on who is making a request (which is also a key point noted by Joshi and McCluskey (2017) about responsiveness of public officials in general). High-caste Hindus generally perceive the state to be more responsive to their demands than Dalits and indigenous people; they often live closer to the government office, are better educated and have stronger social networks and connections with local political party leaders.

In **South Africa and India**, the courts underpin incentives for state action. In South Africa, citizen and civil society advocacy on behalf of beneficiaries of social protection programmes sparked a court case against Cash Paymaster Services (CPS) — the private company contracted by SASSA to make the payments – and the Constitutional Court barred CPS and its subsidiary partners from making unauthorised deductions from beneficiary payments and ordered them to refrain from providing personal data of grant recipients to other companies for marketing of services such as airtime and loan offers. In an earlier case, the courts also compelled provincial authorities to re-instate suspended benefits programmes, and revoked provincial control over the grants and recentralised their administration in order to achieve this (Barca et al., 2012 p. 118).

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[13] This research took place before local elections were held in 2017 in accordance with the new Constitution, and the situation is now much different.

However, effective courts are not a panacea in terms of creating incentives for positive state action. In India, whilst courts have played an important role in enforcing the Right to Information Act that is a key underpinning to accountability in social protection programmes (Aiyar and Walton, 2014), there are still major variations between states in the effectiveness of social audits and these can be linked to political incentives. In Andhra Pradesh, the incentives that underpinned the unusually successful institutionalisation of the social audits had to do with alignment with a political imperative to ensure the effective functioning of the MGNREGS. The audits presented an opportunity for the newly elected Chief Minister 'to break the local contractor-politician-bureaucrat nexus and disempower local politicians' (Aiyar and Walton, 2014, p. 31). Conversely, in Rajasthan, social audits had the unfortunate side effect of diminishing the incentives of officials to implement social protection programmes. By making the most visible and easiest forms of corruption more difficult, local officials who would otherwise have had an incentive to support the programme in order to boost their earnings from petty corruption, now prefer to limit their engagement in it and instead focus on other schemes with easier ways of making money (Chopra, 2015).

Capacities of Front-line Service Providers

Apart from incentives, capacities also play a key role in explaining the extent of state response. In India, capacity issues are an explanatory factor in differences between states' effectiveness in implementing social audits (Dutta et al., 2014). The capacity to respond to citizen demands is an issue also in Nepal:

> *One thing is for sure, the number of VDC Secretaries that is needed and the amount of time a VDC secretary needs to spend in a VDC is not enough. So, this is one problem and as a result of this, because a VDC secretary is not always present in the VDC, [it] is not that easy for people to go and complain to him. One VDC secretary looks after 3-4-5 VDCs so he is never available in any VDC for longer times and this problem still exists* (Tuki Association Director, Sindhupalchowk).

In general, our interviews confirmed that local officials in Nepal are overburdened with work and have very few resources. Similarly, in South Africa one of the greatest constraints to state response is the lack of manpower. When we visited a service point, the need to service hundreds of people in a matter of a few hours was daunting: it was clear that more staff were required. In Ethiopia, we found that capacity constraints, including very poor documentation and high staff turnover, had undermined follow up on the action plan that had been developed through the ESAP process to respond to citizen concerns.

Having considered incentives and capacities for response, the following sections look at how this has played out in practice: how states have actually responded to citizen voice. We draw on both global evidence on grievance mechanisms and our case study findings on collective mechanisms, particularly from Ethiopia.

Extent of State Response

Looking firstly at grievance mechanisms, as these are the most widespread social accountability mechanism in social protection, **state response appears to be the weakest link in many GRMs**, including in Pakistan, Kenya and Zimbabwe. In Pakistan, only 11 per cent of enrolment complaints in a sample reviewed were considered by the complainants to have been resolved (Mott MacDonald, 2014, p. 77); and overall only 35 per cent of complainants said they were fully or partially satisfied with the system for resolving complaints (Mott MacDonald, 2014, p. 22). As of 2008, over 4,000 complaints had been collected through the rights component in the HSNP programme in Kenya and referred to the relevant service providers, but only 42 per cent of these had been addressed and classified as 'closed cases' (Barrett, forthcoming). Despite substantial work to improve the system since then, resolution of complaints in the HSNP is still considered to be much less timely and effective than the reporting of them (OPM, 2015). In the Zimbabwe HSCT, Sabates-Wheeler et al (forthcoming) find that some issues are resolved quickly at the helpdesk or even by community committees, but that more complex issues that require further investigation often drag on for a very long time without resolution.

Some grievance systems do appear to have impressive resolution rates. For example, the Child Development Grant Programme in Nigeria has a reported resolution rate of 75-100 per cent of complaints (Sharp et al., 2016); Mexico's Oportunidades programme of 75 per cent (Fox, 2007); and the Pantawid Pamilya Pilipino Program in the Philippines resolves almost 100 per cent (World Bank, 2014). However, closer examination suggests that these rates might not be all they seem. In Nigeria, most complaints are actually information requests; payment-related complaints have a lower resolution rate of only 60-70 per cent; and, in any case, due to weaknesses in the database, it is unclear what is meant by a complaint having been resolved (Sharp et al., 2016). In Mexico, there were three ways in which complaints could be considered resolved: positively, negatively, or 'by orientation'; and over 60 per cent of those classified as resolved were resolved 'by orientation' (information had been provided). Many of the most serious complaints were registered via toll-free telephone calls, which offered anonymity. However, operators' standard response was simply to recommend to callers that such complaints be filed in writing, upon which they would be immediately registered as having been resolved 'by orientation' (Fox, 2007). Similarly, in the Philippines 4Ps programme, a grievance is considered 'resolved' as soon as it has been referred by the division receiving complaints to the unit or department responsible for taking action (World Bank, 2014).

The reasons for the challenges faced by grievance systems in resolving issues have been little analysed in the literature. In some cases, the lack of clear procedures and proper record-keeping systems have been identified as a factor (see for example Sabates-Wheeler et al., forthcoming, on Zimbabwe; and Barca et al., 2012, on Indonesia). On the other hand, programmes with these systems in place, such as the HSNP in Kenya and

the BISP in Pakistan, still face challenges. A lack of dedicated staff capacity to address grievances may also be an issue: the mechanisms in Zimbabwe and Indonesia lack any staff dedicated to the complaints function. But, this is clearly not the whole story. For example, the BISP has 358 complaints assistants, one in each programme office, yet the system still faces substantial challenges in resolving complaints. Issues that we discuss elsewhere around the incentives and authorities of those local officials who receive complaints are likely to be important.

