

# Social protection, social cohesion and national reconciliation

Relevance of international experiences for social protection in Myanmar

Rasmus Jensen Schjødt  
Social Policy Consultant, Aros Policy Research

September 2019

Funded by



## L i v e l i h o o d s   a n d   F o o d   S e c u r i t y   F u n d



Managed by  UNOPS

#### Author

Rasmus Jensen Schjødt, Social Policy Consultant  
Aros Policy Research

#### Published by

HelpAge International  
Myanmar Country Office  
No. 5 (Shwe Gandawin Villa), Zizawar Street,  
Parami Avenue, 8 Ward, Yankin, Yangon  
Tel +95 (1) 663815  
www.helpage.org

Copyright © HelpAge International 2019

Registered charity no. 288180

This study was commissioned by HelpAge International. It is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>

Any parts of this publication may be reproduced without permission for non-profit and educational purposes. Please clearly credit HelpAge International and send us a copy or link.

#### Acknowledgements

We thank the governments of Australia, Canada, the European Union, Ireland, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America for their kind contributions to improving the livelihoods and food security of rural poor people in Myanmar. Their support the Livelihoods and Food Security Fund (LIFT) is gratefully acknowledged.

#### Disclaimer

This document is produced with financial assistance from Australia, Canada, the European Union, Ireland, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The views expressed herein should not be taken to reflect the official opinion of the LIFT donors.

## **Content**

Acronyms.....	4
Executive Summary .....	5
1. Introduction .....	10
2. Background .....	11
2.1 The political and social context in Myanmar.....	11
2.2 Social protection in Myanmar .....	14
3. The relationship between social protection and social cohesion.....	18
3.1 Key concepts.....	18
3.2 Analysing the relationship between social protection and social cohesion .....	19
3.3 Influence of social protection on political indicators of social cohesion.....	20
3.4 Influence of social protection on social indicators of social cohesion .....	22
3.5 Influence of social protection on economic indicators of social cohesion.....	23
4. International experiences of using social protection as a tool for enhancing social cohesion and national reconciliation .....	25
4.1 Timor-Leste.....	26
4.2 Nepal.....	29
5. International evidence on the effects of social protection on indicators of social cohesion.....	32
5.1 General programme effects .....	32
5.2 Programme design.....	38
6. Social protection and social cohesion in Myanmar .....	42
6.1 Strengthening state-citizen relations .....	42
6.2 Strengthening social relations .....	44
6.3 Potential impact on economic dimensions of social cohesion.....	45
7. Conclusions and recommendations.....	47
References.....	50

## **Acronyms**

BISP	Benazir Income Support Programme
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
EAO	Ethnic Armed Organisations
FESR	Framework for Economic and Social Reforms
HSNP	Hunger Safety Net Programme
ISHG	Inclusive Self-Help Groups
MMK	Myanmar Kyat
MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MoHS	Ministry of Health and Sports
MSDP	Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan
MSWRR	Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement
NSPSP	National Social Protection Strategic Plan
NREGA	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme
SBCC	Social and Behaviour Change Communication
SLRC	Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium

## **Executive Summary**

In December 2014, Myanmar's government approved the National Social Protection Strategic Plan, which laid out eight flagship schemes including four cash transfers. Since then, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement has initiated two of these cash transfer schemes: the National Social Pension for everyone aged 85 years and older, and the Mother and Child Cash Transfer. Social protection now represents a significant expansion of the Ministry's mission and also of the government's services to the people, and is likely to continue expanding in the future.

With 135 officially recognised ethnic groups in the country including eight major groups, Myanmar is a very diverse country. At the same time, Myanmar has been more deeply affected by subnational conflict than any other country in Southeast Asia and conflicts currently affect a substantial proportion of the country. An estimated 118 of the country's 330 townships, comprising almost one-quarter of Myanmar's population, are currently affected by active or latent conflict (Burke et al. 2017). In addition to conflict between the central government and ethnic armed organisations, there is the risk of inter-communal or inter-religious violence, which over the past several years has re-emerged as a serious threat to peace and unity.

