

Improving Social Protection's Response to Child Poverty and Vulnerability in Nepal



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Acknowledgements

This report was written by Keetie Roelen and Helen Karki Chettri from the Centre for Social Protection (CSP) at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in collaboration with Bishwa Pun, Shodashi Rayamajhi, Hemanta Dangal and Disa Sjöblom from Save the Children. The authors gratefully acknowledge the input from all key informants and community members that were interviewed for this report, as well as the support provided by KIRDARC and Tuki Association for arranging fieldwork visits in Kalikot district, Karnali zone, Mid-West region and Sindhupalchowk district, Bagmati zone, Central region. We also thank the participants of the consultative workshop held in Kathmandu in February 2016.

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Save the Children Finland
Koskelantie 38, PL 95
00601 Helsinki, Finland, Nepal
Tel: +358 10 843 5000
Fax :+358 10 843 5111
Email: info@pelastakalapset.fi

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For further details please contact

Save the Children Nepal Country Office
Airport Gate Area, Shambhu Marg
Kathmandu, Nepal
G.P.O. Box 3394
Tel: +977-1-4468130/4464803
Fax: +977-1-4468132
Email: Post.nepal@savethechildren.org
www.nepal.savethechildren.net

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank	NAYS	Nepal Adolescent and Youth Survey
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics	NDWA	Nepal Disabled Women Association
CCWB	Central Child Welfare Board	NFDN	National Federation of Disabled, Nepal
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer	NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
CG	Child Grant	NFSP	National Framework for Social Protection
CSSP	Child Sensitive Social Protection	NLSS	National Living Standards Survey
DDC	District Development Committee	NPC	National Planning Commission
DEO	District Education Officer	NPHC	Nepal Population and Housing Census
DFID	Department for International Development	NRS	Nepali Rupee
DoCR	Department of Civil Registration	OAA	Old Age Allowance
DWCO	District Women and Children Office	PMT	Proxy Means Test
ERDCN	Educational Resource and Development Centre Nepal	PW	Public Works
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation	RCIW	Rural Community Infrastructure Works
FCHV	Female Community Health Volunteer	SDIP	Safe Delivery Incentive Program
FGD	Focus Group Discussion	SP	Social Protection
ILO	International Labour Organisation	PO - SD	Program Officer - Social Development
KEP	Karnali Employment Programme	SPCSN	Social Protection Civil Society Network
LDO	Local Development Officer	SWA	Single Women's Allowance
MDG	Millennium Development Goals	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey	UNFCO	United Nations Field Coordination Office
MoE	Ministry of Education	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
MoFALD	Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development	VCPC	Village Child Protection Committee
MoHP	Ministry of Health and Population	VDC	Village Development Committee
MoWCWS	Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare	WFP	World Food Programme
		WHO	World Health Organisation

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1.

INTRODUCTION

Social protection in Nepal has rapidly expanded to become part and parcel of the response to poverty and vulnerability. It is also considered a key policy option for addressing issues of child poverty and deprivation.

Social protection in Nepal has rapidly expanded to become part and parcel of the response to poverty and vulnerability. It is also considered a key policy option for addressing issues of child poverty and deprivation. Evidence that social protection interventions, depending on their design, implementation and delivery, lead to positive impacts on child outcomes such nutrition, health, education and child labour is rapidly expanding (Barrientos et al., 2013). Social protection has the potential to break intergenerational transmission of poverty and create long-term economic benefits (ACPF, 2014). This report aims to assess to what extent social protection in Nepal addresses child poverty and vulnerability and can be considered to be ‘child-sensitive’, and how it can be strengthened to further improve children’s lives.

1.1. Rationale for Study

Nepal can be considered to be at the forefront of social protection amongst low-income countries,

being one of the first low-income countries to have introduced a social pension in 1995 (Koehler, 2014). The country has also greatly expanded its investment in social protection in the last 5 to 10 years. A National Framework for Social Protection (NFSP) was drafted in 2011 and is currently being finalised. It outlines an overall approach to social protection and underpins a set of existing and future policies that combine into a coherent social protection system. Despite this expanded investment and comprehensive set of programmes, social protection in Nepal suffers from coverage, implementation and delivery challenges, all of which undermine their potentially positive impact on children.

Against this backdrop and taking into account the devastating 2015 earthquakes (see Box 1), this report assesses the extent to which social protection in Nepal responds to child poverty and vulnerability and can be considered to be ‘child-sensitive’. As such, the objectives can be summarised as follows:

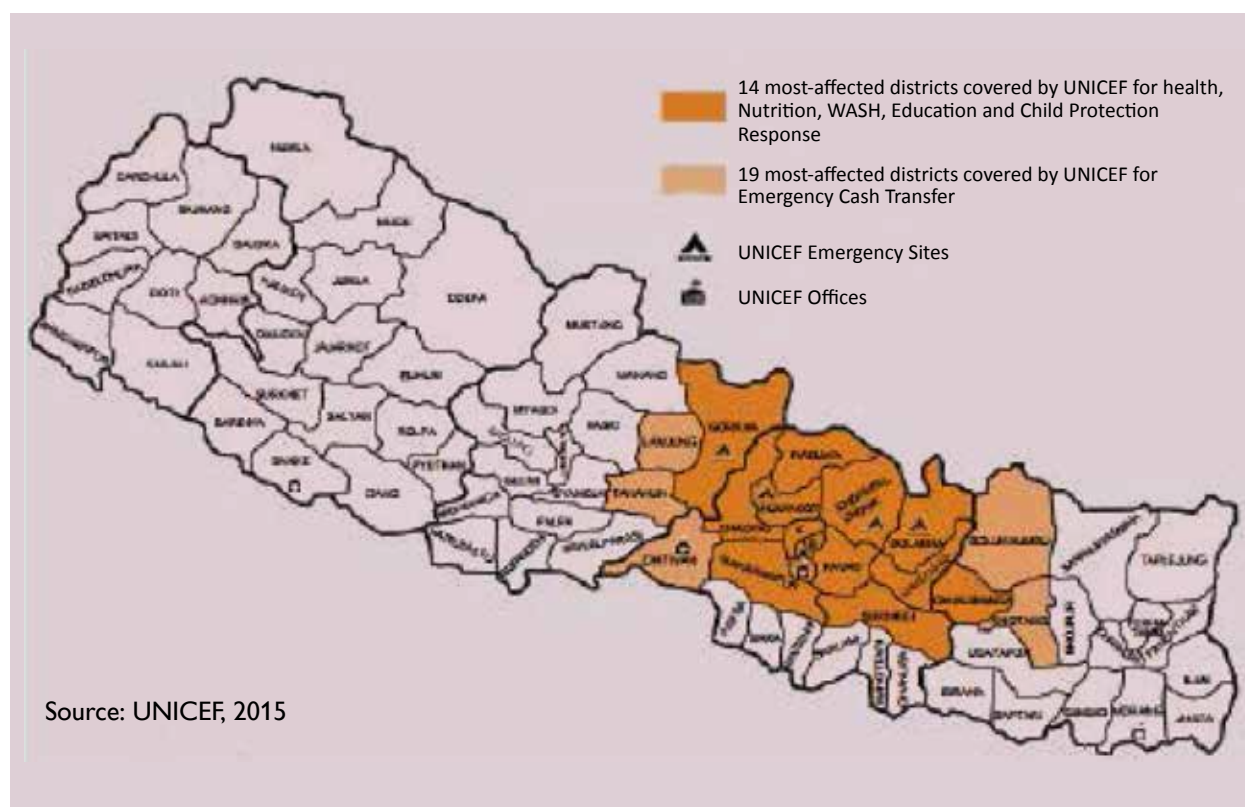
- a) to conduct a review of the situation of child poverty and vulnerability in Nepal based on secondary and grey literature;
- b) to assess the social protection landscape in Nepal and the extent to which and how social protection programmes are child-sensitive in nature;
- c) to identify options for social protection programming that maximise its potential for positive outcomes for children.

Box 1: 2015 earthquakes in Nepal

On 25 April and 12 May 2015 Nepal was struck by heavy earthquakes with a shattering effect on the country. Almost half of all 75 districts in the country were affected. Within those areas 14 “most affected” districts were prioritised for immediate humanitarian relief by government, INGOs and NGOs. These 14 districts have an estimated total affected population of 2.8 million, out of which 1.1 million (40 percent) are children.

1.2. Methodology

The methods employed in this study include the review of secondary literature and collection and analysis of primary data. The literature review covers information on the situation of child poverty and vulnerability and on social protection programmes in Nepal, particularly with respect to how they consider children in their design, implementation or evaluation. Sources include reports by National Planning Commission (NPC), line ministries, UNICEF, ILO, Save the Children and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and literature and studies from national and international research institutes. Primary data was collected at two different levels: (i) national level and (ii) district level. At national level, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with key stakeholders involved in child poverty, social protection and child protection policies. These include government representatives, international organisations, NGOs and selected donors (a full overview can be found in Annex 1). At district level, semi-structured (group) interviews were undertaken with District Development Committee (DDC) and Village Development Committee (VDC)



officials, implementing partners and programme participants in Kalikot district in Karnali zone, Mid-West region (November 2014) and in Sindhupalchowk district, Central region (February 2016). Kalikot was selected given the range of social protection programmes available, including the Child Grant and the Karnali Employment Programme (KEP). Save the Children's Child Sensitive Social Protection (CSSP) programme is implemented in Sindhupalchowk, allowing for lesson learning regarding the improvement of child-sensitivity of existing social protection programmes. A full overview of respondents is provided in Annex 1. Finally, findings and recommendations were validated at a consultative workshop in Kathmandu in February 2016 (see Annex 2 for overview of participants).

1.3. Outline

This report begins with setting out the conceptual frameworks regarding social protection and child-sensitive social protection (CSSP). Next, main trends and issues regarding child poverty and vulnerability in Nepal are discussed. This is followed by an assessment of the impact of selected social protection programmes on child poverty and vulnerability. Finally, this report discusses challenges in Nepal's social protection system in addressing child poverty and proposes recommendations for making social protection in Nepal more child-sensitive.

2.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section clarifies definitions and conceptual approaches underpinning the analysis in this report.

2.1. Social Protection

Social protection can be defined as “all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalised; with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups” (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004, p. 9).

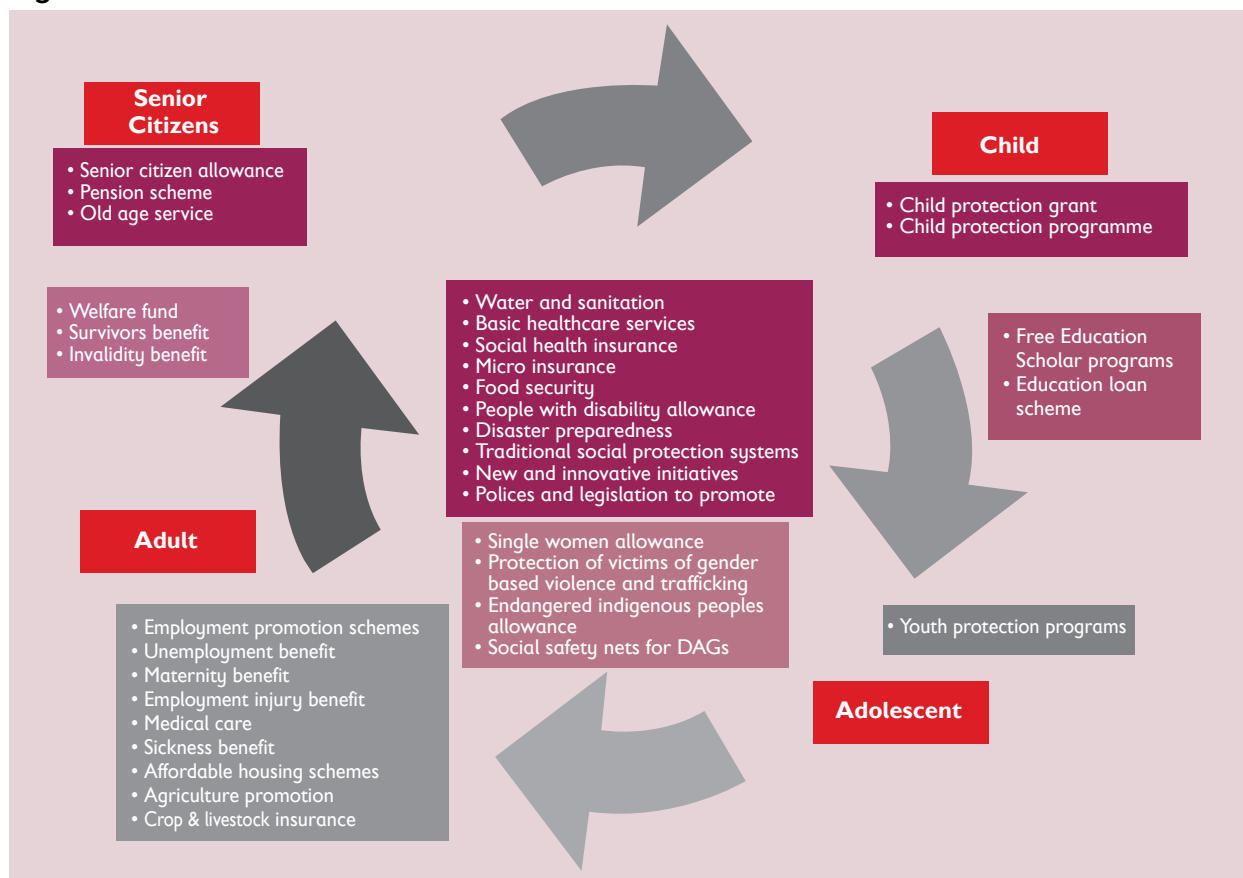
The definition of social protection as adopted in the draft National Framework for Social Protection emphasises the multidimensional nature of poverty and the importance of ensuring a minimum standard of living for all citizens through a set of contributory and non-contributory measures: *“In Nepali Context social protection is defined as a set of policies and actions aiming at reducing poverty and multi-dimensional deprivations to ensure a basic minimum livelihood for all citizens. It includes all non-contributory and contributory measures that: (1) provide cash or in kind transfers to the poor and vulnerable, to protect them against livelihood risks; (2) improve access of deprived*

people to basic social and economic services; (3) promote social insurance in formal and informal sectors for income maintenance and secure livelihood; (4) enhance the social dignity, equity and rights of people who are marginalized and socially excluded” (NPC, 2012b).

There are multiple approaches to operationalising this definition. One such approach is the life-course framework or life-cycle approach, which has also been adopted in the NFSP (see Figure 1).