Another important issue is that the **expectations of grievance systems are often too broad**: these systems are charged with addressing a wider range of issues than they realistically can. In particular, they seem ill-adapted to addressing 'thick' (complex) accountability challenges, such as appeals around exclusion errors in poverty-targeted programmes.

Barrett found that in Kenya's HSNP the challenges regarding the non-resolution of grievances in the early days were partly due to the fact that the system was flooded with complaints about targeting decisions made through a community-based targeting system, which, being inherently political and subjective, were difficult to resolve through a rules-based system (Barrett, forthcoming). In Pakistan, when those complaining about exclusion through the PMT-based targeting mechanism meet the criteria for a review of the targeting decision, the solution offered is a 'complementary targeting event', which involves re-visiting and interviewing the household. However, not a single such visit had (in 2014) been carried out since initial targeting in 2010 (Mott MacDonald, 2014). In Ethiopia in our case study woredas, the Kebele Appeals Committees (KAC) are largely non-functional and were unable to address complaints about exclusion error that occurred between targeting rounds. In one woreda they were playing a useful role in terms of addressing targeting errors *during the actual targeting process*; but interestingly, in this case, they were operating more as a collective mechanism, facilitating a further community conversation about which households were the most deserving of support, rather than as a classic rules-based grievance system.

Collective mechanisms, such as community scorecards, social audits and committee-led verification of targeting appear more promising in terms of addressing complex 'thick' accountability challenges, though these approaches have been so little used in social protection in low-income countries, that the evidence base is very limited. Apart from the Ethiopia example above, one other example comes from Zimbabwe's HSCT. Despite the fears expressed by individual programme beneficiaries about flagging inclusion errors, the community verification of targeting pilot enabled community committees working collectively to identify over 400 targeting inclusion errors among the 71,000 beneficiary households (Coffey, 2015). A review of the value for money of this community verification exercise found it to be highly cost-efficient: every $1 spent on community verification led to savings of $3.20, which would otherwise have been transferred to households that were removed through the community verification process (Coffey

2015, p. 64). On the other hand, it should be noted that there is no way of knowing what proportion of errors were corrected through this process, or indeed even whether the right households were identified as incorrectly included or excluded, since no independent evaluation of targeting accuracy was carried out.

South Africa presents a contradictory example to our widespread finding elsewhere that state response is often the weakest link in the social accountability chain. There the state appears relatively responsive, despite weak mobilisation of citizens. There are several examples of staff taking the initiative to resolve citizen concerns. For example, one of the issues that citizens raised regarding the disability grant was access to doctors for medical assessment. In order to make this process less cumbersome, in Praktiseer local office the manager decided to turn the boardroom into a medical assessment room so that applicants could be assessed on-site and receive an immediate decision; and the office also flexed rules to allow home-based care workers or relatives to bring in the IDs of prospective beneficiaries who were housebound. In Mitchell's Plain, the manager arranged for the Commissioners of Oaths to be present at the service point so that applicants could get their letters certified on-site and complete the application process in one day, and also trained some volunteers and church pastors to be able to provide this certification. The reason for this responsiveness appears to be mainly linked to intrinsic, rather than extrinsic, motivation of staff: they receive no specific rewards for these efforts, but express great enthusiasm for their jobs. We may also conjecture that it is linked to levels of authority at the local level: it is not evident that in some of the other contexts we studied local officials would have the authority to vary programme rules in such ways.

Issues Most Effectively Resolved through Social Accountability Initiatives

Evidence from our Ethiopia case study suggests that different programming issues are more or less easily addressed through social accountability mechanisms. See Box 1, for detailed analysis.

Box 1: WHICH PSNP PROGRAMMING ISSUES HAVE AND HAVE NOT BEEN RESOLVED THROUGH SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY?

In our Ethiopia case study, one of our key findings was that issues successfully resolved through social accountability processes tend to be those that are **within local (kebele or woreda) control**, have **no budgetary implications** and face **no competing imperatives**. These have included: targeting errors at the time of targeting; abuses of power at the kebele level; and operational gaps due to lack of detailed knowledge of programme design (such as lack of implementation of the gendered public works provisions).

Resolved Issues:

Targeting appeals at the time of targeting can result, through a community-based verification process, in a simple readjustment of the targeting list. Households that successfully appeal their exclusion are included at the expense of other households identified as being less food insecure: there are no implications for the quota or budget. Changes to targeting lists were made in this way in all our case study kebeles.

As for abuses by local officials, in both woredas respondents told us about cases of local-level corruption (requests for bribes and nepotism in targeting lists) that had been resolved. Also, in one of our case study woredas, public works participants were previously made to do additional community work outside of the PSNP work (including harvesting of crops for militia and other high-status individuals) as a condition for receiving their public works wages. The ESAP process enabled these abuses to be discussed and hours of work have now been regularised.

Social accountability processes have also been associated with progressive improvements in the extent of alignment with programme rules, especially provisions for shorter working hours for women, and a switch from public works to direct support for pregnant and breastfeeding women, largely through their effect on raising the awareness of both local service providers and beneficiaries. However, other country-wide efforts have been important to this also, and it is difficult to attribute impact.

Unresolved Issues: As for issues that have not been addressed through social accountability, quotas dominate the explanations for their non-resolution. Each kebele has an allocated quota of individuals that can be supported through PSNP, and these quotas were widely perceived in our case study kebeles to be insufficient to cover all households in need. Upholding targeting appeals outside of the targeting period or complaints about premature graduation both imply adding households into the programme (or back into the programme in the case

of graduated households). Unless others are simultaneously removed, upholding complaints on either of these issues will, therefore, result in the kebele surpassing its allocated quota (and budget). This was the primary reason given to us by local officials, as well as beneficiaries, as to why most of these concerns remain unresolved.

> *As the PSNP transfer is related to the budget, once the quota is fixed it is impossible to increase the payment amount to beneficiaries. This is because most of the time what they raise is to select new beneficiaries. They come at an unplanned time and we respond that the quota is limited and it is impossible to select additional beneficiaries* (DA, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).

Whilst, according to the PSNP Programme Implementation Manual, one of the three sanctioned uses of the woreda five per cent contingency budget is to fund successful targeting appeals , in none of the visited kebeles is it currently being used in this way. Indeed, almost none of the local officials were aware that the contingency budget could be so used, and many were unaware of the existence of such a budget. As a result, in practice, even when appeals about targeting exclusion and full-family targeting appeals are upheld, implementation is contingent on space opening up within the quota when individuals die or households move away from the area.

> *One PW beneficiary with three targeted household members moved to the Bale area. We replaced her with another person…he is the poorest of the poor but was not included in the programme so far* (DA, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).