This report presents findings from a desk study on how national social protection programmes have promoted social cohesion and national reconciliation in post-conflict contexts internationally. The study documents and analyses the dynamics of how government-provided social protection programmes in a variety of contexts, with various design features, have contributed to national reconciliation and social cohesion. It then draws out lessons of relevance to Myanmar.

### **Social protection has a documented impact on several dimensions of social cohesion**

Social cohesion is a multi-dimensional concept, including political, social and economic dimensions. The international literature points to a number of ways in which social protection programmes have contributed to these dimensions of social cohesion in different countries.

#### **The political dimension:**

- **Increasing state legitimacy:** social protection can contribute to strengthening state legitimacy, by increasing the ability of the state to meet the expectations of citizens. A particular value of social protection transfers is that they present a clearly visible function of the state for citizens (Godamunne, 2017). However, if services are delivered in a manner which does not demonstrate fairness and professionalism on the part of state representatives, it may instead contribute to decreased legitimacy of the state in the eyes of citizens (Cummings and Paudel, 2019). It is therefore essential to consider how processes of delivering social protection transfers are experienced by citizens (Slater and Mallett, 2017).

#### **The social dimension:**

- **Preventing violence and unrest:** Studies from several countries show that social protection can be an effective tool for preventing violence and unrest. In India, social protection programmes are associated with decreased levels of civil unrest and violence (Justino 2011; Fetzner 2019). In Colombia, there is evidence that the Familias en Accion conditional cash transfer programme had positive effects on the demobilisation of combatants (Pena, Urrego and Villa, 2017). Similarly, in the Philippines, the 4P conditional cash transfer programme decreased conflict and insurgent influence at the village level (Croft, Felter and Johnston 2016). These micro-level effects are also reflected in cross-national analyses showing that higher investment in social protection leads to less risk of social unrest (UNESCAP 2015; Taydas and Peksen 2012).

- **Increasing social capital:** The social protection literature shows that social protection can enhance individuals' ability to share their income and participate in social activities (Attanasio et al. 2009; Owusu-Addo, Renzaho and Smith 2018; Babajanian, Hagen-Zanker and Holmes, 2014; Camacho, 2014). Social protection transfers increase citizen engagement in social networks and social activities. They can enable individuals to maintain or improve their economic status and thus increase their ability to participate in ceremonial, cultural and other social activities (Babajanian, 2012). Active social participation in turn can help foster and strengthen social capital – i.e. the relations of trust and reciprocity that bind together individuals in a society.
- **Reducing social exclusion:** There is a strong link between social exclusion, social cohesion and insecurity. Minority groups become more insecure if they are marginalised because of their ethnicity, gender, culture or religion. This can lead to insecurity in the wider society, if a marginalised group decides to use violence to seek to redress inequalities. People who are excluded may feel that they have little to lose by taking violent action (Stewart et al. 2006). Social protection can contribute to reducing social exclusion by reducing vulnerability, help overcome structural disadvantage, such as for example covering transport costs, as well as limitations in capability by for example improving access to education (Babajanian and Hagen-Zanker, 2012). Universal programmes are particularly well suited for signalling equality between citizens, regardless of population group. The ability of social protection transfers to increase access to education is well documented, and this can have important effects on social inclusion (Bastagli et al. 2016). More equal access to education is associated with lower risk of conflict, with the likelihood of experiencing violent conflict twice as high in countries with high education inequality between ethnic and religious groups (FHI 360, 2015).