The life-cycle approach focuses on different stages throughout people’s lives and the specific needs and vulnerabilities particular to those stages of life. Types of risks and levels of exposure to different types of risks depend on one’s stage in the life-cycle. The life-cycle approach emphasises the need for social protection to provide an adequate response and ensure a minimum level of security throughout the whole cycle. The life-cycle can be broken into stages relating to infancy, school-age, adolescence, childbearing and lactating age for women, working-age and old age, with various instruments being particularly appropriate for

Figure 1 Life-course framework NFSP



Source: NPC (2012b) National Framework for Social Protection (draft)

addressing needs and vulnerabilities of these life-cycle stages.

Children and elderly are widely considered the most vulnerable groups that are highly dependent on others for the fulfillment of their basic needs, making unconditional cash transfers or free health insurance potentially relevant interventions. Adolescents can be considered to have specific needs and face particular risks in their transition from schooling to work and scholarships in accessing vocational training may be an appropriate mechanism for this age group. The biggest risk faced by adults of working age pertains to the lack of work or the inability to raise a proper income from the work they are performing, or to shocks that prevent them from working, such as illness and disability. Unemployment insurance protects adults in working-age against a loss of income in the case of job loss, whilst input subsidies can provide the necessary support to farmers. A life-cycle approach to social protection aims to ensure that people in these different stages of life

are protected against the differential risks and vulnerabilities they face in their lifetime.

2.2. Child-Sensitive Social Protection

Definitions of child-sensitive social protection (CSSP) are thin on the ground, despite its widespread use since the 2009 Joint Statement on CSSP calling for a more coherent focus on children in the social protection agenda and signed by many international organisations and NGOs (Roelen and Sabates-Wheeler, 2012). We adopt the following definition:

Child-Sensitive Social Protection (CSSP) refers to social protection programmes or a system of programmes that aim (i) to maximise positive impacts on children, when and where appropriate and (ii) to minimise potential unintended side effects or perverse incentives. This encompasses both direct interventions (i.e. child-focused or targeted) and indirect interventions.

This definition highlights the two components of CSSP, namely maximising positive outcomes and minimising adverse consequences. Social protection can be considered child-sensitive when it directly improves children's lives but also when it reduces unintended adverse consequences or perverse incentives. Public works programmes, for example, can be considered child-sensitive when they include safeguards that prevent children from working on such programmes or provide substitute labour for adult household members working on public works programmes. The notion that CSSP is about considering positive as well as potential negative effects of programmes challenges those working on social protection for children to think outside of the box and beyond common assumptions of what works or doesn't work for children.

The definition above also emphasises that CSSP extends beyond instruments that directly focus on children. Social protection interventions can also be child-sensitive when targeted at other household members or aiming to benefit the household as a whole. An old age pension, for example, will reach many children when large proportions of the population live with grandparents or elderly (such as in South Africa). A poverty-targeted programme can be child-sensitive when accompanied by sensitisation activities that increase awareness about how to respond to children's material and psychosocial needs.

This definition of CSSP appears to resonate with the particular context in Nepal. Key informants in this research recognised the distinction between child-focused and child-sensitive social protection programming, echoing the notion that child-sensitive social protection is broader than programmes targeted at children. The role of the family was highlighted in this regard, and the need to recognise that children generally grow up in family settings. Programmes reaching families at large or other members can therefore also be considered being child-sensitive: *"Thinking about child-sensitive social protection, children's issues are related to the family so we cannot separate the children's issues from those of the family"* [Executive Director, CCWB].

The conceptual frameworks of CSSP and the life-cycle approach to social protection can be

meaningfully combined in assessing the extent to which Nepal's social protection system addresses pressing elements of child poverty and vulnerability. Child-sensitive social protection across the life-cycle means that programmes focused on addressing vulnerabilities across different stages of life can be child-sensitive in that they benefit children or are designed in such a way that they do not cause harm or lead to unintended negative side-effects. Key informants also referred to how social protection covering other elements of the life-cycle can indeed be child-sensitive. With respect to old age pensions, for example, it was mentioned that: *"almost 40% of [Old Age Allowance] money goes indirectly to children. This is also rational from our cultural context because most of the grandchildren in rural context grow up in the lap of grandparents"* [Social Policy Specialist, UNICEF] and *"The Old Age Allowance (OAA) goes to children somehow because grandparents give to grandchildren for schooling"* [Executive Director, CCWB].

Box 2: Social protection as an emergency response

The most notable use of social protection interventions in humanitarian and emergency responses refers to cash transfers. They have become an increasingly important component of the toolkit of humanitarian aid in the 1990s and 2000s with evidence indicating that *"cash can be effective at meeting the needs of people dealing with the impacts of crisis and disaster, as a substitute or complement to in-kind aid. But it is not appropriate at all times and in all places. Markets need to be functioning or able to recover quickly enough that an injection of cash will prompt traders and shopkeepers to make goods available. [...] beneficiaries of emergency response CTs have been found to use the money for the goods and services they most need such as food, shelter and debt repayment"* (Bailey and Harvey, 2015).

3.

CHILD POVERTY AND VULNERABILITY IN NEPAL

It is widely recognised that child poverty and vulnerability is a complex, dynamic and multidimensional phenomenon, encompassing children's material and non-material needs.

It is widely recognised that child poverty and vulnerability is a complex, dynamic and multidimensional phenomenon, encompassing children's material and non-material needs (Roelen, 2015). This section therefore provides an overview of a range of outcomes for children, ranging from economic poverty to care issues, considering changes over time and horizontal inequalities based on gender, age, geographical location and caste where appropriate.

In general, Nepal has seen many improvements with respect to children's outcomes, including monetary poverty, living conditions, education and infant mortality. However, not all children have been able to share in these improvements. Nepal is a country characterised by its diversity. Although a relatively small land mass, Nepal covers three climatic zones from the flat tropics in the south to the snow-capped Himalayan range stretching its northern border. The

remoteness and lack of infrastructure in the mid-hills and mountainous areas place people living in those areas at a great disadvantage. The country also has around 125 different castes¹ or ethnic groups (CBS, 2012), which brings along a deeply entrenched social exclusion with relation to caste (particularly the lower castes such as Dalit or Janajati groups) and other identity parameters (Koehler et al., 2009). Gender also plays a significant role in household and community dynamics. Despite many legislative changes to reduce discrimination against women they remain at a disadvantage due to socially and culturally embedded patriarchal practices.

3.1. Economic Poverty and Livelihoods

Poverty in Nepal has declined significantly over the last decade. In 1995, 42 percent of the population were living below the national poverty line² compared to 24 percent in 2013 (Khanal, 2014). It is also estimated that within

¹Caste refers to the hereditary classes of Nepali society, distinguished by relative degrees of ritual purity or pollution and of social status. Although several anti-discrimination laws have been introduced to prevent the discrimination and mistreatment of lower castes and ethnic minorities coverage and enforcement is a problem as the system remains socially reinforced (Barr et al. 2007). The last census in Nepal reported 125 caste or ethnic groups in Nepal (CBS 2012).

the last 15 years per capita income of the poorest 20 percent of the population increased by 687 percent (CBS, 2011). Large geographical disparities exist: families residing in households in the far-west and mid-west development regions were disproportionately represented in the bottom two consumption quintiles at 63 percent and 54 percent respectively (CBS, 2011 p.35). These regions span mountainous areas that are hard to access and rely largely on agricultural practices (CBS, 2011 p.10) and seasonal migration for work (Gill, 2003). Poverty is also more prevalent in rural areas; 23 percent of the population residing in rural locations are in the bottom consumption quintile compared to just 5 percent in urban locations (CBS, 2011). Dalit households are more likely to be amongst the poorest (UNICEF, New Era and NPC, 2010); 32 percent of the Dalit population are part of the poorest 20 percent of population (Koehler et al., 2009). Households with more children are more likely to be poor: large families with more than 6 household members have shown a slower than average rate of poverty reduction (UNICEF, New Era and NPC, 2010).

Analysis of the situation with respect to wider living conditions indicates that many children live in vulnerable conditions. With respect to fuel use, for example, the use of gas, oil or kerosene puts children at a greater risk of fire hazards while cooking on open fires can increase children's risk of chest infections and asthma. Nationally, 34 percent of households still rely on gas, oil or kerosene as their main source of lighting. Urban households have greater access to electricity (92%) than rural households (48%). Lack of clean drinking water can also lead to disease and ill health, with knock on effects on nutrition and schooling outcomes. Nationally less than half of all households - 42 percent - have access to clean drinking water (ILO and CBS, 2012).

3.2. Food Security and Nutrition

Food security remains a widespread concern in Nepal. Only one in two households in Nepal are food secure³ and has access to food year round (MOHP, New Era and ICF International, 2012). This equates to around 3.5 million people being moderately to severely food insecure (ADB, 2011). Poor households that rely on subsistence agriculture are more susceptible to food insecurity due to the lack of income for purchasing food and vulnerability to natural disasters that affect crop production (FAO, 2006). Malnutrition among children in Nepal remains widespread. National averages for children aged under 5 who are stunted (42%), wasted (14%) and underweight (31%) are high⁴ (CBS, 2011). Overall children living in poorer households were found to be more likely to be at risk of stunting, wasting and being underweight than richer households (ibid). Malnutrition is more prevalent in rural locations and in the western regions (ibid). While children living in the mountainous regions are most affected by stunting and being underweight, wasting was most widespread in the Terai (ibid).

Household income and nutrition outcomes are not always positively correlated. Children who were severely underweight also included those in the richest quintile (CBS, 2011). Likewise although stunting affects children in the lowest consumption quintile most severely (52%), it is also prevalent amongst the highest quintile (22%) (ibid). An increase in family income can also lead to the purchase of more desirable but less nutritious food stuffs. *“Vitamin and mineral deficiency is the source of the most massive ‘hidden hunger’ and malnutrition in the world today. The ‘hidden hunger’ due to micronutrient deficiency does not produce hunger as we know it. You might not feel it in the belly, but it strikes at the core of your health and vitality.”* (UNICEF, 2014).

² The national poverty line is calculated using a cost of basic needs approach and inflation adjusted on an annual basis. See <http://www.penn.org.np/sites/penn.org.np/files/NLSS%20Findings%20for%20IDPG.pdf>.

³ “Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”. (World Food Summit, 1996 quoted in FAO 2006)

⁴ Stunting, wasting and being deemed underweight are measured by the proportion of children under the age of five who fall below minus two or three standard deviations from the median in relation to the WHO population reference (CBS 2011).

3.3. Health

Nepal has made significant progress in the last two decades with respect to improving children's health. Infant mortality reduced from 108 deaths per 1,000 live births per year in 1990 to 46 in 2011 and the under-five mortality rate declined even more sharply from 162 in 1990 to 54 in 2011 (NPC and UNDP, 2013). These figures vary considerably according to geographical location though. Infant and child mortality were found to be highest in the mid-west and far west regions (58 and 73, and 65 and 82 per 1,000 live births respectively). Infant and child mortality was also highest in those mountainous regions (73 and 87 respectively) while children in rural areas are more affected than children living in urban locations (NPC and UNDP, 2013).

Vaccination coverage is highest in the mid-western Terai (76%) and lowest in the mid-western mountainous region (46%) (CBS and UNICEF, 2012). Interestingly children residing in urban areas (58%) were less likely (65%) to receive all vaccinations than those in rural areas, while children from families in the poorest quintile (60%) were less likely to vaccinate their children than those in the richest quintile (73%). Children whose mother had no education (57%) were less likely to receive all immunisations than children whose mother had a primary education (75%) or secondary education (73%) (CBS and UNICEF, 2012).

Availability and access to health centres, professionals and drug dispensaries also displays great geographic disparities (Koehler et al., 2009). Some areas of Nepal, such as the mountainous regions, have much poorer access due to a variety of reasons including the lack of road networks, severe weather cutting off areas and a difficulty in attracting professionals to the postings (Koehler et al., 2009).

3.4. Education

Primary school enrolment in Nepal is close to universal (95%) (World Bank, 2013). However,

this figure does not account for the quality of education, enrolment dropping off with age and higher levels of education, or the effects of geography, gender, ethnicity and poverty on access to education: *"If we see the net enrolment figures in primary education it is somehow encouraging, but of those we enrol in primary education half of them dropout when they reach higher secondary level"* [Undersecretary, MoWCWS].

In terms of exam performance, over 40 percent of children taking their SLC⁵ fail (World Bank, 2013). 16 percent of households in the country believe that schooling for their children is less than adequate and 70 percent think education to be just adequate (CBS, 2011). Concerns about the quality of education were also voiced by key informants: *"There is no quality education for children. There is a very big gap between government and private education and for most children private education is out of reach. They have to rely on government education and the government education is of lower quality. (...) Because the quality of education is lower, [...] it is very difficult for a child to get a pass mark in every class and reach the SLC level. So they just drop out of school and classes and the consequences are seen when they prepare for jobs"* [Coordinator, SPCSN].

A survey of dropout amongst adolescents and youth, suggested that key reasons for drop-outs were economic problems (34%), followed by family difficulties (25%), lack of interest (17%), failure in exams (10%) and work (8%). The main reason among female dropouts was marriage (35%) followed by family situation (23%). Other reasons for female drop-outs included financial problems (13%), lack of interest (10%) and failure in exams (11%) (MOHP, 2011).

Access barriers to education differ by ethnicity, with disparities increasing at higher levels of education (World Bank, 2013). Lower castes such as Dalits and Janajati still suffer educational disadvantages and prejudices making access to education more difficult (Barr et al., 2007).

5. School leaving certificate taken during grade 10 (c. aged 15-16).

Reasons for the marginalisation of Dalit children include poor education facilities, substandard teaching methods and prejudiced attitudes towards Dalit children by educators and children from other castes (ibid). Poverty, coupled with the aforementioned dimensions of age, gender and ethnicity, also presents an intergenerational process of disadvantage for education. Families in the lowest consumption quintile are more likely to be illiterate and due to the necessary coping strategies of poverty are less likely to be able to invest fully in their children's education (UNICEF, New Era and NPC, 2010).

3.5. Child Labour

One of the many coping strategies of poorer households across the globe is child labour. Child labour is defined as any work that negatively affects a child's development and that exceeds a particular number of hours (depending on the age of the child and the type of work). Many children are also involved in economic activity more generally. Such economic activity is not considered child labour but contributes to the household economy (ILO and CBS, 2012).