There are a range of further concerns of beneficiaries that are beyond the capacity of local officials in Ethiopia to resolve. In both woredas, the timeliness of direct support payments seems to have actually worsened. This is not due to a deterioration in the work of local officials, but to factors beyond their control and determined at regional or federal levels. There is also a challenge with respect to timely provision of client cards, due to either spelling errors in names on cards, new households being added, or clients losing their cards. These issues are, again, outside local control, as the cards are printed and sent from the region. Representations made upwards to these levels appear to have had little influence on the speed of response to citizen complaints.

Other evidence supports the findings from Ethiopia about the challenges local officials face in resolving citizen concerns about issues that are decided higher up. For example, in Nepal, local officials appear to have responded to citizen concerns about payment delays to the best of their ability, but payments are still late, due to delayed transfer of funds from national level. In Jones et al. (2013), social workers in the Occupied

Palestinian Territory (oPt) comment on how their lack of understanding of the PMT and disempowerment in programme decision making lead to an inability to engage constructively with programme beneficiaries about their concerns. In the words of one social worker in the oPt: *'I feel so guilty and powerless – I cannot explain why some people are excluded or included. So I can listen to people's problems but I can't really do much. I just gather information but I don't have a role in decision-making. It is a very frustrating working environment'* (Jones et al., 2013, p. 43). Similarly, Barca et al. found in Indonesia that the reason poverty targeting was by far the most difficult kind of grievance for district government officials to resolve was that they did not have the authority to provide a solution to challenges that were perceived to derive from beneficiary quotas established by national decision-makers (Barca et al, 2012).

A further point of interest from the Ethiopia case relates back to the point made in section 4.2.4 that citizens are most likely to raise issues highly salient to them, and that social accountability mechanisms are poorly adapted to addressing forms of corruption that have no direct effects on citizens. Whilst the issue of PSNP participants doing unpaid non-PSNP work in addition to their PSNP hours has been resolved, it appears that, in one woreda, the PSNP budget might still be paying for non-PSNP work on private land; it is just that now the kebele responds by reducing beneficiaries' participation in PSNP works, in order to keep working hours in line with norms,

> *The reason we let them handle additional work is not because we like them to do that. Rather the woreda cabinet orders us to arrange the community to handle such work. They do not know how we are working in SLM/sustainable land management, public works etc. So what we do is that we minimise the public works and arrange the beneficiaries to handle other works (kebele respondent).*

There is an interesting parallel here with the documented shift mentioned above in Andhra Pradesh as a result of the social audits from wage-related irregularities that directly affect workers to materials-related regularities that do not (Afridi and Iversen, 2014). In Ethiopia, workers are no longer being required to work for longer hours than they are paid, but, according to the testimony, it would appear that in these cases the public works budget might still be being used for non-PSNP works. This new arrangement was not mentioned as a problem by any public works beneficiary we met, presumably either because it is not visible to them or has no direct negative effect on them – it is not highly salient to them. This suggests that social accountability mechanisms are not the best avenue to address such issues.

Chapter 5: Variations in Outcome

In this chapter we address research question four: **Under what conditions have different social accountability mechanisms in social protection programmes been associated with improved service delivery outcomes and strengthening of state society relations?**

Answering this question requires us to use the findings presented in Chapter 4 to analyse the variations in outcomes of social accountability according to four dimensions of difference: context; social protection programme design; type of social accountability mechanism; and social group. Thus, we respond in this chapter to the following four sub-questions:

- What effect does the political-economic context have on the impact of social accountability mechanisms (including the nature and strength of existing state / citizen relations) and what effect do rules, roles, administrative capacity, incentives, controls and degree of civil society engagement have on the impact of social accountability mechanisms?

- Are there particular types of social accountability mechanisms that are most appropriate to the delivery of social protection programmes?

- How do programme design features affect accountability within social protection systems, including the choice of instrument (cash transfers, in-kind transfers or public works), conditions, targeting approaches, complementary or layered interventions, timing and value of transfers, the use of third party delivery agents?

- What mechanisms are most likely to involve and represent traditionally excluded or marginalised groups (with a particular focus on people with disabilities)?

Whilst for readability we structure this chapter according to these four dimensions, it should be noted that there are important interactions between them. For example, we might find that a particular type of social accountability works better than another for a particular social protection design in a specific context. We consider these interactions wherever they most logically arise.

5.1 How Context Matters

What effect does the political-economic context have on the impact of social accountability mechanisms (including the nature and strength of existing state / citizen relations) and what effect do rules, roles, administrative capacity, incentives, controls and degree of civil society engagement have on the impact of social accountability mechanisms?

We identified three dimensions of context of interest to social accountability: the extent to which there is a strong rights-based legal framework, backed up by the courts; power relations within and between state actors and citizens; and the role of civil society.

<u>Legal System</u>

A right to social protection underpinned by an effective legal system can facilitate social accountability, but is neither sufficient in itself, nor a necessary precondition.

As we discussed in chapter 4 above, translation of citizens' programme knowledge into a sense of a right to social protection is not automatic, but is strongly mediated by political context. Programme knowledge is more likely to be converted into a sense of entitlement to social protection benefits where rights are part of the political discourse and are underpinned by a legal framework and courts to which citizens have access (Jones et al., 2013; and South Africa case study).

Whether or not citizens feel themselves to have a right to social protection is important, because feeling grateful, rather than entitled, is often reported as a reason for inaction in the face of delivery gaps (Barca et al., 2012 and Ethiopia case study). But whilst such a sense of entitlement might facilitate citizen action, it is clearly not a sufficient condition, and might not even be a necessary one. As noted above, we found amongst marginalised citizens in South Africa a very low propensity to raise concerns, despite their widespread understanding of their right to social protection; and in Ethiopia and Nepal rather active citizenries and some positive outcomes of social accountability initiatives, even in the absence of a sense of entitlement. Furthermore, evidence from these latter two countries suggests that rights training may enable a sense of entitlement to social protection to be progressively built.

<u>Power relations</u>

Much of the focus in social accountability is on relationships between citizens on the one hand, and states on the other. Our research suggests that relationships within states and elites matter too, as do power relations between groups of citizens. Evidence: medium.

Intra-state relations

Relations between levels of the state hierarchy can constrain or facilitate positive state response to citizen action. In Ethiopia, the control exerted by higher levels of the state over frontline service providers have enabled social accountability mechanisms to address abuses at the local level, by highlighting these to the woreda level. On the other hand, local officials appear to fear raising issues up the hierarchy as much as citizens fear speaking up to local officials, in particular when the messages from below contradict top-down targets. The pressure from the organisational logic within the bureaucracy seems to trump citizen demands: for example, top down demands to meet graduation targets overrode citizen complaints that households too poor to meet the graduation criteria being exited from the programme, even when local officials endorsed these

complaints. This means that social accountability has had little traction with respect to issues decided at higher levels. The political economy context in Ethiopia, an aspiring developmental state with a strong focus on effective delivery and stamping out local corruption, appears to facilitate certain types of locally-bounded social accountability, but to constrain positive response to other important citizen concerns.