Overall 42 percent of the child population of Nepal are considered to be economically active (CBS, 2011). Activities include childcare, domestic chores, tending livestock, collecting fodder or water, and helping with some agricultural practices. Girls are generally more likely to engage in these activities than boys are, as are children in rural areas compared to urban areas (ILO and CBS, 2012). Across all types of economic activity, girls spend an average of 21.5 hours per week on activities and boys spend an average of 21.1 hours on work (ILO and CBS, 2012).

50.9 percent of all economically active children and 20.6 percent of all children in Nepal are considered to be involved in child labour (ILO and CBS, 2012). Examples of the types of work children in child labour are involved in include working in agriculture, at brick kilns, sari factories and dance bars. It also includes the illegal but still prevalent practice of bonded labour as domestic

workers which, particularly affects girls, known as "Kamalari" in Nepali. Figures on domestic child labourers suggest that there are currently 361,814 children working in this sector with more than half of them being sent to work in urban areas (Banos Smith, 2014 quoting Dharel, 2009, Sharma, 2012 and Plan and World Education, 2012). Girls remain disproportionately affected with 0.91 million girls compared to 0.69 million boys being involved in child labour nationwide (ILO and CBS, 2012). Child labour is also most prevalent in rural locations (ibid).

3.6. Child Care and Protection

Issues of birth registration, early marriage, family separation and alternative care arrangements can be considered core components of child care and protection. Lack of birth registration can have many adverse consequences for children. It puts children at risk of trafficking⁶ and also hinders efforts to reunite trafficked or missing children with their families as it may be harder to trace relatives. Children are also vulnerable to sexual abuse as although sex with a minor under the age of 16 is against the law in Nepal, this is hard to prove without a birth certificate (UNICEF, 2002). National estimates of birth registration suggest that 42 percent of children under 5 years of age are registered, which is well below the NPC target of 90 percent registration by 2013 (MOHP, New Era and ICF International, 2012). The mountainous areas had the highest rate of registration (46%) followed by the Terai (46%) and the Hills (37%) (ibid). Despite being illegal, early marriage still affects many children below the age of 18 in Nepal, particularly girls from illiterate families, lower castes or Janajatis (Plan Nepal, World Vision and Save the Children, 2012). The worst outcomes of child marriage relate to the physical impacts of early sexual relationships and pregnancy of girls (often linked to maternal mortality), but it is also a common cause for drop-out from education. Many children in Nepal live in informal care; about one in every ten households in Nepal care for a child that is not their own. One of the important reasons for family separation is migration for work.

⁶ There is no record of citizenship (which requires a valid birth certificate) for these children when traffickers get caught, making them more attractive to traffickers as it is harder to prosecute when citizenship is unknown (UNICEF 2002).

Box 3: Child poverty and vulnerability in earthquake affected areas

Poverty: It is estimated that the income shock following the earthquakes will push a further 700,000-982,000 people below the poverty line due to loss of housing and livelihoods (ADB 2015). This equates to 2.5-3.5 percent of the population on top of the existing 21 percent of the population living in poverty. 50 to 70 percent of those estimated to fall into poverty live in the rural central hills and mountains, which were already vulnerable to high poverty rates prior to the earthquakes.



Living conditions: The earthquakes destroyed over half a million homes and damaged many additional households (Shelter Cluster 2016). Families have been forced to live under canvas through the monsoon and then the harsh Nepali winter. The inadequacy and insecurity of these temporary shelters is one of the key concerns of children in the earthquake affected areas (Withers and Dahal, 2015).

Food Security: Many families face drastically increased food insecurity as a result of the impact of the earthquakes on agricultural practices and storage. It is estimated that more than 3.5 million people were in need of food assistance following the earthquakes, with 1.4 million deemed most affected and prioritized for immediate food assistance (Save the Children, 2015). Increased levels of food insecurity may translate into malnutrition for children in affected areas.

Health: Around 90 percent of health facilities were damaged by the earthquakes, leaving families and pregnant mothers without access to clean and safe facilities (Save the Children, 2015). Damage to WASH facilities has also left children more exposed to the spread of diseases such as cholera (UNICEF, 2015) with children fearing for their health and that of their family members (Withers and Dahal, 2015).

Education: The earthquakes' damage to school buildings severely disrupted education, leaving over 1 million students without education during the first few months post-emergency (Save the Children, 2015). 62 percent of the classrooms in the 14 most affected districts were found to be unsafe for use (UNICEF, 2015). Returning to school was something children affected by the earthquakes desired the most (Withers and Dahal, 2015).

Migration and displacement: An estimated 3.2 million children were displaced by the earthquakes (Save the Children 2015). Close to 60,000 people were still in 120 displacement sites by the end of 2015 (UNICEF, 2015). The earthquakes have also increased the risk of trafficking in the most affected districts. To date, 281 girls and 224 boys have been intercepted from trafficking (ibid).

4.

SOCIAL PROTECTION AND THE IMPACT ON CHILD POVERTY AND VULNERABILITY

This section seeks to provide a systematic (but not exhaustive) overview of evidence on the impact of social protection programmes in Nepal on child poverty and vulnerability and the reasons underlying such impact.

This section seeks to provide a systematic (but not exhaustive) overview⁷ of evidence on the impact of social protection programmes in Nepal on child poverty and vulnerability and the reasons underlying such impact. This is crucial in understanding the extent to which social protection in Nepal can be considered to be child-sensitive.

Nepal has a plethora of social protection programmes currently in operation across the country. Some of these programmes are targeted directly at children such as the Child Grant and Scholarship programmes. There are also programmes which indirectly impact children by focusing on other stages of the life-cycle and targeting other family members. Examples of these include the Safe Mother programme, Old Age Allowance, Single Women's Allowance, Disability Allowances and public works

programmes. An analysis of the intended and unintended positive and negative effects on children provides insight into the degree of the programmes' child sensitivity.

In order to place this analysis within the context of Nepal's social protection landscape, we adopt the life-cycle approach. Programmes under consideration are thus selected to cover all stages of the life-cycle⁸, considering their impact on children's outcomes as discussed in section 4. The following programmes are included:

- ▶ **Infants:** Child Grant
- ▶ **School-age children:** Scholarship programme Midday Meal programme
- ▶ **Pregnant and lactating women:** Safe Mother programme (Aama)
- ▶ **Working age population:** Karnali Employment Programme (KEP)

⁷ Social protection schemes for endangered Janajati groups were omitted due to lack of literature and knowledge base. These programmes do warrant further research as they have the potential to impact on children throughout the lifecycle.

⁸ The life stage of 'youth and adolescents' is omitted because too little information is available for programmes covering that stage in the life-cycle.

- ▶ **Elderly:** Old Age Allowance (OAA) and Single Women’s Allowance (SWA)
- ▶ **Across life-cycle:** Disability Allowance

Four of the programmes under consideration (Child Grant, Old Age Allowance, Single Women’s Allowance and Disability Allowance) are implemented by the Department of Civil Registration (DoCR) within the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD). The Department was established in 2015 with a two-fold mandate: (1) implement and improve vital events registration, and (2) implement and deliver social protection. Implementation of all MoFALD social protection programmes are combined with funds being distributed from central government to the District Development Committee (DDC) and then to the Village Development Committee (VDC) where the VDC secretary distributes the cash transfers to the beneficiaries every four months (Adhikari et al., 2014). The Scholarship

programmes and Midday Meal programmes are implemented by the Ministry of Education (MoE) while the Safe Mother programme (Aama) is implemented by the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP). The Karnali Employment Programme (KEP) is also implemented by MoFALD but not part of the social protection programmes administered by DoCR.

Table 1 provides a schematic overview of intended impacts of these different programmes elements of child poverty and vulnerability as set out in programme documents. The overview shows how most programmes have clear and narrow objectives: the Child Grant particularly aims to improve nutrition for children while allowances for those unable to work, including elderly and severely disabled, aim to reduce economic poverty. It is noteworthy that improvements in child labour and child care are not explicit objectives of any programme under consideration.

	Child Grant	Scholarships Programmes	Midday Meal	Safer Motherhood Programme (Aama)	KEP	Old Age and Single Women’s Allowance	Full Disability Allowance	Partial Disability Allowance
Poverty					+	+	+	+
Nutrition	+		+					
Education		+	+					
Health				+		+	+	+
Child Labour								
Child Care								

The assessment of the impact of these interventions on different child poverty and vulnerability outcomes is based on secondary information about design, implementation and impact of programmes, both in terms of children and the families more widely. It has to be noted that information on the design and implementation of the majority of these programmes is readily available but that availability of impact evaluations is limited. In terms of programmes that are not directly targeted at children, information with respect to impact on or implications for children is particularly scarce. We therefore draw heavily

on information provided by key informants and community groups.

The discussion of child-sensitivity for each programme is based on a ‘traffic-light’ assessment for each of the areas of poverty and vulnerability as discussed in section 3, namely (i) poverty, (ii) nutrition, (iii) education, (iv) health, (v) child labour, and (vi) child care. Dark green denotes strong positive impact, light green denotes fairly positive impact, yellow denotes maintenance of status quo (either because of no impact or because of positive and negative effects that cancel each other out) and red

denotes a negative impact. Blue indicates that no information is available and no conclusions can be drawn. See a 'legend' in Table 2.

Table 2: Impact 'traffic light' key	
+	Positive impact
+	Fairly positive impact
+/-	Maintenance of status quo
-	Negative impact
?	No information available

It is important to note that these 'traffic lights' should be interpreted as an indication of relative impacts within one programme rather than comparable across programmes. As little quantified information on impacts is available across programmes, it is not possible to compare the magnitude of one programme against the other in any of the areas of child poverty and vulnerability.

Box 4: Social protection as part of the earthquake response

The response to Nepal's earthquakes has been wide and multi-faceted, including in-kind and cash support from government, INGOs and NGOs. Many initiatives are similar to those used in regular social protection programming including the provision of cash transfers to those most affected by the earthquake and cash-for-work projects related to clearance of debris and demolition of unsafe buildings. Two initiatives are particularly notable given their linkages to the existing social protection system and implications for the future: (1) the Emergency Top-Up Cash Transfer Programme (ETCTP) and (2) the provision of an ID card to households affected by the earthquake.

1. The ETCTP consisted of a one-off top-up of 3,000 NRS for participants in five social protection programmes implemented by the DoCR in MoFALD, including the Child Grant, Disability Allowance, Old Age Allowance and Single Women's and Widow's Allowance, in the 19 most-affected areas (Rabi et al., 2015). Its aim was to offer immediate assistance to vulnerable households through financial support, contributing to household expenditures and prevent negative coping strategies (UNICEF, 2016). Approximately 93% of intended beneficiaries (amounting to 434,690 people) received the benefit. A second phase of the ETCTP aims to extend the Child Grant to all children under five in 11 districts. A registry is currently being drawn up in these districts and any children who do not have birth registration are being registered. Following the completion of the registration system all children will receive a lump-sum of 4000 NRS in May 2016. This second phase will not only provide additional support to young children but will also expand the level of birth registration.
2. In order to channel support to households affected by the earthquake in an efficient manner, households have been able to apply for an ID card giving them access to a range of in-kind and cash support. The application process took place at the VDC level and includes the provision of witnesses and verification by engineers. The range of transfers channelled to those holding an ID card differs per VDC but includes basic household supplies, two government cash transfers totalling 25,000 NRS and NGO cash transfers such as 15,000 NRS by Save the Children. There are also plans to distribute a large housing grant of 200,000 NRS to households carrying this ID card. The generosity of this package has led to many households splitting up; as the ID card is awarded at household level, many households appeal to the VDCs to split their households. As a result, the number of households in a Dalit community in Thumpakhar in Sindhupalchowk district had risen from 22 to 33 households.

4.1 Infants: Child Grant

The Child Grant was introduced in 2009, primarily aimed at improving nutritional outcomes for children. The grant is available for up to two children per household under the age of 5 in Karnali region and poor children from Dalit households nationwide (Adhikari et al., 2014). The transfer amount is 200 NRS per month, to be distributed every four months and supplemented by orientation on infant and young child feeding practices (ADB, 2011). Awareness and sensitisation activities linking beneficiaries to birth registration and complementary services are almost entirely dependent on NGO support, leading to big differences between areas where such support is or is not available.

The impact of the Child Grant can be considered to be moderately positive. It has contributed to reducing poverty and improving health outcomes for children and increasing birth registration rates. In line with the primary aim of the programme and one of the most pressing concerns for children in Nepal, the most notable impact is with respect to nutrition, both in terms of making children more food secure and reducing malnutrition. In a study in Karnali, Okubo (2014) finds that *“the prevalence of underweight decreased from 42.5 percent for non-recipients to 34.5 per cent for children who received the full amount of CG, a decrease by 8 percentage points (18.8 percent)”*. No conclusive information is available regarding the effects on child labour and child care. The issue of birth registration was considered both a barrier to receiving the Child Grant and a positive impact of the programme as the requirement to have birth registration to sign up for the programme formed a positive incentive for birth registration for many children.

Poverty	+
Nutrition	+
Education	?
Health	+
Child Labour	?
Child Care	+

Factors that contribute to these positive impacts include coverage and spending patterns. Coverage of the programme is relatively high in the programmes areas with 76 percent of eligible children having received the grant in the Karnali zone, Mid-West region (CBS and UNICEF, 2012). The grant was found to have been used mainly for buying food, clothing, household items, education, health and a very small percentage (2%) for income generation (Thakur, 2014 quoting NLSS findings). It has also allowed households to purchase more nutritious foods and items not locally produced (Adhikari et al., 2014).

Factors that hamper the positive impacts include the low transfer rate, irregular and low payments and delayed registration. The transfer amount - 200 NRS - is low compared to overall cost of living. There is strong consensus that the transfer amount is too low for the grant to have meaningful impact: *“In Dolpa (Karnali), one egg costs R50, what can 200 NRS do?”* [KIRDARC District Coordinator, Kalikot], *“The Child Grant is not enough, with 200 NRS we cannot buy 2 litres milk in Kalikot”* [Undersecretary, MoWCSW] and *“There is nothing if there is an empty plate with a single seed”* [Executive Director, CCWB].

Payments were found to be irregular and often below the stipulated amount. A recent evaluation suggests that only 63 percent of beneficiaries received the full transfer and on average beneficiaries are receiving 83 percent of the transfer value (Adhikari et al., 2014). Most families were found to have received the benefit only once in the last year, although payments are to be received every four months. When asked about when the last payment was received, 33 percent of beneficiary households had received the grant more than 10 months ago, 38 percent less than 7-9 months ago and just 14 percent had received it under 3 months ago (Thakur, 2014).

Although children are eligible for the Child Grant from birth, new-borns often experience a delay in getting registered for the programme. Current registration processes are an important factor in

these delays: at present, one has to be registered before the end of November of the current year to be able to benefit from the programme from August next year. In other words, a caregiver who registers their child for the scheme in December 2015 will receive it only in August 2017, thereby defeating the point of contributing positively to the child's window of opportunity of the first 1000 days in terms of developmental potential. A second issue contributing to delays in registration for new-borns relates to birth registration. Households with eligible children who had not yet received the child grant stated that the main reason for this delay was the inability to complete necessary documentation due to delays in or lack of birth registration. As a result of this delay, coverage of children under 12 months was lowest (Thakur, 2014).

That said, the Child Grant was also found to positively impact birth registration: “The

most significant benefit of child grant is the increase in birth registration (birth registration is still low). This is an unintended positive benefit.” [Social Policy Specialist, UNICEF]. Key informants in Karnali shared the view that the Child Grant had increased overall birth registration, particularly in conjunction with awareness campaigns and assistance in getting the appropriate documentation provided by NGOs: “The Nepali government provides 200 NRS to all children in Karnali. So for that there are some conditions to receive that, for example birth registration. So we do some campaigns to ensure birth registration of all children, especially those children who are under 35 days. We have successfully achieved 95% birth registration and this is the government scheme” [Programme Manager, KIRDARC, Kathmandu]. Similar experiences were shared by a community group in Sindhupalchowk (see Box 5).

Box 5: Case study – the Child Grant and birth registration in Sindhupalchowk, Central Region.

Experiences in a Dalit community in Thumpakhar VDC in Sindhupalchowk indicate how support with obtaining birth registration can promote inclusion into the Child Grant scheme. Save the Children's Child Sensitive Social Protection (CSSP) programme aims to improve access to existing social protection schemes by providing awareness and advice on eligibility criteria and application processes. When implementation of the CSSP programme was started in this community, none of the children were receiving the Child Grant despite being eligible. The mothers indicated that although they were aware of the Old Age Allowance, they did not know about the existence of the Child Grant or that their children under five were eligible. Implementing partner Tuki Association created awareness of children's eligibility and also provided necessary information on how to apply, including the need for birth registration. Mothers and their children subsequently went to the VDC in small groups to obtain birth registration and then to apply for the Child Grant for their children.

4.2. School-Age Children

This section discusses Scholarship programmes and the Midday Meal programme.

4.2.1. Scholarship Programmes

Scholarship programmes are a popular instrument in Nepal for improving educational outcomes for vulnerable groups including girls, Dalit and disabled children. For the purpose of

this report, we focus on the programmes for girls and Dalit children. Each scheme provides a yearly stipend of 350 NRS, which is distributed as a lump sum in the presence of a parent or primary carer in school during enrolment (ERDCN, 2011). Since 2011, the girls' scholarship programme was expanded to cover 100 percent of female students attending primary school (ERDCN, 2011). The Dalit scheme aims to cover all Dalit children attending primary school. These programmes are implemented through

the Ministry of Education (MoE) through to the District Education Office (DEO), who in turn distribute the funds to schools.

Despite their popularity, the impact of scholarship programmes appears to be very limited. There is no conclusive evidence regarding the aspects of poverty, nutrition, health and child care. Findings with respect to education and child labour suggest that impacts are not unequivocally positive, largely due to implementation issues undermining positive effects and negative effects regarding the singling out of vulnerable groups possibly offsetting positive impacts.

Poverty	?
Nutrition	?
Education	+/-
Health	?
Child Labour	+/-
Child Care	?

Interviews with key informants reveal that some positive impact on enrolment can be observed following the introduction of scholarship programmes: *“Until a few years back, a child of the Dalit community had a very rare chance to go to school. Even if they went to school, there was a huge dropout and they rarely reached higher levels of education. But this programme somehow has supported the children of the Dalit community to at least gain a higher level of education and the number of children going to school has increased since the beginning of the programme. Also at least the parents of the Dalit children are aware that they should send their children to school. For the Dalit parents that money counts a lot. This is the positive impact”* [Coordinator, SPCSN].

However, there is little evidence to suggest that the high enrolment rates are a result of scholarship schemes alone (Acharya and Luitel, 2006). Factors that undermine the schemes’ positive impact include the low transfer amount, weak links to other factors linked to low enrolment and drop-out and inefficient

implementation. The cash transfer is low at only 350 NRS per annum. Particularly in cases where opportunity costs are high and families are counting on children to undertake productive work or income-generating activities, the incentive offered by this scholarship is limited.

In terms of other aspects of children’s outcomes, the cash amount is too small to have a considerable impact on household poverty, child nutrition or health. Various respondents suggested that families feel other basic needs (such as food) need to be fulfilled before children can be sent to school: *“In some cases, we found that some of the agencies provide scholarships for the schools and some of the families told us: “what is the use of that because we have no food or money for shelter so I can’t send children to school”* [Executive Director, CCWB]. Focus group respondents and workshop participants also highlighted that while the amount of the scholarship is the same across all ages, costs may differ considerably, with education becoming more expensive when children grow older.

Both Dalit and girls’ scholarship schemes aim at increasing enrolment amongst these two socially and economically marginalised groups. However, other factors - notably poverty - may form an important barrier to school enrolment for other children as well. As the schemes are not targeted at poor households, they ignore other factors which prevent children from attending school such as participation in economic activities or household chores (Kidd and Calder, 2012).

The targeting of vulnerable groups also appears problematic in practice. Some families were found to receive less or more than the allocated amount, for example. One reason for this was that teachers were distributing the cash evenly amongst all students to prevent issues of marginalisation or favouritism amongst students (ERDCN, 2011). Although targeting children of particularly vulnerable groups may help to support their outcomes, such singling out could also lead to further stigmatisation and discrimination (Koehler, 2011). Key informants also pointed towards issues of political pressure

complicating the targeting process: *“The schools divide it across all children because there is a lot of debate and political pressure”* [Executive Director, CCWB].

4.2.2 Midday Meal Programme

The Midday Meal Programme was introduced in 2009 with the aim of improving child nutrition and decreasing educational dropout figures. It is operational in 16 districts that are considered to be food insecure, have poor access to education and low enrolment of female students. The programme is implemented by the World Food Programme, MoFALD and the MoE. The budget for the programme in 2009 was set at 720 million NRS (Chopra and Wadhawan, 2015 quoting MoF, 2013).

There are currently very few impact evaluations available on this programme. Available information suggests that there are many challenges to programme effectiveness, suggesting that limited impacts on education and nutrition.

Poverty	?
Nutrition	+/-
Education	+/-
Health	?
Child Labour	?
Child Care	?

The programme experiences both design and operational challenges. The lack of attention for external factors such as inflation and the rise in costs of produce in hard to reach areas have meant that budget could not always be put to effective use (ADB, 2011). Furthermore, the lack of national guidelines concerning nutrition and food quality has led to meals being of poor quality and low nutritional value (WFP, 2013). The inclusion of multiple stakeholders in the decision making process has hindered effective decision-making (WFP, 2013) while capacity constraints at grass roots level has also led to understaffing, having effects on quality control and monitoring and evaluation (WFP, 2013).

4.3. Pregnant and Lactating women: Safe Mother Programme (Aama)

‘Safer Mother Programme’ popularly known as “Aama-Suraksha-Karyakram” or Aama is a reformed version of the Safe Delivery Incentive Programme (SDIP) which began in 2005. It is a universal nationwide cash transfer programme aimed at increasing the utilisation of professional care at a health facility during childbirth and thereby reducing maternal and infant mortality in child birth. Mothers receive 1,000 NRS for a natural birth and 5,000 NRS when surgical interventions are necessary (Chopra and Wadhawan, 2015). The programme also provides incentives to health providers for each delivery attended, either at home or the facility (Baral, 2012). It is administered through the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) through the use of trained volunteer health workers at VDC level health posts.

Findings suggest that the programme has a considerable positive impact on children’s health and moderate positive impact on nutrition and child care. Nepal has seen great reductions in maternal and child mortality ratios in the last two decades; the maternal mortality ratio has decreased by more than 50 percent from 850 in 1990 to 170 in 2013 (NPC and UNDP, 2013). As discussed in section 3, infant and child mortality have also decreased significantly during the same time frame (NPC and UNDP, 2013). Nationwide deliveries attended by skilled birthing attendants were found to have increased from just 15 percent in 2008/9 to 34 percent in 2011/12 (Lamichane and Tiwari, 2012). Although these positive impacts cannot be attributed to the Safe Mother programme, it is likely that the programme has played a positive role, particularly for poor women. Despite the programme being universal, research suggests it is utilised mostly by women from the lowest income quintile (Lamichane and Tiwari, 2012). No conclusions can be drawn about other areas of poverty and vulnerability.

Poverty	?
Nutrition	+
Education	?
Health	+
Child Labour	?
Child Care	+

Factors contributing to positive outcomes include the relatively generous payment and link to health care services. Beyond incentivising antenatal care and safe births, reaching women with cash transfers at such an early phase in child development also has the potential for positive effects on nutrition and other elements of child care⁹. Although a lump-sum payment, the stipend is relatively high, particularly in comparison to other transfers. Furthermore, the use of trained professionals offers the opportunity for orientation on child and maternal health and nutrition. Focus group discussions with women in Daha VDC, Kalikot indicated that awareness and use of the programme was widespread: *“We get the allowance if we give birth in the medical centre. They give us 1,500 NRS and dress for the child from the government”* [female FGD participant, Daha VDC, Kalikot, Karnali].

Factors limiting the positive impact of the Safe Mother programme include geographical disparities in terms of access to and supply of services. In the mid to far western regions, coverage of antenatal care remains low. Only 45 percent of women had had at least one antenatal care appointment from a skilled provider and only 40 percent had received at least four appointments (CBS and UNICEF, 2012). The total number of deliveries attend by skilled personnel was also lower than national averages at 29 percent and nearly 30 percent of births took place in a health facility in the mid to far western regions (CBS and UNICEF, 2012). This suggests that although the programme is still making

considerable progress attention needs to be placed on accessibility in hard-to-reach places.

4.4. Working Age Population: Karnali Employment Programme (KEP)

The KEP, also known as the ‘One family, One job’ scheme, is a cash-for-work scheme in one of the poorest regions of Nepal. The programme aims to address regional poverty and vulnerability and targets unemployed and poor households. The original design of the programme aims to provide 100 days of labour on local infrastructure at a wage rate between 180 to 350 NRS per day (Chopra and Wadhawan 2015, quoting NPC, 2009 and NPC, 2012). Current KEP guidelines provide no guidance on the number of days of employment to be provided but state that this should be decided during the planning phase. The programme is implemented by MoFALD.

The original KEP model involves the set-up of village level user committees with 7 to 11 members, inclusive of women, Dalits and other Janajati peoples. The committees subsequently select suitable infrastructure projects at village level. Proposals are subsequently submitted to the VDC, after which the budget is requested from MoFALD through the DDCs. Upon approval, funds are transferred to the user committees via the DDCs and VDCs in instalments of 30 percent upon commencing the project and then the rest was paid upon completion following an assessment of the works (based on information provided by Kalikot LDO and Raku VDC Secretary, Karnali). The user committees are responsible for payment of the workers. While pilot programmes testing new models and new KEP guidelines have since been established (see Box 7 and discussion below), the assessment of KEP’s impact on children’s outcomes considers the original model based on secondary data and primary information from field visits.

⁹ A new social protection programme has been introduced to Nepal to target women and children during this phase - 1000 Golden Days or Sunaula Hazar Din – however this programme is still in its infancy and only baseline data has been collected (MoFALD 2012, World Bank 2014a & 2014b).

The KEP can be considered to have a relatively strong positive effect on nutrition and mild positive impacts on poverty and education. Positive effects with respect to prevention of family separation and potentially negative implications for child care cancel out. The available information does not allow for drawing conclusions about child health or child labour.

Poverty	+
Nutrition	+
Education	+
Health	?
Child Labour	?
Child Care	+/-

Factors contributing to positive impacts of KEP include the cash payments, the construction of local infrastructure and employment in local jobs for all members in the community. In terms of consumption, 85 percent of households stated that the most important use of the income gained from KEP was being able to buy food (Vaidya, 2010). Food expenditures accounted for 35 percent of the total KEP, followed by expenditures on education, clothing and fuel (NPC, 2010). The construction of local infrastructure - particularly in areas where such infrastructure is limited - is considered a key

benefit of public works programmes. One key informant also pointed towards the positive impact of the construction of infrastructure on children's outcomes: *"They have constructed an irrigation channel and after that the production is improving. They have also constructed 3 dams and channels which benefit 6 wards. After that the education and health and other conditions of children improved"* [VDC Secretary, Raku, Kalikot].

KEP achieved its target of the inclusion of households from all castes, although gaps remain regarding participation of women and youth (Koehler et al., 2009). Lower female participation can be linked to the engendered nature of unpaid care and household work in combination with the restriction that only one member per household can participate in KEP. Although advocated in previous reports (see Vaidya, 2010), no childcare facilities were offered as part of the original KEP model, potentially discouraging women to participate or undermining children's care as they may be left unsupervised or be taken to the worksite. New pilot models of KEP, however, are integrating childcare facilities in KEP (see Box 6), which might contribute to improved child care. Another potential positive impact of KEP on child care issues may follow from lower levels of labour migration provided that the number of work days and wage rates are sufficient (see Box 6).

Box 6: Case study - KEP, child care and family separation in Kalikot, Karnali

A pilot model of KEP (implemented by MoFALD and DFID - see Box 7) and its implementation in Daha village in Kalikot, Karnali zone, provides interesting lessons learned about potential positive impacts of KEP on child care.

The KEP project had a child care centre on site with one woman from the village being hired as a caretaker for children of KEP participants. She was paid 200 NRS per day from the KEP budget, which was the lowest wage rate (as the wage rate of other participants was performance-based depending on the amount of work they had undertaken). The availability of a child care facility has the potential to positively impact child care by preventing the practice of taking children to the work site: *"One member of the family remains in the household to take care of the children. If no one is available, they take the children to work"* [female FGD participant, Daha VDC, Kalikot, Karnali]. Such a child care centre might be particularly beneficial for lactating women as it would provide a suitable location for breastfeeding: "It is

Box 6: Case study - KEP, child care and family separation in Kalikot, Karnali

definitely a good idea if the women there get the opportunity for breastfeeding time to time to the children” [District Coordinator, KIRDARC, Karnali].