In Nepal on the other hand, weak accountability within the bureaucracy makes it difficult for higher officials to sanction local service providers when social accountability mechanisms pinpoint wrong-doing. Here, enabling citizens to articulate problems to higher-level officials is unlikely to resolve the issues in the same way as in Ethiopia. Instead, in Nepal, a key mechanism for citizens to hold local officials to account seems to pass via influential local political party leaders; competition between parties appears to facilitate social accountability, because party leaders are keen to create a good impression.

> *There is a competition among politicians and they are keen to help people left behind in order to get votes… Because of political competition, no one is left behind* (Dalit community leader, Kavrepalanchok).

Social relations

In addition, power relations between classes, castes and ethnic groups have specific effects on social accountability in some of our case study contexts. In Nepal, Drucza (2016) finds that the relationship between groups of citizens may be as important as the relationship between citizens and the state, and that citizens tend to relate to the state through the prism of their social group. In our case study, we found differences in the perception of the performance of and trust in local officials between groups, with Brahmins being more satisfied than Dalits and indigenous people. Citizens explicitly recognise the importance of caste in their own relationships with the state. As one high-caste Hindu said,

> *Maybe we have good relations with the VDC Secretary because we are from the same sub-caste* (Brahmin widow, Kavrepalanchok).

An interesting strand of research in India examines the importance of local class relations in terms of access to the MGNREGS programme and the effectiveness of social audits. Vashishtha et al. (2015) explains how, in many areas, farmers who are small-scale employers have great power locally and an interest in keeping wages low; and that there is often a conflict of interest between them and labourers seeking work on MGNREGS, because MGNREGS offers alternatives to workers hiring out their labour, and thereby fuels fears among small-scale agricultural employers that it will raise the cost of agricultural labour and lead to labour shortages (Thapa, 2015). Rajasekhar et al. (2013) find this structural conflict of interest to have undermined the effectiveness of the programme, including the social audits, in many villages in Karnataka.

In South Africa, persistent social and racial hierarchies may explain the low propensity of citizens to raise concerns, despite an apparently propitious context, including a strong legal framework and a generally responsive state. One focus group flagged this issue, *'As black people, it is generally difficult to complain'* (FGD, Samora), and the perceived constraint in approaching local officials appeared to be more severe amongst black communities when the local official was not black.

<u>Civil society</u>

In our case study countries we found surprisingly little evidence of 'organic' civil society participation in social accountability in social protection, that is to say, initiatives that develop in response to local realities without external support.

Most active citizen engagement in our case study contexts is facilitated by NGOs that are externally funded or contracted by the state. In both our South Africa and Ethiopia case studies, even though there are active local associations that bring together social protection beneficiaries, social protection issues are not discussed in these fora. As noted above, in India, scale-up of social audits has been most successful in Andhra Pradesh, where it has relied largely on a state-led top-down induced participatory process (Aiyar and Mehta, 2013). The model has largely failed to scale up in contexts where the state did not take an active lead in promoting it (Dutta, 2015).

Two possible reasons why the top-down approach to social audits has worked in India that might be relevant to other contexts are: that the complexity of social audits means that local citizens require technical support and capacity building; and that marginalised people need secure platforms protected from above in order to be able to participate and speak out against local officials and elites (Aiyar and Mehta, 2013).

5.2 How Design of Social Accountability Interventions Matters

*Are there particular **types** of social accountability mechanisms that are most appropriate to the delivery of social protection programmes?*

There is no one particular type of social accountability mechanism that is best indicated for social protection programmes. But the evidence suggests the following general principles:

Firstly, all the elements in the conceptual framework are important: for citizens to act they need to be informed and mobilised and enabled to interact with providers; and state response depends on providers having the incentives, information, authorities and capacities required to do so. This does not mean that a single initiative must address all these elements – some can be provided through normal programme operations, other development initiatives or informally (for example by traditional leaders in some contexts). Rather an initiative needs to address key identified gaps in a given context.

Secondly, the most appropriate mechanism depends on the nature of the accountability challenge, which depends on both the design of the social protection scheme and the social protection programming issue(s) that the mechanism is intended to address. In most cases a mix of initiatives is more likely to be appropriate than sole reliance on a single one.

Thirdly, locally bounded social accountability initiatives have evident limitations, suggesting that strategic initiatives that link local, intermediate and national levels appear to have more promise, though due to very few examples of the latter there is no firm evidence of their greater success.

Individualised Approaches: Grievance Mechanisms

Grievance mechanisms are very widespread in social protection programmes, but there are question marks over their effectiveness, especially in addressing 'thick' accountability challenges. That is not to say that grievance systems have no role to play in enhancing social accountability in the delivery of social protection. Evidence suggests that globally grievance mechanisms resolve at least many tens of thousands of individual complaints about social protection programmes every year, with undoubted service delivery benefits for the individual households concerned (World Bank, 2014; World Bank, 2013; Mott MacDonald, 2014). Indeed, in regard to some problems that affect individual citizens and are amenable to a rules-based solution it is difficult to envisage an effective solution that does not include enabling individual citizens to complain. This is for example the case with regards to failures in the registration, enrolment or payroll processes that lead to failure to pay specific households/citizens already established to be eligible for a programme.

On the other hand, even in countries where grievance mechanisms are successful in soliciting complaints from citizens, many complaints remain unresolved. State response has been clearly identified as the weakest link in the complaints system in Pakistan (Mott MacDonald, 2014), Kenya (Barrett, forthcoming; OPM, 2015) and Zimbabwe (Sabates-Wheeler et al., forthcoming). Weaknesses in state response to citizen concerns obstructs the pathway through which citizen's voice is expected to lead to improvements in service delivery.

Some of the weaknesses in grievance mechanisms have to do with detailed design, operation and resourcing. Their contribution to social accountability could almost certainly be strengthened by: ensuring that systems are in place to record and register complaints; that officials have the capacities, authorities and incentives to action and follow up on them; and that feedback is systematically provided to complainants (Barca et al, 2012; Sabates-Wheeler et al, forthcoming).

However, a more fundamental issue seems to be that grievance systems tend to be used rather indiscriminately as a default social accountability approach, with little reflection

regarding their strengths and limitations. The scope of the mechanism is in many countries not clearly delineated: mechanisms are often open to all to raise any issue, with no clearly differentiated pathways for addressing different types of issues (Mott MacDonald, 2014; Sharp et al., 2016; Fox, 2007).