That said, it should also be acknowledged that child care was not considered a major problem by some KEP participants and that the availability of a child care centre in and of itself does not guarantee higher quality care: *“If they have good care taker in their home it is good to keep the children at home rather than a childcare centre. There are more than 10 children in the centre and it is very difficult to care by single care taker so I think it is not working well”* [District Coordinator, KIRDARC, Karnali]. The ambiguous results with respect to the inclusion of child care centres in KEP has led to them not being included in the new KEP guidelines.

Focus group discussions with KEP participants revealed that KEP may have a positive impact on preventing family separation by reducing the need for labour migration. Migration (primarily to India) is one of the chief sources of employment for people in the Karnali region. The low number of work days offered on KEP currently prevents an impact on migration patterns: *“There is no reduction in migration after KEP. Most people are in India”* [male FGD participant, Daha VDC, Kalikot, Karnali].

At the same time, KEP participants and key informants indicated that the availability of more work days could reduce the need for migration. A key aspect appeared to be that KEP offered employment, rather than just cash support: *“As we are all living in a very remote place in Nepal, nobody should have to go to India. If we have a small amount of employment in the village we don’t have to go”* [female FGD participant, Daha VDC, Kalikot, Karnali] and *“We have a limitation of the budget in KEP so that we can only give work for one or two months. After that they go out of the community to work. If we can extend the amount of work on KEP it would stop that [migration]”* [VDC Secretary, Raku, Kalikot, Karnali].

The subsequent benefits for children translate into better but mostly more continuous care and support, as suggested by one key informant: *“If you get the opportunity to work here, they won’t go to India, meaning that the children are more protected by their parents. That helps for the continuity of education, security, and love from the parents”* [District Coordinator, KIRDARC, Kalikot].

Factors limiting the positive impact of KEP include low days of work available to participants, low wages in combination with the cap on one member of the household being allowed to participate in the programme and unclear targeting and accountability mechanisms.

Although the original model aims to provide 100 days of work per year for each participant, the actual number of days worked is much lower. In practice, the average number days were 13 days with a median wage of 201 NRS per day (NPC, 2012). The restriction that only one household member can participate in KEP limits the impact on that household given fairly low wage rates. There are also indications that it might incentivise family separation with families temporarily moving away or breaking up in order to be accepted onto the scheme (Vaidya, 2010). It has to be noted that no evidence for this was found during the field visit and in the key informant interviews.

Targeting in the original KEP model has been viewed as unsuccessful or unclear and in need of more transparency. In particular the programme's ability to reach the poorest households has been called into question: *"There is a biased selection process. The people who have good economic status and food are working"* [male FGD participant, Daha VDC, Kalikot]. The selection process of eligible participants through the user committee and VDC secretary was considered to be unfair or biased with FGD participants indicating the need for greater transparency in the targeting methods: *"The VDC decides who joins on the programme and there is political influence during the selection process"* [female FGD participant, Daha VDC, Kalikot] and *"We all are poor and the*

land doesn't support us. It would be better if we could all work there and have more days work" [male FGD participant, Daha VDC, Kalikot].

Problems have also been found with respect to project accountability. This relates to the disbursement of funding in particular. In the original model KEP, participants' wages were distributed by the user committee. However people were not receiving the correct amount and money was being used for other projects outside of KEP such as other infrastructure works or for teachers'¹⁰ salaries in the local school: *"The people who were working were not getting all of their money. The user committee were giving the money to pay for teachers' salaries. That was not government policy."* [LDO, Manma, Kalikot].

Various new models of KEP were piloted across Karnali region in a bid to address issues of targeting, accountability and child care (see Box 7). The most recent KEP guidelines suggest that various lessons learned have led to changes in targeting and payment procedures. Selection of programme participants, for example, is now undertaken by social mobilisers and the Ward Citizen Forum alongside other Community-Based Organisations who jointly select and prioritise unemployed and underprivileged households to take part in the scheme. They are also responsible for selecting the project to work and managing monitoring and evaluation of the programme. Payments are to be made every 15 days by the Project Implementation Committee (PIC), who also undertake a public audit of the work undertaken and number of days worked. The guidelines do not mention provisions for pregnant and lactating women or child care.

Box 7: Case study - Joint DFID and MoFALD KEP pilot projects in Kalikot, Karnali

DFID and MoFALD piloted new KEP implementation models in Kalikot District (Daha and Raku VDCs) in 2013 to address issues of accountability, improve targeting of the poorest households and increase the positive impacts of the project on households such as through increased consumption and better childcare.

¹⁰ In government schools the government pays the wages of some staff however there is often not enough teachers for all the grades and supplementary temporary teachers' salaries need to be paid from elsewhere (LDO, Manma, Kalikot).

Box 7: Case study - Joint DFID and MoFALD KEP pilot projects in Kalikot, Karnali

In order to reduce in- and exclusion errors, targeting was changed to employ basic indicators for the selection of eligible households based on issues commonly associated with poverty. One of the key indicators of poverty in Nepal is the number of dependents in the household. The KEP pilot projects therefore target households with greater numbers of dependants, especially children. In a bid to increase accountability, KEP job cards have also been introduced. These cards list the names of the main card holder and two alternative members from each household to participate in the works should the job card holder be sick or unable to participate in work for any other reason. One can only be listed on the KEP job card when presenting a citizenship card, helping to prevent children participating in the public works (the minimum age for the citizenship card is 16 years of age). The pilot models also adopted a new payment method, ensuring workers receive their full pay at more consistent intervals. Workers are back paid 250 NRS per day every 15 days and the remainder is paid in a lump sum upon the completion of the project (c. 7/8,000 NRS). Although this payment scheme was not well received initially, participants appreciated the continuity in payments as the project progressed.

The pilot model exempted pregnant women from working on the project, although there didn't appear to be provisions for supporting those women when exempted from work. The pilot schemes also include child care centres with the women who run the centres being paid the same daily rate as the labours from the KEP budget. Initially take up of child care services was low as female participants were used to taking children along to the work sites or having alternative family members look after them in the home.

(Based on information collected during interviews with the LDO Kalikot, Raku VDC Secretary and DFID Nepal.)

4.5. Elderly: Old Age Allowance (OAA) and Single Women's Allowance (SWA)

The Old Age Allowance (OAA) is a universal programme which has been in operation for two decades. In 2008 the monthly stipend was increased from 100 to 500 NRS and the age bracket was decreased to 70 years with a further reduction to 60 years for Dalits and the residents of the Karnali zone (Chopra and Wadhawan, 2015). As of this financial year, people receiving the OAA will also be entitled to an extra monthly allowance of 500 NRS to cover medical expenses. This will be provided to all beneficiaries on top of the monthly transfers and does not require receipts (Director, DoCR).

The Single Women's Allowance (SWA) is available to single women (unmarried or divorced) aged 60 years and above, or to widowed women of any age. This cash transfer was increased in 2008 from 150 to 500 NRS per

month in line with changes to the OAA. At the same time, the definition of beneficiaries also expanded to cover all single women above the age of 60 years rather than uniquely those with no income source (Chopra and Wadhawan, 2015). The SWA was not increased in 2015.

The OAA and SWA are implemented by the DoCR under MoFALD. The budget is allocated from central government to the DDC and distributed to the beneficiaries at the VDC level by the VDC secretary. Budget is allocated on the basis of records collected by the VDC and sent to DoCR via the DDC. The funds are distributed every four months, which is in line with the distribution of other DoCR operated cash transfers (see above).

The OAA and SWA can be said to have a modest but positive impact on children across the areas of poverty, nutrition, health and child care. There is no conclusive information about the effect on child labour.

Table 8: Old Age Allowance and Single Women's Allowance	
Poverty	+
Nutrition	+
Education	+
Health	+
Child labour	?
Child care	+

Positive impacts appear grounded in traditional practice whereby grandparents provide care to grandchildren and spend cash towards their nutrition and education. A study by HelpAge indicated that most beneficiaries spend a large proportion on their health costs but also that modest proportions were allocated to spending on grandchildren (9%) and children (3%). Such spending was also confirmed during a focus group discussion in Daha VDC, Kalikot: “We buy milk, meat, and other foods with the money. The rest goes to pens and copy (exercise books) for studying” [male FGD participant, Daha VDC, Kalikot].

Key informants confirmed the importance of cultural practice whereby grandparents care for or distribute cash to their grandchildren: “Even OAA, we had a study with WFP, almost 40 percent of money goes indirectly to children. This is also rational from our cultural context because most of the grandchildren in rural context grow up in the lap of grandparents. Even from human psychological perspective, the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is better than father-son or mother-daughter. [...] What grandparents do is give little money to grandchildren to buy things like sweets or something, so maybe that is the reason for 40 percent. This also holds for food. In that sense, even though there is nothing in OAA from a children’s perspective, it is still child-oriented” [Social Policy Specialist, UNICEF].

Another positive impact the OAA was found to have for families was the empowerment of beneficiaries, both economically and socially. This is perceived to have reduced family tensions

(Holmes and Upadhy, 2009; Khanal, 2014). This type of empowerment and reduction in family pressures can also have a positive effect on children’s wellbeing through better family relationships and psychosocial aspects of care (Roelen and Shelmerdine, 2014 and Roelen and Karki Chettri, 2015).

Although no reports are available regarding the impact of the Single Women’s Allowance, similar findings can be expected with respect to the transfers provided to women over the age of 60: “Many senior citizens contribute their allowances to education of children and nutrition. [...] Similarly, the single women’s allowance is also going to help children indirectly. So more or less consciously or subconsciously they help children but there are not many child-focused SP schemes” [Undersecretary, NPC].

In terms of the Single Women’s Allowance provided to widowed women regardless of age, the transfer was deemed to benefit children more directly, particularly in case of a young woman. One key informant indicated that the provision of a cash transfer to young widows and children as she may not yet have older children that can provide her with income support: “[...] those who are above 60 are probably in a better position than younger women when they become single. From a social perspective, they might already get support from older children. But if a young woman becomes unemployed, she will have greater risks. From children’s perspective, children of young widows will be benefiting” [Social Policy Specialist, UNICEF].

4.6 Disability Allowance

Two cash transfers are available for people living with disabilities depending on the severity of disability. Those who are deemed severely and fully disabled receive 1,000 NRS per month. Those who are considered fully and partially disabled receive 300 NRS per month. Initial identification of beneficiaries is undertaken via the VDC secretary and final beneficiaries receive a disability card from the District

Women and Children Office (DWCO) after having gone through certification process led by a health professional. The disability allowance is implemented by DoCR in collaboration with the District Women’s and Children’s Office (DWCO). The benefit is transferred from the central level to the DDC and then distributed along with the other MoFALD cash transfers by the VDC secretary.

Partial disability allowance operated a quota up until this financial year. In 2011 there were 16,202 beneficiaries receiving the full disability benefit and 6,875 partially disabled beneficiaries (NPC, 2012a). Split by VDC this equated to a quota of around 6 people per VDC¹¹: *“If a VDC has 100 partially disabled children, we do not include all children. We have a limitation. One to three priorities in the VDC level. 75 total in the district divided by 30 VDC is two or three. But for fully disabled people, completely we have to pay”* [PO-SD, Kalikot, Karnali]. Although the quota has now been lifted, only persons with fairly severe physical impairments will be eligible. This decision was taken to make the system more equal as previously those who had better contact with the DDC were getting the Partial Disability Allowance (Director, DoCR)

Very little information is available regarding the impact of the disability allowances. Nevertheless, the impact of Full Disability Allowance can be said to be mildly positive in terms of poverty and health.

	Full Disability Allowance	Partial Disability Allowance
Poverty	+	+
Nutrition	?	?
Education	?	?
Health	+	+
Child Labour	?	?
Child Care	?	?

Factors contributing to the positive impact of the disability allowances pertain largely to the

¹¹ This is based on the number of VDCs in 2014 (3633).

cash provided. The impact of the allowance on children in households with wholly disabled persons is deemed substantial given the relatively generous cash transfer (1,000 NRS). The impact of the allowance provided to partially disabled people is likely to be more limited as the amount is considerably lower (300 NRS per month). For those receiving the allowance for full disability the grant could have a good impact on health and poverty.

Factors contributing to the limited effect of the Partial Disability Allowance relates to the quota that was imposed on this allowance until last financial year: *“The partial disability allowance is one of most ineffective instruments. The quota system is there. They have a quota of 50 for up to 100,000 population. What happens is that those who have access to the district office, they can get it. But others do not hear about it or cannot claim it or if they claim it, they won’t get it.”* [Social Policy Specialist, UNICEF]. The lifting of the quota since the current financial year may help to improve effectiveness of the programme.

4.7. Social Protection and Child Poverty and Vulnerability

This section aims to pull the analysis regarding the individual interventions together. Table 10 holds an overview of findings across all programmes under consideration with respect to all outcomes of child poverty and vulnerability as discussed in section 3. As previously indicated, the analysis presented above provides an indication of relative impacts within each programme rather than an indication of relative size of impact across programmes.

Overall, Nepal’s social protection system can be considered to positively influence children’s lives in areas of poverty, nutrition and health followed by positive changes with respect to education and child care. It has to be noted that all these

Table 10: Relative impacts on child poverty and vulnerability indicators across all social protection programmes

	Child Grant	Scholarship Programmes	Midday Meal	Safer Motherhood Programme (Aama)	KEP	Old Age and Single Women's Allowance	Full Disability Allowance	Partial Disability Allowance
Poverty	+	?	?	?	+	+	+	+
Nutrition	+	?	+/-	+	+	+	?	?
Education	?	+/-	+/-	?	+	+	?	?
Health	+	?	?	+	?	+	+	+
Child Labour	?	+/-	?	?	?	?	?	?
Child Care	+	?	?	+	+/-	+	?	?

impacts are modest rather than leading to large changes in children's lives. Impact of the Scholarship and Midday Meal programmes as well as KEP with respect to child care was considered ambivalent with adverse consequences potentially outweighing positive effects. That said, it is important to point out that the current system

serves as a fertile basis from which to address and overcome challenges to improve social protection's degree of child-sensitivity. The many question marks in Table 10 also highlight the need for more information about the effect of social protection on children, including programmes both targeting children directly or indirectly.

Box 8: Impact of social protection as part of the earthquake response

Little evidence is available of the impact of the earthquake response, including the various social protection interventions. Interventions are still being rolled out, making the assessment of impact premature. In terms of the two initiatives highlighted in Box 4 – the Emergency Top-Up Cash Transfer Programme (ETCTP) and the ID for households affected by the earthquake – an independent assessment has been undertaken regarding the first phase of the ETCTP. It indicates that the ETCTP was fairly well implemented and that participants appreciated the support received through this mechanism. Transfers were primarily used to purchase food, household items, clothing and medicines (UNICEF, 2016). Given the demographic profile of participant households, children disproportionately benefited from the ETCTP in an indirect way; two-thirds live with at least one child under the age of 18 and one-third live with a minimum of one child under the age of five (ibid). No information is currently available about the implementation or impact of the support provided through the ID card for households affected by the earthquake, although the combination of transfers channelled through this card suggests that it plays an important role in supporting people with basic needs and rebuilding their livelihoods.