GRMs seem particularly ill-suited to addressing thick accountability challenges, such as exclusion error in poverty-targeted programmes. Appeals about the outcomes of both the community-based targeting system in the HSNP grievance mechanism and the PMT-based targeting in Pakistan's BISP have flooded the systems but remained largely unresolved (Barrett, forthcoming; and Mott MacDonald, 2014). In Ethiopia in our case study kebeles, whenever Kebele Appeals Committees (KAC) effectively addressed exclusion error it was during the actual targeting process when they operated more as a collective mechanism, facilitating a further community conversation about which households were the most deserving of support, rather than as a classic rules-based grievance system (Ethiopia case study).

<u>Collective Approaches</u>

Collective mechanisms, such as community scorecards, social audits and committee-led verification of targeting appear more promising in terms of addressing complex 'thick' accountability challenges. However, these approaches have been so little used in social protection in low- and middle-income countries, that the evidence base is very limited.

The very few reviews we found of community verification of targeting suggest that this might perhaps be a promising approach for correcting targeting errors (Jones, 2008; and Coffey, 2015) as well as a cost-efficient one (Coffey, 2015), but evidence is limited.

As discussed in chapter four above, Zimbabwe's HSCT programme piloted a community verification process to hold the programme to account for targeting decisions that was found to be both effective and cost efficient (Coffey, 2015). In Ethiopia the ESAP scorecard pilot in the PSNP facilitated discussion of some collective citizen concerns that had reportedly not been previously aired (PSNP Social Development Task Force, 2015) and contributed to service delivery improvements in a number of areas where quality improvements were within the control of local officials, had no budget implications and faced no competing imperatives (Ethiopia case study). Similarly, as noted above, there is a wide range of well-documented positive impacts of social audits in Andhra Pradesh in India.

But collective mechanisms are not a panacea. One key operational challenge is that they require strong facilitation skills to be effectively implemented, and these skills might be in short supply in low income contexts. In Ethiopia, one of the reasons that citizen report cards worked less well than community scorecards within ESAP was that facilitating organisations often lacked the skills to present survey findings in visually impactful ways

that were comprehensible to illiterate populations (PSNP Social Development Task Force (2015), though Black Sash in South Africa has done this successfully. In the Dominican Republic, despite extensive training support from the World Bank, the first round of community scorecards still met its fair share of implementation challenges, particularly around following up action plans (Park, 2014).

A more fundamental limitation is that to date most of these mechanisms have been largely locally-bounded, involving discussions between citizens only at the local level. Without linkages to similar processes of citizen or civil society engagement at state/regional and national levels, effects seem largely limited to the local level, especially in contexts where upward influence within state apparatus is weak. For example, in Ethiopia, when citizens raised concerns that were outside local control, such as premature graduation, these were not addressed. Similarly, in Nepal, increased engagement of citizens appears to have led to some improvements in the efficiency of that part of the payment process under local control, but no change regarding problems occurring at higher levels. In India, the impacts on corruption have resulted in a displacement of easily-detectable, wage-related irregularities that directly affect communities and tend to be carried out by low-ranking officials, towards harder to detect, materials-related, and require greater power and influence to bring about.

In a comparison that cuts across our discussion above of both individualised versus collective mechanisms and locally bounded versus integrated ones, Fox (2007) finds a collective vertically-integrated social accountability approach operating at local, regional and national levels around the Rural Food Supply Programme in Mexico to have been more effective than the individualised locally-bounded complaints mechanism of the Oportunidades cash transfer programme in shifting the incentive structure for local administrators to respond to citizens.

5.3 How Social Protection Programme Design Matters

How do programme design features affect accountability within social protection systems, including the choice of instrument (cash transfers, in-kind transfers or public works), conditions, targeting approaches, complementary or layered interventions, timing and value of transfers, the use of third party delivery agents?

There is very little <u>direct</u> evidence on the effects of programme design on social accountability outcomes. Much of the evidence we present in response to this question, therefore, relates to specific linkages in our conceptual framework: for example, how programme design features affect citizen access to information, or their perceptions of whether social transfers is an entitlement or a gift. We consider these intermediate outcomes to be important, but it should be noted that the relationships between them and impacts in terms of service delivery and state-citizen relations are not straightforward, but are themselves mediated by context. We, therefore, consider the evidence base to respond to this question as limited (except where otherwise indicated).

Our main conclusions are that design factors that facilitate social accountability seem to include:

- **Simple and easily observable selection/targeting criteria; and**
- **Straightforward and transparent programme rules and entitlement levels;**

And that factors that impede it appear to be:

- **(possibly) conditionalities; and**
- **stop-start funding or explicit quotas that ration access.**

In terms of programme operations, opportunities for **face-to-face interaction** between service providers and citizens are also important, to provide opportunities for citizen feedback and for building relationships of trust. We now look at each of the important design features in turn.

All other things being equal, simple criteria for eligibility tends to facilitate citizen awareness and engagement. In Nepal, citizens are better informed about the eligibility criteria of social programmes than might be expected given limited local outreach capacity. Accurate information seems to circulate easily within the community by word-of-mouth, due to the simple eligibility criteria of these categorically targeted programmes and their high coverage. Given that they are on-demand programmes, knowledge about entitlements is likely to translate into increased applications and thereby to the relatively high coverage rates that we observe for the Old Age Allowance, Single Woman/Widow Allowance and Child Grant in Nepal, though we have no direct evidence of this causal mechanism. Conversely, the Disability Benefit in Nepal has more complex and less transparent eligibility criteria, with access depending on a disability assessment carried out in the district capital. Most of our respondents were unclear about who is eligible for this programme and the programme has lower coverage of its intended target group. Similarly, in South Africa we observe that knowledge around the Old Age Grant and Child Support Grant that have simple criteria is higher than for the Foster Care Grant that has more complex eligibility criteria.

Elsewhere, the use of a PMT in targeting appears to increase the challenges for citizens in distinguishing between correct and incorrect application of programme rules. For example, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, many citizens remained largely unaware that the basis of targeting in the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme had changed from categorical to poverty-targeting (using a PMT) or of the purpose and implications of this, with one respondent describing the PMT as akin to *'the secret Coca-Cola formula'* (Jones et al., 2013, p. 49). Similarly, in Pakistan, Gazdar and Zuberi (2014) and Mott MacDonald (2014) note the numerous cases of women who are above the PMT threshold for eligibility for the BISP, yet, not understanding the criteria for eligibility, make repeated visits to the programme office to raise grievances about their non-enrolment (presumably at considerable personal cost).

Similarly, whilst the combination of geographical and community-based poverty targeting in the PSNP results in very pro-poor targeting outcomes in the Ethiopian highlands (Berhane, 2015), it does not produce clear and simple rules of eligibility: selection into the programme is a highly complex process and citizens perceive it to be highly discretionary.