5.

CHALLENGES FOR CHILD-SENSITIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION IN NEPAL

This section reflects on lessons learned and challenges for child-sensitive social protection in Nepal based on the analysis of individual programmes against the backdrop of child poverty and vulnerability in section 4. We discuss lessons learned and challenges across three categories:

(i) institutional and administrative challenges, (ii) design challenges and (iii) implementation challenges.

5.1. Institutional and Administrative Challenges

There appears to be great acknowledgement in Nepal that social protection is an important part of policies aiming to reduce poverty and inequality. The drafting of the social protection framework and existence of a wide set of government-owned programmes across the life-cycle is evidence to this acknowledgement and commitment, making Nepal a frontrunner in the region: *“There is now the constituency of social protection and it is getting larger and larger with more people from civil society, academics, media are coming in. This is a good indication for the future. If the political stability stays then our economic power will also increase and that will have definite impact on social protection at large [...]”* [Undersecretary, NPC].

Despite this positive trend, social protection in Nepal also suffers from challenges at

the institutional and administrative level.

These include lack of strong leadership and coordination, proliferation of and fragmentation between programmes, budget and capacity constraints. This undermines the effectiveness of social protection both generally and for children specifically. With respect to child-sensitive social protection in particular, there appears to be a lack of acknowledgement of children’s issues and the importance of investing in children.

Lack of leadership and coordination was found to be a fundamental shortcoming to the functioning of Nepal’s social protection system (ABD, 2011; Khanal, 2014): *“We don’t have a monitoring and regulating body that presides over all interventions that can give guidelines and advice and regulations. We have many schemes, including provident fund, employment schemes, insurance schemes, which are not yet operationalised, we have social security, we don’t have the capacity to bring them all*

together” [Undersecretary, NPC]. As such, social protection in Nepal falls short of being a true system: “We have a system but it is a system-less system” [Executive Director, CCWB].

One of the factors playing into this ‘system-less system’ is the proliferation of both policies and governing bodies. A large number of government ministries operate their own parallel programmes and distribution systems without linkages across: “We don’t have a comprehensive strategy. One provision falls under one ministry and another programme falls under ministry. For example, the scholarships falls under the MoE and the health and nutrition provisions falls under MoHP. The benefits are going through different channels. There is no proper coordination through these channels and the beneficiaries are experiencing all kinds of problems due to them not linking up” [Coordinator, SPSCN].

Similarly, there is a lack of linkages between government and non-government partners operating within the field of social protection: “The greatest problem that we are facing is the lack of cooperation and the lack of linkages. Every agency is working on its own, including development partners. We try to bring them together to link them and to bring to the centre but they are pulling in their own directions. This is some of the big problems that we are facing. We discuss here together and then we are going back to our own organisation and work on our own without any reference to what has been discussed before. This is a frustrating experience” [Undersecretary, NPC].

Budget constraints are also a reality forming a barrier for scaling-up programmes, increasing the benefit size and making social protection more rights-based: “Beneficiaries are demanding greater amounts but the government is not in the position of increasing the allowance because of its limited treasure. Funding is main challenge” [Director, DoCR]. At current levels of coverage, programmes are sometimes in deficit and suffer from insufficient budgets (MOLD, 2011), leading to hesitation about extension of social protection: “Now the

government is preparing an act regarding KEP so it becomes rights-based. Slowly it can be governed by the act but it is a huge obligation to the government. If we make it universal, it will take more than 8% of our GDP. It requires huge budget that is impractical to think of. We have to be careful. Once these programmes are launched, it is politically impossible to pull them back. So before moving ahead we have to think about how to sustain them and if we can do that” [Programme Officer, ILO].

Social protection in Nepal also suffers from **capacity constraints**, with government capacity having been called into question at all levels (ADB, 2011). Capacity constraints are most pressing at the VDC level as many of the current social protection programmes are administered through the VDC secretary. VDC secretaries cover several wards each and are directly responsible for collecting all the data on beneficiaries alongside the timely distribution of cash transfers. Despite the widespread acknowledgement that VDC secretaries are over-stretched, the introduction of new programmes often builds on this existing structure but without building capacity, either by hiring more staff or training the VDC secretaries: “The VDC secretary is overloaded. There are very few and they have to do so much work. They have to work the functions of all ministries at grass-roots level. We have to think of capacity of VDCs” [Director, DoCR] and “Capacity is not being built when programmes are introduced. The VDC secretary has to monitor all so you can imagine time-wise and technically - they have just passed high school - what is their capacity to do this? Can VDCs coordinate with others? System wise, we have not done anything to improve” [Programme Officer, ILO].

Finally, **children’s issues appear to be under-prioritised** in Nepal. Although one informant indicated that children are high on the agenda - “it is a very positive thing that people in government and civil society that they all are one in that children should be prioritised” (Undersecretary, NPC), others felt that much is left to be desired: “The issue of children is not

part of the agenda. It's partially my ministry's agenda but it's not a national agenda. There are other urgent matters to be attended to here. [...] The politicians, the bureaucracy are not properly sensitised enabling them to put forward this agenda on every platform or development paradigm" [Undersecretary, MoWCSW].

The fact that many social protection programmes are largely implemented by bodies that do not have great awareness about children's issues, notably MoFALD and the VDC secretary at local level, was also considered to impede a child focus: *"If you look at the government structure, the VDC secretary is the grass roots level of MoFALD, who has very little to do with the issues of children. The ministry that has to deal with the children doesn't have a grass roots level institution and the institution that is at the community level doesn't have expertise at the higher level" [EFSL Regional Capacity Builder, Oxfam].*

5.2. Design Challenges

The analysis of social protection programmes revealed that there are also a number of challenges with respect to their design, which particularly hamper their potential impact on children. These include low transfer amounts, targeting mechanisms, the rigid registration process, limited sensitisation and awareness activities and limited beneficiary participation.

Firstly, it is widely acknowledged that **transfer amounts are too low** to have a substantial impact, particularly for the Child Grant and Scholarship Programmes. With respect to these programmes, one key informant said: *"the benefit is not going to address the problem. If you are going to hunt a tiger and are just going to throw a small stone, that will not work" [Social Policy Specialist, UNICEF].*

This challenge is compounded by inflation and higher cost of living in remote areas. Rising inflation has risen to steady increases in food and fuel prices (ADB, 2011; Khanal, 2014), decreasing the real value of transfers over time. Despite

upwards adjustments in other cash transfer programmes such as the OAA or SWA, the Child Grant remains at the initial transfer amount. This coupled with higher prices in less accessible districts such as those in the mountainous regions means that transfers have the smallest impact for some of the most vulnerable children. Various key informants have indicated that the determination of transfer amounts lack a clear rationale and benchmark, leading to great discrepancies between programmes: *"Minimum wage is 8,000 NRS per month. That is what government thinks that they should get. This should be a basis for the cash transfer; if not in full, we should give at least half so that the responsibility for the full amount can be shared by the family and the government. There should be a logic behind the amounts" [Programme Officer, ILO].*

Following the acknowledgement that transfer amounts are too low for having a substantial impact, various development partners (notably ILO and UNICEF) are undertaking costing and simulation exercises to assess options for increasing transfer size vis-a-vis extending coverage of programmes and their potential impact.

The use and **choice of targeting mechanisms** presents a challenge to social protection reaching the poorest and most vulnerable children in Nepal. There is no consensus regarding the best approach to targeting and any choice for a particular mechanism inevitably involves trade-offs between reducing in- or exclusion errors. The majority of Nepal's social protection programmes are based on categorical targeting. For example, the Child Grant is awarded to all children under 5 years (age) in Karnali (geography) and all Dalit children (caste).

Various key informants have argued that this type of targeting is not far-reaching enough as it does not distinguish between poor or non-poor children. Proponents of poverty targeting emphasise the need to ensure that only those in need receive the support and to ensure that the programmes are affordable: *"The government*

should prioritize the poor children; I get the Child Grant for my children but I don't need it" [Programme Coordinator, KIRDARC, Kalikot].

At the same time poverty-based targeting may be inefficient and inappropriate in the Nepali context (Kidd et al. 2011). This is motivated by principles of universality as well as concerns around the need for capacity to implement poverty targeting: *"Instead of targeting and dividing society into poor and non-poor, it is better to have universality, justice and an integrated approach. Sometimes people might be arguing that we have scarce resources and we should try to identify who is poor and target the poor. That is fair in one sense but do we have that capacity? You can see that caste and poverty targeting of Child Grant is not effective. What you find is that they give R150 to all Dalit children rather than R200 to poor Dalit children because it is too difficult [to target]. They only have a few criteria (poverty mapping indicators) but it still does not work. For example, they have a criterion on amount of land but of course location of land matters"* [Social Policy Specialist, UNICEF].

Others have also emphasised the costs of targeting and the need for careful consideration in choosing the appropriate targeting mechanism: *"Targeting is not cheap and there are administrative costs of targeting and then monitoring. [...] There are a lot of issues to be taken into consideration. There should be a proper work done before deciding these things"* [Programme Officer, ILO].

Finally, targeting on the basis of poverty indicators or specific categories may reinforce identity politics rather than reducing exclusion (Koehler et al., 2009; Acharya and Luitel, 2006). As indicated with respect to the Scholarship programmes, targeting of and singling out vulnerable groups may compound their marginalised position. At VDC level, transfers are diluted beyond the target group across a bigger group of beneficiaries to avoid further stigmatisation and tensions at community level.

The **rigid registration process** and its link to the budget cycle form a crucial impediment to achieving impact for particularly young children. At present prospective beneficiaries need to be registered before the end of November to receive transfers in the following financial year, which starts in July. In other words, if someone registers in December 2016, they will only start receiving transfers in July 2018. This is particularly problematic in terms of achieving impact for young children; this process leads to a minimum delay of 7 months and maximum delay of 19 months. The DoCR fully acknowledges this challenge and has put a proposal forward to the Ministry whereby parents and widows will be offered immediate registration onto the programmes upon creation of birth or death certificates. This process should reduce the waiting time to four months (Director, DoCR).

The **limited integration and scope of sensitisation and awareness activities** as part of social protection programmes may undermine the positive impact that programmes can have on children, both in terms of spending of the transfers and with respect to access to and use of complementary services. Various respondents indicated that educational levels of parents, low awareness of harmful traditional practices and limited experience in managing cash poses a challenge to child-sensitivity of social protection: *"There is lack of awareness of parents (...) child marriage, children dropping out to find migrant work and the trend of sending children to children's homes. They think children will get quality education plus good care in children's homes. Most of the parents are uneducated and they don't know the real situation that the children face in children's homes and monasteries. We are discussing options with Save the Children for conducting sessions on better parenting"* [District Coordinator, KIRDARC Kalikot].

Other key informants have voiced concerns about inappropriate use of cash from programmes that was particularly geared towards supporting children, such as scholarships, undermining the programme's

potential impact: “Scholarships, this is quite instrumental in bringing children to schools. [...] But even if they are given in the name of the children, are they used for the children’s education or not? I am pointing at the possible misuse of the scholarships. I have come across in many cases where the parents have taken the scholarships in cash from the schools or from the education office but they have not used that for the education of the children but for some other purpose. Even sometimes they use it for drinking alcohol. So we often hear about these anomalies happening here but if that kind of thing is continued not stopped or not monitored, you provide the scholarship support but it is not actually helping the children” [Programme Support Manager, Plan Nepal].

Other key informants suggested that a sensitisation or awareness raising element in social protection programmes can help address such issues: “They can make the parents of the children aware. The parents should be aware of child marriage and other issues. And be aware about the merits of education” [Director, DoCR]. Explicitly asking mothers to collect the transfer in Kalikot, Karnali was found to make

a positive difference: “Recently, VDCs in Kalikot have asked mothers to come and collect the Child Grant and we see a positive difference” [VDC secretary, Raku, Kalikot]. Experiences with the Child Grant as described in section 4 also illustrated the benefits of actively linking beneficiaries to the birth registration process, for example. At present, the majority of sensitisation and awareness activities that do take place are implemented by NGOs.

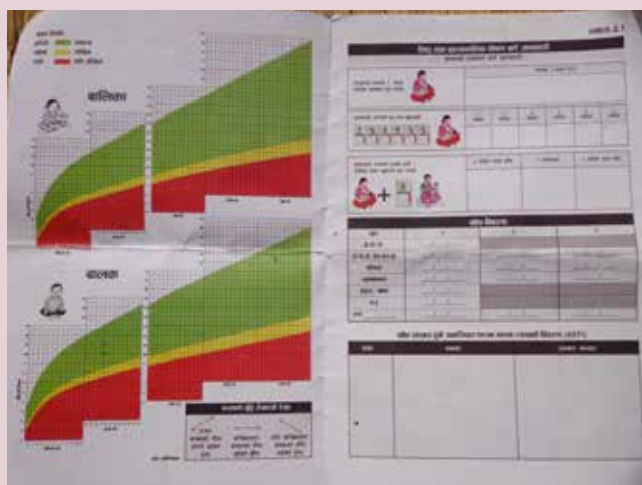
It has to be noted that generally little information is available about how beneficiaries spend transfers. Many key informants were hesitant to say something about the potential impact of programmes on children as they indicated that no information is available about spending patterns and to what extent is spent for the benefit of children: “If we give cash to the parents it’s difficult to monitor and ensure the money used for the children” [LDO, Kalikot, Karnali]. More generally this relates to little being known about the intended and unintended impacts of programmes, total investment, coverage or where improvements could be made to make the programmes more efficient (Koehler et al., 2009; Khanal, 2012; Khanal, 2014).

Box 9: Case study – Sensitisation through Save the Children’s CSSP in Sindhupalchowk

A core component of Save the Children’s Child Sensitive Social Protection (CSSP) programme is the provision of advice and support regarding the use of social protection transfers and wider investments in children. Experiences of a Dalit community in Thumpakhar VDC in Sindhupalchowk highlight the value added of sensitisation and awareness raising in making the Child Grant and Scholarships more effective.