Furthermore, in the PSNP, **the complexity of the rules on transfer size appears to be one of the factors inhibiting challenge from citizens**. According to the most recent modification of the programme implementation manual, transfers are provided for each member of the household up to a maximum of five members. But local officials in our case study kebeles frequently register fewer than the real number of household members even in smaller eligible households, in an effort to spread transfers across more households. Our respondents did not always make a clear distinction between a household of seven members receiving transfers for five (as per the rules) and a household of five members receiving transfers for only three members (contrary to the rules).

> *'It is the rule of the safety net. They target three or five family members. Since my family members are four, they targeted three of us (SSI with temporary DS beneficiary'* (Ramada kebele, Shebadino woreda).

We also found, in both India and Ethiopia, that the c**omplexity of public works programmes** offered opportunities for corrupt practices (materials-related fraud or use of public works labour for private works) that social accountability mechanisms have been unable to eliminate (Afridi and Iversen, 2014; and Ethiopia case study).

A further complication arises when functions are contracted out to private sector providers, who are responsible for setting up their own first level interface to hear citizen complaints. In the early days of the HSNP complaints system in Kenya, the lack of enforcement of the requirement for the payment service provider to set up its own first level complaints mechanism led to the second level system being overwhelmed (Barrett, forthcoming). Even if such a provision is enforced, in practice there are various challenges. For example, in Pakistan, the Payments Service Provider (PSP) has a complaints mechanism available to social protection beneficiaries, but it is inappropriate in language and format, having been set up for other bank customers (Mott MacDonald, 2014). The outsourcing of payments may also change the way social protection programmes influence state-citizen relations. For example, in South Africa many people do not connect the social protection programmes with the Government, as they are delivered by an independent government agency (SASSA) through private payment service providers. This is in stark contrast to Nepal, where payments are delivered manually, in cash, by government officials, and therefore provide a very concrete – and in Nepal rare – meeting point between citizens and the state. This is likely to change as Nepal's social protection programmes are in the process of transitioning to payments through PSPs.

None of our case study countries included **conditional cash transfer programmes**, but there are a few references in the global literature. As pointed out by Fox (2007), the power relationships established between beneficiaries and health and education ministries within CCTs are likely to constrain the power of beneficiaries to hold these providers to account. CCT programmes assign frontline service providers the task of verifying that beneficiaries meet the required conditions for receipt of transfers (for example, sending children to school or vaccinating them), giving the service providers enormous power over the beneficiaries. Beneficiaries could thus have a legitimate fear that complaining about teacher or health worker absenteeism would lead to cash transfer payments being stopped. The disempowering effect of programme conditionalities is documented by Jones (2008) and by Cookson (2016) in her ethnographic study of the CCT Juntos programme in Peru. Cookson (2016) discovers that a range of behaviours encouraged by local officials have become 'extra-official' conditions in the programme, indistinguishable by programme beneficiaries from formal programme conditionalities. Although not officially required by the programme, women comply with these, often burdensome, demands out of fear that otherwise they will be excluded from the programme.

A programme design that provides for clear and consistent eligibility criteria appears more likely to promote a sense of entitlement to social protection than one in which access to the programme is evidently contingent on the vagaries of **stop-start funding or quotas**. Where beneficiaries observe day-to-day that access to the programme or transfer levels are contingent on funding availability they are unlikely to perceive their access as an inalienable right. As stated by one beneficiary of the HSCT in Zimbabwe, which due to funding constraints was set to close in their district, when asked whether the transfer was a right or a gift, the beneficiary responded:

> *It is a gift...If it was a right, I would be saying this programme is not closing today or tomorrow. It is my right. And you are infringing on my rights* (Sabates-Wheeler et al., forthcoming p. 32).

Similarly, in Ethiopia, in the context of programme quotas that were widely perceived in our case study areas as inadequate to cover all needy households, respondents perceive access to transfers to be rationed,

> *When individuals appealed that they are poor but not targeted for safety net, the kebele responded as there is no more quota to entertain the appeal....They said we have no budget* (PW beneficiary, Birriti, Kuyu).

An understanding that access to the programme is rationed by quotas and a sense of entitlement on the basis of clear eligibility criteria would appear to be mutually exclusive. Indeed, even for the minority of our Ethiopian respondents inclined to see their transfers as entitlements rather than gifts, this was still contingent in their eyes on being selected into the programme in the first place. Although according to the programme

implementation manual there are clear criteria of eligibility, none of our respondents perceived a right of access to the PSNP, but at most a right to transfers if and when selected.

> *Once people are recruited at the kebele by the community, are involved in PW and get*
> *client card, it is the beneficiary's right to receive the transfer'* (ESAP FG participant FGD,
> Birriti kebele, Kuyu woreda).

In terms of programme operations, opportunities for **face-to-face interaction** between service providers and citizens are also important, because in low-income contexts poor and vulnerable people tend to value **face-to-face interfaces** with officials responsible for running the programme. Such face-time might occur as part of ongoing programme operations. For example, Jones et al. (2013) describe how, in the Uganda SAGE programme, staff gather beneficiaries in small groups on payment days to hear their concerns. And, in Nepal, since cash transfers are currently delivered manually by VDC Secretaries, the transfers themselves offer a 'sighting of the state' and payments provide a form of interface between beneficiaries and officials (Drucza, 2016; Corbridge et al. 2005).

However, opportunities for face-time tend to be less when payments are made electronically; and unconditional cash transfers do not provide the kind of automatic gathering of beneficiaries required for public works. These are clearly not sufficient reasons to eschew electronic payments or to prefer public works over unconditional transfers, but it does suggest a need to think through at design stage how to provide opportunities for face-to-face engagement when they do not occur automatically as part of programme operations. Such engagement normally has an associated cost, in terms of staff time as well as transport, as local officials generally need to travel to communities. Given that the workloads of frontline staff in social protection programme are often heavy (for example, Fox (2007) finds that staff of the Mexico Oportunidades programme carry caseloads of 8,000 households) one conclusion is that face-to-face interaction should be explicitly planned for and budgeted within programme design.

Also, ensuring face-time between state and citizens is not sufficient in itself; the nature of the interaction is also important. In South Africa, social accountability initiatives have strengthened opportunities for citizens to communicate with government officials. But despite the availability of multiple platforms, citizens tend to use them only to submit an application and receive their payment, and not for engaging in other ways with the staff, for example in relation to complaints or other needs: people report being afraid to ask for information from the staff for the fear of being treated rudely. Similarly, in Nepal, some of our respondents from the Dalit caste and indigenous groups complained of being treated badly by officials; and many women reported not raising questions because they were afraid of being ridiculed. This suggests a need, in such contexts, to build skills and confidence of both officials and citizens to interact in new ways.

5.4 Marginalised Groups

What mechanisms are most likely to involve and represent traditionally excluded or marginalised groups (with a particular focus on people with disabilities)?

Marginalised Groups

In respect of this question, most of the evidence that is available is around specific links in our conceptual framework. We have little direct evidence on variations in outcomes for marginalised citizens.

Section four above documents in some detail the multiple challenges faced by different groups in engaging in social accountability processes and how various dimensions of exclusion, such as gender, poverty, age, disability, caste and ethnicity interact to compound these. To give just a few examples, we find that, in Nepal, time poverty of marginalised households is one of the key factors leading to their exclusion from key interfaces. According to one former Ward Citizen Forum Coordinator, Dalits and indigenous people often find it more difficult to find the time to participate in meetings, as they have to go wherever they can find work. We find, in Ethiopia, that mobility and economic constraints interact to make it more difficult for marginalised older people with certain disabilities to attend community interface meetings, as they need to pay people to help them to meetings.

We find few examples of good practice in overcoming these challenges, though one key finding of practical relevance is that the beneficiaries of social protection programmes prefer face-to-face interfaces over those dependent on technology. We find, rather unsurprisingly, for example, that this holds true for people with failing eye sight, or limited literacy (Barca et al., 2012; Mott MacDonald, 2014; Ranganathan, 2008; Sharp et al., 2016; Sabates-Wheeler, forthcoming); and that enthusiasm for mobile phone based interfaces appears higher in middle-income countries and among younger and more-highly educated population groups (Fox, 2007; World Bank, 2007; OPM, 2015).

This suggests that to be inclusive, mechanisms will need to ensure that interfaces, whilst enabling face-to-face contact, are also designed around the time, logistical and economic constraints of poor and marginalised citizens.

It could be argued that other interfaces, including technology-based ones, can serve marginalised groups through intermediaries, so we consider carefully the evidence on intermediaries in the next sub-section.

Intermediaries

We found in chapter four that marginalised citizens tend to be more reliant than others on intermediaries for information and for interfacing with officials. Whilst intermediaries often play useful and valued roles in channelling information to marginalised citizens

and their concerns up to service providers, there are also risks in relying heavily on intermediation. As noted above: two studies (one in Pakistan and one in Nigeria) point to the way in which processes of intermediation are gendered and may benefit disadvantaged groups less (Gazdar and Zuberi, 2014; and Sharp et al., 2016); and studies from India indicate how disadvantaged groups (Alik-Lagrange and Ravallion, 2016) and women (Dutta et al., 2014) have lower access than others to informal information flows within the community.

We further suggested that the problem of reliance on intermediaries may be exacerbated where programme design sets up competition between households for access to transfers. For example, the ESAP trained only a small group of citizen representatives in social protection rights, and we found little evidence that learning had been shared by this group with others. This might not matter so much if there was congruence of interest between the representatives and marginalised citizens, but we cannot assume this. PSNP transfers are essentially an individualised service, benefiting specific households and, in the context of a limited quota for a kebele, households are in competition with each other for access to limited resources. In effect citizens are in a zero-sum game: inclusion or full-family targeting for one household means exclusion or lack of full-family targeting for another. In such situations, it cannot be assumed that mobilising and training a sub-set of community members will necessarily benefit the poorest and most marginalised through a process of intermediation. The citizens who receive training might use their newly-found skills to advocate in the interests of their marginalised neighbours, but they might equally use them in their own interests, especially if many are themselves poor. Indeed, many of the direct participants in the ESAP committee members and focus group participants with whom we spoke had themselves raised appeals and complaints regarding the inclusion in PSNP of their own household.

Taken together, these findings suggest the need for empirical investigation of the nature of intermediation and the dynamics around it in a particular context, before decisions are taken about how to involve intermediaries in a social accountability strategy.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Policy Implications

In this chapter we set out the key conclusions of our research and some implications for policy and programming.

There is no blueprint for successful social accountability in social protection: design needs to be grounded in contextual analysis. There are certain common principles: for citizens to act they need to be informed and mobilised and enabled to interact with providers; and for providers to respond they need the incentives, information, authorities and capacities to do so. However, given that social accountability is an essentially political process, design of any intervention to support it needs to be strongly informed by the context in which it is to operate. This suggest the need for an <u>exploratory</u> approach to design and implementation of social accountability initiatives in social protection, grounded in local analysis and with strong monitoring, learning and evaluation alongside.

State response is frequently the weak link in efforts to promote social accountability. Based on contextual analysis, any attempt to strengthen social accountability needs to identify and address the binding constraints in a given context. Positive state response is just as important as citizen action for successful social accountability, but has often received inadequate attention; and frequently (but not always) is one of the binding constraints on successful outcomes. To respond effectively, frontline service providers require a set of *capacities, authorities, and incentives* – and one or more of these is often lacking. In terms of capacity, time is often in short supply for frontline service providers, as are funds to travel to meet with communities. The *authorities* that providers require to respond to citizen voice include budget authority where resolving issues has financial implications – which it often does. The most important *incentives* for frontline service providers to respond (or not) to citizen voice might come through their formal job objectives and performance evaluations, intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction, or pressures through other informal or political networks, depending on context. A proper understanding of all these institutional issues will be key to strengthening state response; and partnerships between social protection and governance/public sector reform programming are likely to be useful.

Support to social accountability needs to take account of the level at which social protection programming decisions are taken: there is little point in establishing a locally-bounded mechanism and expecting it to address issues that are decided at national level. Social protection design and management is often quite highly centralised, even where implementation is decentralised. So, in most contexts, citizen concerns about social protection programmes straddle issues under both local and national control, meaning that integrated approaches to social accountability that link local, regional and national levels are likely to be most effective. We did not identify any positive examples in our case studies of where such linkages have been successfully

created and there are few in the literature, so an exploratory approach will be required. Options to consider in the creation of linkages between different levels might include:

- Structured case management of complaints and appeals, including: electronic referral mechanisms within GRMs to ensure that each complaint reaches the actor with decision making authority on that issue; follow up mechanisms (for example automated flags in an MIS and reminder emails) that track whether and when action is taken.

- Direct participation of relevant higher-level decision makers in the community level interface meetings held as part of community score cards or social audits.

- Support to multi-level civil society engagement: facilitation of citizen mobilisation at community level that is explicitly linked to dialogue/advocacy with relevant social protection decision makers at national and intermediate levels.