Photo credit: Keetie Roelen



Box 9: Case study – Sensitisation through Save the Children’s CSSP in Sindhupalchowk

Caregivers indicated how the receipt of valuable information and positive affirmation helped them to change their thinking with respect to spending the transfers. It helped towards prioritising children in their spending patterns as well as improving their spending patterns to benefit children. The support made it clear to caregivers that spending money on food, educational materials and clothing for their children is an investment rather than expenditure. In addition, caregivers learned about the combination of foods that would optimise nutrition for their children – combining fresh vegetables with pulses and rice, for example. Caregivers also learned about growing their own vegetables, antenatal health check-ups and the importance of growth monitoring of their young children. When asked what mattered the most: cash or advice, caregivers were unanimous in saying that the advice makes the biggest difference. The lessons learned will stay with them forever and extend to other income, while the cash transfers only represent a small amount and will come to an end when the child turns five years of age or moves to secondary school.

A related issue concerns **the lack of linkages between social protection and child protection**, mostly with respect to identification of child protection violations. A number of key informants highlighted the predicament of many vulnerable children as a result of trafficking, violence and abuse, and how this goes undetected: *“Violence is a recurrent phenomenon. Human trafficking and child labour are a social crime against their [children’s] rights. And also sexual abuse and exploitation. These things are such private affairs and so girls may not be in a position to expose what is going on. Knowing what is going on is a problem”* [Undersecretary, MoWCSW]. While child protection is a separate policy area with distinct legislator frameworks and processes, linkages between social protection and child protection systems are vital to ensure that frontline social protection staff (such as VDC secretaries and VCPCs) are able to refer children and child protection cases to the relevant counterparts in Government, the police or NGO sector. At present no such mechanism in place and capacity on the ground for identifying child protection cases is extremely limited.

The **lack of participatory processes** and limited link between policy design and people’s needs, expectations and perceptions is another challenge to policies being child-sensitive. A

few key informants have pointed towards the largely top-down approach adopted in designing social protection policies and how this leads to programmes that may not be feasible to implement or do not achieve the desired impacts: *“They [government] are not doing consultative work. They just sit there on the top and write what they think or what they see but they are not going to the grassroots, stakeholders and the beneficiaries. So this leads to drafting a policy on unrealistic voices. They [government] have to go down and consult with beneficiaries or at least the organisations working for their interests”* [Coordinator, SPCSN].

Others have pointed to the lack of engagement with marginalised groups, such as those living with disabilities: *“The government just assume that maybe physical disabilities need this, maybe the blind this. It is not sure that this is necessary, that’s why there should be the involvement of stakeholders. If they call organisations like National Federation of Disabled, Nepal (NFDN) so that we can go and we can talk with them and say this is their need”* [Chairperson, NDWA]. Key informants also flagged the importance of including children’s voices particularly when designing policies: *“Whatever programmes are designed or implemented the children should be involved and what programmes are designed or developed, we have to make sure the issues of*

children are included and that the programmes ultimately contribute to the betterment of the lives of the children” [Programme Support Manager, Plan Nepal].

It has been noted that there is difficulty in creating beneficiary participation and ownership of the current social protection programmes (Adhikari et al., 2014; Thakur, 2014). With respect to KEP, some have noted that such lack of ownership has meant that local infrastructure built as part of the public works fall into disrepair. It also undermines awareness of the availability of programmes and eligibility criteria, such as for the Scholarship programmes: *“Instead of having 40 different scholarships, the most important is to downsize it to 10-15 schemes, increase benefit amount and inform the whole country so that they can apply and know the eligibility. The campaign is needed. Children don’t know scholarships exist and how to apply”* [Social Policy Specialist, UNICEF].

5.3. Implementation Challenges

Implementation challenges largely pertain to corruption and misuse of funds, inadequate monitoring and evaluation, payment delays and arrears and lack of economic opportunities. These challenges are not exclusive to child-sensitive social protection but mostly hold for social protection in general.

One of the most pressing problems for social protection is that of **corruption and misuse of funds** at different levels of governance. Many key informants mentioned examples of how budget and funds intended to reach beneficiaries were siphoned off into other projects, used for paying government staff in other sectors (notably teachers) or for personal benefit: *“There is a big issue of corruption during the distribution of those allowances. The VDC secretary are misusing the funds; in a guideline it is supposed to distribute three times in a year but VDC secretary sometimes distribute once in a year or twice in a year. There is no transparent way of*

distributing the allowance” [KIRDARC District Coordinator, Kalikot] and *“While delivering the benefits there is huge corruption and no one is monitoring”* [Coordinator, SPSCN].

A number of factors appear to play into the misuse of funds. The first factor related to the institutional and administrative challenge of capacity constraints as mentioned above. This holds particularly at VDC level and can also be linked to limited continuity of postings¹²: *“There is only one VDC secretary, no other staff, [...], they cannot collect the data, real data and they only do the job in the headquarters. They also do some manipulation because most of the government staff are not from Karnali. They don’t have the real experience here. If the staff are local they have some things to be accountable to their place. But they are from other parts of the country. They come there for 2 years, they do their jobs, they go. And when they go the whole system goes with them. So there is a problem of continuity of the systems”* [Programme Manager, KIRDARC, Kathmandu].

A more frequently mentioned concern was the **lack of effective and well-functioning monitoring and evaluation systems**:

“Programmes get announced in the budget speech and there is pressure on the ministry to implement without any mechanism for targeting and monitoring. So we start implementation but don’t have a system for targeting and monitoring and that is huge problem. If you count the number of OAA beneficiaries, they are double the number of old people in the community. We should not start programmes without a good system for targeting and monitoring” [Programme Officer, ILO].

Remoteness compounds both issues of continuity and monitoring and evaluation: *“In different districts, especially in the most remote areas like in the high Himalayan mountains, the main challenge is monitoring. Often we see that the government service is not easily accessible there and the government staff do not stay in those*

¹² Government staff are reposted to districts, potentially far from their homes, every two years.

positions for a long time. [...] So it's difficult to provide services but also to monitor them" [Programme Support Manager, Plan Nepal].

A possible resolution to the challenge of monitoring and evaluation is the development of a Management Information System (MIS) (MOLD, 2011; Khanal, 2014), as also mentioned by key informants: *"The main challenge behind implementation is the data recording system. The records are not kept properly at DDC and VDC so that we cannot get proper data in proper time. Government has provided reporting guidelines but not all officials are fully aware of the provision of the guidelines so they are not reporting timely"* [Director, DoCR]. Government is collaborating with various partners, including The World Bank and Save the Children to digitise data and develop a Management Information System for improved data management. These developments may also present a first step towards the establishment of grievance procedures, which are currently lacking (MOLD, 2011). Grievance procedures are vital for improving accountability, particularly between government and communities, and for addressing issues of corruption.

A related implementation challenge pertains to **payment delays and arrears**. Current service delivery is not efficient and payments are irregular (Subedi, 2014; Thakur, 2014). The fieldvisit in Kalikot, Karnali illustrated that

beneficiaries were paid less frequently than stipulated; every 6 months rather than every 4 months: *"A representative from the VDC gives the money directly to the person. The VDC secretary gives us the OAA, SWA, CG every 6 months"* [female FGD participant, Daha VDC, Kalikot, Karnali]. A VDC secretary in Sindhupalchowk indicated that at the end of February 2016 he had been waiting for a month to receive the funds for making social protection payments that he was due to receive from the DDC in January 2016, representing the longest delay he ever experienced.

Finally, programme effectiveness is also influenced by the **economic context** in which programmes are implemented. Community members in Daha village in Kalikot district indicated that any social protection transfer, particularly at current levels of support, can only play a limited role if there are no other economic opportunities. This raises questions with respect to the long-term effectiveness of programmes, particularly with programmes that aim to lift households out of poverty so they no longer need to rely on support, such as KEP. This lack of economic opportunities was also noted in relation to the long-term benefits of the Child Grant which is targeted mainly in the same geographical area as the KEP. The absence of accompanying livelihoods means that there is less longevity to poverty reduction if cash transfers were to end (Adhikari et al., 2014).

Box 10: Challenges of social protection as part of the earthquake response

An assessment of two social protection tools used in the earthquake response – Emergency Top-Up Cash Transfer Programme (ETCTP) and the ID card for households affected by the earthquake - points towards a number of challenges of social protection as part of an emergency response.

Firstly, local-level capacity constraints are compounded with the majority of emergency relief, including social protection measures, being channelled through VDC secretaries. For an emergency response to build on an already overstretched system may undermine the timeliness and quality of support provided to poor and vulnerable households, including children.

Secondly, the creation of new social protection instruments – most notably the ID card for those affected by the earthquake - may create long-term systemic challenges for social protection

Box 10: Challenges of social protection as part of the earthquake response

systems. With the ID card providing access to a wide range of transfers at household level, including a potential housing grant of 200,000 NRS, households have been found to split up into smaller units to gain greater access to such transfers. In Thumpakhar VDC, for example, the number of households was said to have increased by approximately one-thirds. This increase in the number of households has implications for the future of social protection if one was to introduce a household-transfer, for example, having to account for a far greater eligible population.

Finally, in particular reference to children, social protection instruments employed as part of the emergency response might lose sight of potential unintended consequences. This is particularly pertinent in reference to the many cash-for-work and labour-based debris clearance and demolition programmes, such as implemented by UNDP and IOM. While safeguards are often in place to ensure that no children are directly employed [Team Leader, UNDP], the ad hoc nature of such programmes allows for limited consideration of issues regarding child care and substitution of unpaid care at home by children.

6.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1:

Strengthen the functioning and implementation of existing social protection programmes

An improvement of the current functioning and implementation of social protection constitutes a first important step in making the system more effective in reducing child poverty and vulnerability. Core components of doing so include strengthening coordination and collaboration, improving capacity at VDC level and improving transparency.

▶ ***Strengthen Coordination and Collaboration***

Social protection requires stronger collaboration between government partners, international organisations, donors and civil society in setting up and implementing social protection programmes and coordinating such efforts, rather than initiating new projects or programmes for political or other reasons. Existing collaborations between MoFALD and DFID in Karnali zone for testing different implementation models of KEP, between MoFALD and the World Bank regarding the development of the MIS, and between UNICEF and MoFALD regarding the development of the Emergency Top-Up

Cash Transfer Programme (ETCTP) provide positive examples. Such initiatives are to be guided by a common understanding of the vision for and objectives for social protection in Nepal. A finalised National Framework for Social Protection can contribute to these endeavours. Workshop participants indicated that the establishment of a lead agency within Government to be solely tasked with social protection and to act as a coordinating body may be another option for strengthening collaboration, coordination and implementation.

▶ ***Improve Capacity***

Experiences with existing social protection programmes as well as the additional initiatives as part of the emergency response highlight the importance of improved capacity, particularly at VDC level. VDC secretaries are overstretched with a multitude of responsibilities that extend well beyond social protection. While the issue of capacity constraints is widely acknowledged, it requires further consideration in a bid to find workable solutions. Comments made during the consultative workshop suggested that this might mean a change in the structure of VDCs, adding human resource at VDC level with enhanced capacity and enhancing their

capacity by better use of data and monitoring systems.

► ***Tackle Corruption and Improve Transparency***

Many respondents in this study raised concerns with respect to the misappropriation of funds, particularly with respect to KEP and the scholarship programmes. Not only does corruption compromise the impact of social protection due to dilution of funds, it also undermines beneficiaries' and the wider population's confidence in government structures and decision-making. Many initiatives are already underway aiming to improve transparency and accountability, including changes to the payment mechanisms in KEP, annual publication or display of name lists of social protection beneficiaries and scale up of digital data management of social protection programmes. NGOs could play a pivotal role, as evidenced by Save the Children's support to the publication of name lists and digitisation of data in Sindhupalchowk.

Recommendation #2:

Expand Coverage

Given current eligibility criteria, Nepal's social protection system excludes the majority of children from benefiting from social protection. As such the expansion of coverage is crucial for improving social protection's ability to respond to child poverty. This can be done directly – through programmes targeted at children - or indirectly – through programmes targeted at households or other groups. A twin-track approach that taps into government responsibilities and community participation may yield the most promising results for children.

► ***Government Responsibility: Expand the Child Grant***

The most immediate channel through which to expand coverage of children with social protection consists of expanding the Child

Grant. As the current target group is limited to under-five children in Karnali and under-five Dalit children in the rest of the country, much is to be gained by widening the eligibility criteria. As the programme currently uses a combination of categorical and geographical targeting, the most feasible options include the widening of such categories, either to include all under-five children or to focus on children 18 months old in recognition of the '1000 days window of opportunity'. The set of options should be considered against practical constraints and informed by in-depth analysis of poverty reduction impacts. While the focus on young children might be desirable to reach children when they are at their most vulnerable, current registration processes often undermine children's access to the programme in the first six to 18 months of their lives. Moreover, caregivers in Karnali and Sindhupalchowk indicated that costs for raising children are higher when they are older, making the expansion to older children an important consideration. While budget limitations present a constraint (as highlighted above), the current skewed distribution of spending on social protection versus civil servants' pensions and social security (Chopra and Wadhawan, 2015) suggests that the opportunities to expand social protection targeted at children are a matter of priority as much as they are of available budget.

► ***Community participation: Establish local funds***

While large-scale expansion of social protection programmes can only come from government, the establishment of local funds can ensure that the most vulnerable and marginalised children currently excluded from government social protection schemes do receive regular support. Funds can be built in a number of ways, for example based on regular resource mobilisation at the community level by a dedicated group or committee, through allocation of funds from the 10% capital grants for Child Friendly Local Governance or through the

Box 11: Case study – Child Endowment Fund (CEF) in Sindhupalchowk

All 68 VDCs and 2 municipalities in Sindhupalchowk currently operate a Child Endowment Fund (CEF) in support of the most vulnerable children in the community. This model was first piloted in three VDCs in 2012 and gradually scaled up to the whole district. Save the Children supported this model of social protection as part of their Child Sensitive Social Protection (CSSP) programme by providing an initial investment of 150,000 NRS to be matched with an equal amount by VDCs, culminating into a total fund of 300,000 NRS. The interest generated through this fund allows VDCs to support approximately 6-8 children from across the community. The transfers are most commonly targeted at orphans in vulnerable conditions as identified by the Village Child Protection Committees (VCPCs) and verified at community level. The transfers consist of 300 NRS per month, paid in four-monthly intervals coinciding with payments of other social protection transfers. The use of the existing social protection infrastructure for implementation and payment guarantees limited operational cost. Many VDCs have now contributed more funds to the CEF, partly in a bid to extend coverage but also in response to the decrease in interest rates. The volatility of interest rates and the impact on the number of children that can be supported is an issue to receive consideration in taking this model forward.

establishment of a Child Endowment Fund (CEF) as implemented across Sindhupalchowk district in Central Region (see Box 11). Interventions can be implemented at relatively low operational cost when using existing government infrastructure for implementation and disbursement. This also means that targeting needs to be simple and straightforward, making categorical targeting a preferable option. To inform the decision which categories of children to target, a rigorous analysis of vulnerability by category is to be undertaken.