- Stronger linkages between social accountability and top down accountability mechanisms. For example, anomalies in registration/enrolment or payroll identified through MIS data analysis are systematically flagged to frontline staff for follow up with concerned beneficiaries. Conversely patterns of citizen complaints could trigger national reviews on specific programming issues.

- Promotion of bottom-up learning, such that citizen voice filters up through local service providers to higher levels of the state, for example through support to learning workshops involving local and higher officials that hear from frontline workers about the lessons learned in delivery.

Different types of citizen concern can best be addressed through different types of social accountability mechanisms. Grievance redress mechanisms have tended to be the default social accountability mechanism for social protection programmes, but appear poorly suited to addressing many of the challenges faced by these programmes. A suite of mechanisms – both individual and collective – each adapted to addressing a particular set of challenges, is likely to be a better starting point for the design of an effective strategy than a single social accountability mechanism. In general, we suggest that GRMs are most suited to addressing issues that are: highly salient to poor citizens; affect individuals rather than groups; are 'thin' (can be resolved through the application of rules); and are not hugely sensitive (though a confidential GRM route might sometimes be appropriate to these). Collective social accountability issues are more likely to be suitable for other issues that are highly salient to poor citizens: those that affect groups, are 'thick' or sensitive.

Social accountability is not a panacea: other accountability mechanisms are better at addressing certain issues. The value-added of social accountability is in regard to issues that are most salient to poor and marginalised citizens, that is to say issues are visible to them and affect them in direct and important ways. This is not an unimportant element of accountability: some of these issues might be invisible through other

mechanisms (such as traditional audits or top-down controls). On the other hand, we should not expect social accountability to address a whole range of accountability issues, for example, high level corruption issues that have only indirect and diffuse effects on citizens. Social accountability can more usefully be conceived as one element of an integrated approach to accountability in the social protection sector, which also involves top-down controls. Other top-down accountability issues are more likely to be suitable to addressing important issues that are less salient to individual poor citizens, such as high-level corruption without direct and visible effects on poor citizens.

Whilst intermediaries can play useful roles, there are risks to an over-reliance on them, and finding ways to enable marginalised citizens to directly engage with providers should remain a priority. The available evidence suggests a strong preference on the part of marginalised citizens for face-to-face interfaces with service providers. On the other hand, this preference is coupled with various time, logistical and economic constraints to participation that are particularly acute for the poorest and most marginalised. Access to intermediaries is itself gendered and often lower for marginalised groups, and there are sometimes conflicts of interest between marginalised citizens and intermediaries in relation to social protection programming. It is unlikely to be feasible or helpful to suppress the role of intermediaries or representatives, but the preceding discussion suggests that their ability or incentives to reach the most marginalised should not be assumed. Possible actions to better address the most marginalised include:

- Context specific analysis of how information disseminates within a community and on any potential conflicts of interest between intermediaries

- Training for representatives in how to effectively engage and mobilise the most marginalised and provision of sufficient resources to facilitate the participation of these groups. In the case of formally established committees and volunteers, this could be complemented by the establishment of incentive/reward structures that adequately compensate representatives for the time required to effectively play an outreach role to the most marginalised, as well as mechanisms to hold them to account for so doing.

- Higher priority within social protection communication strategies on building awareness of the hardest to reach citizens, including by developing tailored strategies to reach them and reserving a portion of any communications budget specifically for this purpose.

In addition to establishing social accountability mechanisms, attention should also be given to mainstreaming social accountability in social protection programme design. Social protection programme design can constrain or facilitate social accountability; add-on mechanisms can mitigate, but not entirely make up for the challenges posed by a design that constrains accountability. So, rather than conceiving of social accountability simply as an add-on, stand-alone intervention, wherever

circumstances permit, it makes sense to also think about how to mainstream social accountability within programme design. Evidence suggests this would mean ensuring that programme eligibility criteria and processes, transfer levels and other design features are as simple, visible and easily comprehensible to citizens as possible; and that quotas and stop-start funding are avoided. Of course, social accountability is only one consideration amongst many in social protection programme design, so design is rarely likely to be perfect from a social accountability perspective, and mainstreaming efforts will not obviate the need to also give focused attention to social accountability.

Improved basic monitoring and documentation of social accountability initiatives will be key to enhanced learning about what works. Without improvements in the generally weak documentation and monitoring of social accountability in social protection, it will continue to be difficult to draw specific evidence-based conclusions about what works. Improving documentation will require systematically recording and registering concerns and complaints raised, and following the process through to track whether and how the issues are resolved and feedback provided. Computerised management information systems will usually facilitate this process in relation to more complex issues that require referral beyond the local office; but, where frontline workers are not linked to the MIS, simple paper-based recording of locally addressed issues will also be valuable in terms of building an understanding of dominant concerns and making relevant improvements to systems and operations. In order to strengthen social accountability to marginalised citizens, disaggregation of this data by gender, disability status and other context-specific dimensions of social exclusion will be important.

Finally, it is evident that **further research is needed to build a more robust evidence base** to inform practice. Given how numerous are the research gaps, any and all high-quality research into whether, how and under what conditions social accountability interventions in social protection programmes have impacts on service delivery or state-society relations are likely to add value to the research base. That said, three areas appear to merit particular research attention.

Firstly, *state response to citizen voice in social protection programming*. State action in response to citizen voice seems to be one of the weakest links in the social accountability chain, and is hugely under-researched not only in regards to the social protection sector, but in general. Future policy-related research might investigate the factors that incentivise, enable and constrain the response of providers of social protection to citizen voice; and how these play out differently in respect of different approaches to social accountability, different groups of citizens (in particular the poorest and most marginalised) and different contexts. Given the current dearth of evidence in this area, any programming to promote state response will need to take an exploratory approach; and could usefully have a robust evaluation alongside, in order to start building an evidence base on what works in terms of promoting state response to citizen voice in the social protection sector.

Secondly, *accountability to marginalised and socially excluded citizens.* The social accountability in social protection evidence includes very little analysis of differences between different groups of social protection beneficiaries, even though there is often much diversity in the extent of their poverty and marginalisation. The question as to how best to design social accountability processes so they are most likely to involve and represent the poorest and marginalised groups merits further attention. As noted above, the evidence on intermediaries and processes of information diffusion within communities is very mixed and merits further unpacking, in order to help practitioners develop effective mechanisms to engage and empower these groups.

Thirdly, *integrated approaches.* We recommend above that social protection practitioners start to experiment with strategic approaches, which: use different social accountability mechanisms to address different programming challenges; link local, national and intermediate levels; and fit social accountability within a broader accountability strategy that also includes top-down accountability mechanisms. These will merit robust evaluations to generate learning. The most useful approaches to evaluation in this areas are likely to be qualitative or mixed method, in particular theory-driven approaches that unpack causal chains.

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