Recommendation #3: **Increase Transfer Amounts**

The relatively low level of transfers in relation to cost of living, particularly with respect to the Child Grant and the scholarship programmes, was considered one of the main reasons for the limited impact of programmes on children and beneficiaries at large. Although budget constraints are an obvious and real concern, transfer amounts should at least be tied to a justifiable benchmark, reflect regional prices and be adjusted to inflation. With respect to the Child Grant, for example, the OAA and SWA were set as benchmarks in the original planning phases (Adhikari et al., 2014; Koehler et al., 2009; Khanal, 2012). However,

whilst these programmes have seen an increase in their transfer amounts in recent years, this has not been matched by an increase in the transfer amount of the Child Grant. Costing and simulation exercises can map the impact of higher transfers in conjunction with increased coverage across multiple social protection programmes. UNICEF, for example, is undertaking cost and microsimulation analyses for various options of the Child Grant. The information coming out of these and other exercises can provide important input into discussions about how to make transfers more effective.

With respect to public works programmes such as KEP, the notion of transfer amounts refers to the number of days that programme participants can work. Whilst the programme was set up to provide 100 days of work per annum, this is far less for the large majority of projects. New guidelines currently provide no guidance regarding the number of days of work. Wage rates are variable and tied to the amount of work performed, thereby disadvantaging less physically able participants. Improvements in the effectiveness of public works programmes, both for children and more generally, will therefore hinge on increasing the number of working days available to programme participants and the wage rates paid to those participants. As

discussed above, an increase in the number of working days and wage rates would make the programme more child-sensitive. It would increase household resources that can be allocated to meeting children's needs and can support keeping families together through reducing the need for seasonal migration.

Recommendation #4:

Make programme registration more responsive and flexible

Current registration processes are an important cause for delays in receiving transfers. With respect to the Child Grant and other social protection programmes implemented by MoFALD, current processes require a beneficiary to be registered before the end of November of the current calendar year to be able to benefit from the programme from August next year, causing a potential delay of up to 18 months. Linkages between programme registration and entry into programme budgets need to become more flexible so that beneficiaries can start benefiting from the grants with a minimal delay. This particularly holds for new-borns, with the delays undermining the impact in the important first 1000 days. More flexible or rolling registration will also be important for newly widowed women or those becoming partially or fully disabled; their sudden shock to livelihoods and income-earning potential and delay in accessing grants will have far-reaching consequences for the whole household, which may include children. The Department of Civil Registration (DoCR) at MoFALD has been especially created to respond to these issues, and the DoCR has submitted a proposal to the Ministry to minimise the delay for those applying to the Child Grant and Disability Allowance to a maximum of four months.

Recommendation #5:

Strengthen sensitisation and awareness raising regarding use of funds and child wellbeing

The analysis of the various social protection

programmes has shown that the provision of advice regarding transfer use (by whom and on what) and access to complementary services can greatly strengthen the impact of such programmes, on children and the family as a whole (see Box 9). Yet, despite the aim of integrating such sensitisation and awareness activities in programmes (such as the Child Grant), the availability of such activities is very limited. Where they do exist, they are largely implemented by NGOs.

The exploration of opportunities for raising awareness and sensitisation regarding transfer use, spending on education and health and access to complementary services, and more strategic use of those opportunities, can greatly enhance the child-sensitivity of social protection. This effect would be two-fold: on the one hand it would help to maximise positive impacts on children, on the other hand it would reduce the risk of unintended adverse consequences. As payment of social protection transfers still occurs at designated pay points within the VDC every four months, opportunities could include the presence of community health and extension workers and the Village Child Protection Committees (VCPCs) at those pay points. The rise of mobile and new technology also presents new opportunities for providing more general messaging about the social protection programmes and other issues related to children. UNICEF is currently in the process of setting up a pilot project that uses SMS-technology for messaging for Child Grant recipients, for example.

Recommendation #6:

Improve link to child protection

While child-sensitive social protection and child protection are two distinct policy areas, they do share the important objective of reducing poverty and vulnerability among children. This shared objective calls for a greater link between the two policy areas, not by conflating them but rather by fostering collaboration across. This implies the establishment of a mechanism that facilitates referrals of children from the social

protection into the child protection system or vice versa. For example, if VDC secretaries identify a child to be suffering child protection violations (e.g. engaged in child labour, subject to exploitation or neglect, victim of trafficking) when they are undertaken social protection payments, there should be a clear referral pathway into child protection services. Similarly if a social worker or child protection officer finds a child or household member excluded from a social protection programme despite being eligible, they should be able to make adequate referrals. The Village Child Protection Committees (VCPCs) might present a core component of such a referral mechanism. This would require equipping VCPC members and others with the skills to identify child protection violations.

Recommendation #7:

Establish Grievance Mechanisms

Accountability is a great concern for social protection in Nepal. The misuse of funds at village level (either for personal or political gain or in a bid to balance the budget) is widely recognised and as such efforts are directed towards improving monitoring and evaluation, amongst others, in order to improve accountability between sub-national and national level government. However, most programmes lack a mechanism that would allow for beneficiaries and community members to hold government (at any level) to account. Grievance and complaints mechanisms appear largely non-existent and, more worryingly, there seems to be little consideration of the need for such mechanisms.

Grievance and complaints mechanisms are important tools in creating a social contract between citizens and the government and for creating broad-based awareness and ownership of social protection programmes. It will ensure that programmes are not seen as discretionary government hand-outs but as structural support networks and improve transparency about who is eligible for such support and who is not. The establishment of such mechanisms will therefore

not only work towards improving effectiveness of programmes but also establishing a citizen-state relationship.

Recommendation #8:

Raise awareness and voice

While it is the government's duty to provide its citizens with a minimum standard of living, citizens should be empowered to raise their voice and keep government to account in living up to their duty. This requires making sure that those eligible for social protection programmes are aware of their eligibility and the mechanisms through which they can apply, and feel confident to make use of those mechanisms. But it also requires people – those in and outside of the social protection systems – to be vocal in putting forward their demands, such as increased coverage and higher transfer amounts. Public support will be crucial for creating momentum regarding the extension and improvement of social protection in Nepal. The creation of awareness about people's rights, eligibility criteria and mechanisms for making voices heard can be done using conventional technology such as radios and newspapers but also by exploring more innovative options, such as SMS or social media.

Recommendation #9:

Create clarity about the purpose of social protection, and about child-sensitive social protection

Despite the long-standing history of social protection in Nepal, clarity about what it means and should do remains an issue for many. This confusion undermines efforts for moving the social protection agenda forward: *“Three quarters of the people (bureaucracy) see it as a hand out and they don't know why. They don't see it as a cushion or investment. That's why there is a lot of resistance. Inefficiencies come when you don't believe in something”* [Programmes Officer, ADB].

Whilst a number of key informants were able to articulate the meaning of child-sensitive

social protection, many found it a difficult concept to engage with and did not reflect on the potential impact of social protection on children beyond programmes that were directly child-focused. A lack of clarity in conjunction with limited priority of children's issues may undermine efforts to make social protection child-sensitive. Capacity building and creation of awareness of the meaning of child-sensitive social protection and what it implies for social protection to be

child-sensitive (versus child-focused) among policy-makers and practitioners is crucial for strengthening social protection's potential benefits for children. This holds for both those developing policy at national level and those implementing policy at district and VDC level. Given their responsibilities in coordinating programmes on the ground, VDC secretaries and VDC social mobilisers would be key staff to be made aware of children's issues and how social protection can be child-sensitive.

Box 12: Recommendations for child-sensitive social protection as part of an emergency response

Various lessons can be learned from recent experiences with social protection as part of the earthquake response leading into recommendations for child-sensitive social protection as an emergency response. Notwithstanding the devastation and suffering caused by the earthquakes, the emergency also allows for opportunities for improvement of the social protection system. For example, UNICEF and MoFALD are planning one-off payments to all Child Grant beneficiaries as well as all other children under five in the earthquake affected districts. This requires data collection of all children under five in the affected areas and concerted efforts for children to get birth registration. This has the inherent benefit of the expansion of birth certificate coverage but also means that data about and birth registration for children under five is available if the Child Grant were to be expanded to a wider group of children.

At the same time experiences following the earthquake highlight the importance of having solid systems in place to allow for a timely and effective response in case of an emergency. This refers to having high-quality and up-to-date data, well established implementation and disbursement mechanisms and ample capacity at central, district and local level. The importance of having strong systems in case of an emergency adds to previous recommendations regarding the need for greater coordination and collaboration, capacity building and accountability and transparency, strengthening the call to invest in social protection now.

A specific component of systems-building that can ensure that social protection as an emergency response is child-sensitive is sensitisation and awareness raising. This holds at the level of caregivers as well as policy makers. Implementing partners of Save the Children's CSSP programme in Sindhupalchowk indicated that these components have become increasingly difficult to implement after the earthquake as caregivers are mostly interested in 'hardware' support such as in-kind or cash transfers. Having created knowledge about the need to invest in children and how before an emergency hits will ensure that knowledge is available to caregivers when receiving cash or in-kind support. Policy makers will be more aware of potential adverse consequences of programmes such as cash-for-work or labour-based early recovery activities in relation to unpaid care work and child care concerns.

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Annex 1 Overview of key informants and focus groups, 2014 and 2016

2014

Organisation	Name	Profession
Action Aid	Malati Maskey	Project Officer
ADB	Arun S. Rana	Programmes Officer
CCWB	Tarak Dhital	Executive Director
DDC Kalikot		Local Development Officer
DDC Kalikot		Program Officer -Social Development
DFID	Ben Powis	Social Development Adviser
HelpAge	Sangita Niroula	Country Director
ILO	Nita Neupane	Programme Officer
KIRDARC Kathmandu	Min Bahadur Shahi Gobinda Bahadur Shahi	Executive Director Programme Manager
KIRDARC Kalikot	Tula Ram Pandey	District Coordinator Kalikot
Department of Civil Registration, MoFALD	Shaligram Rijal	Director ¹³
MoWCSW	Kiran Rupakhetee	Undersecretary
Nepal Disabled Women Association	Rama Dhakal	Chairperson
NPC	Sanjaya Khanal	Undersecretary
Oxfam	Rajesh Dhungel Pushpa Bhusal	EFSL Regional Capacity Builder
Plan International	Shuvakar Vaidya	Programme Support Manager
Social Protection Civil Society Network	Usha Baruwal	Coordinator
VDC Raku, Kalikot district		VDC Secretary
UNICEF	Thakur Dhakal	Social Policy Specialist
WB	Jasmine Rajbhandary	Social Protection Specialist

Location	Group
Daha VDC, Kalikot district, Karnali zone	Caregivers of young and older children having participated in KEP
Daha VDC, Kalikot district, Karnali zone	Caregivers of young and older children having participated in KEP

¹³ At the time of the interview, this post did not yet exist and Mr Shaligram Rijal was Undersecretary at MoFALD.

2016

Organisation	Name	Profession
Department of Civil Registration, MoFALD	Shaligram Rijal	Director
DDC Sindhupalchowk		Program Officer -Social Development
DFID Nepal	Nina Schuler	Social Development Adviser
UNDP	Niranjana Tamrakar	Team Leader for Early Recovery
UNICEF	Nicolas Mathers	Cash Transfer Specialist

Location	Group
Jethal VDC, Sindhupalchowk district	Village Child Protection Committee (VCPC)
Jethal VDC, Sindhupalchowk district	Caregivers and young children receiving support through CEF
Thumpakhar VDC, Sindhupalchowk district	Caregivers of young children from Dalit community
Chauthara, Sindhupalchowk district	VDC secretaries

Annex 2 Overview of workshop participants (29/02/2016)

Organisation	Name of participant	Designation
IDS	Keetie Roelen	Researcher
Department of Civil Registration, MoFALD	Shaligram Rijal	Director
OXFAM	Pushpa Bhusal	Program Officer
IDS	Helen Karki	Researcher
Tuki, Sindhupalchok	Uma Simkhada	Program Coordinator
Action Aid	Malati Maskey	Women's Right Coordinator
KIRDARC	Rishi Adhakari	Theme Leader
Consortium	Yubaraj Ghimere	Chair Person
UNICEF	Nicholas Mathers	Cash Transfer Specialist
SPCSN	Dolma Tamang	Member
Save the Children-Finland	Disa Sjoblom	Advisor
Helpage	Khemraj Upadhaya	Country Director
Save the Children	Roger Hodgson	Deputy Country Director
CCWB	Namuna Bhusal	Program Manager
Save the Children	Madhu Subedi	Child Poverty Specialist
COCAP	Deepak Kumar BK	Program Coordinator
COCAP	Janak Giri	Vice Chair Person
Save the Children	Anthony Davis	Advocacy Manager
Save the Children	Soni Pradhan	GESI Specialist
UNDP	Gun Kim	Employment Analyst
World Bank	Jasmine Rajbhandary	Social Protection Specialist
CN/CZOPP	Mohan Dangal	Program Director
Plan International	Subhakar Baidya	Programme Support Manager
NPC	Pratibha Rai	Planning Officer
UNDP	Niranjan Tamrakar	Team Leader/LRP
NEPAN	Halcy Saner	Fellow
NEPAN	Prakash Bahadur Magar	Fellow
Save the Children	Gopal Nepali	Project Officer

Organisation	Name of participant	Designation
Save the Children	Robin Maharjan	Project Officer
Save the Children	Kishor Pandey	Jr. Finance Officer
Save the Children	Hemanta Dangal	Project Coordinator
Save the Children	Pratiksha Deo	Secretary
Parliament	Ranju Jha	Chair person, Women, Children, Senior Citizen and Social Welfare Committee
Parliament	Rajan Kumar Jha	Private Secretary
Save the Children	Sodhasi Raymajhi	Sr. Coordinator CRG and CP
Save the Children	Dev Raj Gurung	Monitoring and Documentation officer
Save the Children	Bishwa Ratna Pun	Project Manager

Save the Children Finland

Koskelantie 38, PL 95
00601 Helsinki, Finland, Nepal

Tel: +358 10 843 5000

Fax :+358 10 843 5111

Email: info@pelastakaalapset.fi

Save the Children Nepal Country Office

Airport Gate Area, Shambhu Marg
Kathmandu, Nepal

G.P.O. Box 3394

Tel: +977-1-4468130/4464803

Fax: +977-1-4468132

Email: Post.nepal@savethechildren.org

www.nepal.savethechildren.net