### **The economic dimension:**

- **Reducing poverty:** Poverty can be a contributing factor in violence and conflict, with poorer countries more prone to civil war (Marks 2016). The impact of social protection transfers on poverty indicators has been extensively documented (Bastagli et al. 2016). However, how large this impact is, and whether it can also be seen at a national level, depends on programme coverage and the adequacy of benefit levels.
- **Reducing economic inequality:** High levels of inequality has been empirically linked to outbreaks of violence, social conflicts and crime. Social protection programmes are enormously important for reducing inequality in high-income countries. In European countries, taxes and transfers result in reduction of inequality with an average of 15 Gini points. However, the redistributive impact of social protection on inequality depends on how much is invested in social protection transfers, and whether the combined effect of taxes and transfers is regressive or progressive (Lustig, 2018).
- **Protection against covariate shocks:** Covariate shocks refer to shocks that are felt by entire communities at the same time. Covariate shocks may be natural (e.g. drought, floods, typhoons, earthquakes), political (e.g. political crisis and armed conflict) or economic (e.g. economic downturns, price increases) (O'Brien et al. 2018; Nel and Richarts, 2008; Rezaeian 2013). Increases in the price of fuel and electricity as a result of energy subsidy reforms has been a cause of protests and violence in many countries, including Egypt, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan and Zimbabwe. In Myanmar, unrest in 2007 was also triggered by the removal of energy subsidies, which led to sharp increases in consumer energy prices on petrol, diesel and CNG (Hossain, 2018). Climate related shocks and shocks resulting from fluctuations in international prices of main crops have also been shown to be a cause of violence (Fetzer 2019; Dube 2006). Social protection can be an important means of providing farmers with a safety net in the case of prolonged dry spells, droughts or flooding, and several countries, including for example Iran and Indonesia, have successfully used social protection transfers as a way of compensating poor households for the losses they incur as a result of energy

price hikes, thereby avoiding unrest (Hossain, 2018; Salehi-Isfahani, Stucki and Deutschmann, 2014; World Bank, 2012).

### **Programme design matters for the effects of social protection on social cohesion**

The existing research points to the importance of programme design in relation to many of the outcomes described above. Particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings, it is important to take a 'do no harm' approach, paying attention to the quality of services, including strong systems for ensuring accountability, assessing how programmes work at the local level and taking grievances, unfairness and exclusion seriously (Slater and Mallett, 2017). From a peace building perspective, these factors should be of major concern to policy makers, since perceptions of unfairness and exclusion have a strong influence on people's perception of government and may exacerbate grievances against the state and contribute to inter-communal resentment.

**Targeting:** targeting is crucial for determining whether social protection has a positive or negative effect on social cohesion (Idris 2017). Many studies find that poverty-targeting or targeting of minority groups, or groups such as ex-combatants, risks creating animosity between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, and weakens social relations (Holmes & Slater, 2007; Chong et al. 2009; MacAusland and Riemenschneider, 2011; Camacho, 2014; Kardan et al. 2010; KC et al., 2014; Drucza, 2016; Schjødt, 2018a; Holmes and Jackson 2008; Holmes 2009; Willibald 2006). There are documented cases of the use of proxy means tests for targeting of cash transfer programmes leading to unrest in humanitarian contexts (Jacobsen and Armstrong, 2016; Guyatt, Della Rosa and Spencer 2016).

In addition, targeting approaches have important implications for accountability: simple eligibility criteria, such as age, facilitate accountability, while more complex or opaque criteria impede it (Ayliffe, Schjødt and Aslam, 2018). Research has in several cases found that relying on community committees to select beneficiaries result in high rates of leakage and abuse, discretionary and subjective selection of beneficiaries and manipulation and abuse of the selection process by local power holders (Osofisan, 2011; Shah and Shahbaz, 2015). These perceptions can be damaging to citizens' perceptions of state legitimacy (Dix et al., 2012).

**Conditionalities:** The use of conditionalities and sanctions in social protection programmes risks providing officials with a tool for sanctioning citizens, rather than empowering citizens to hold state representatives accountable for their actions (Fox, 2007; Jones et al. 2008; Cookson, 2016). In addition, ethnographic research from Peru has shown how conditionalities can add to women's work load and exacerbate gender inequality (Cookson, 2018).

**Payments:** the choice of payment mechanism affects the space for interaction between citizens and representatives of the state. For example, the manual delivery of cash payments by local officials in Nepal presents a rare opportunity for citizens to interact with government representatives (Drucza, 2016; Schjødt 2018a). On the contrary, where payments are contracted out to private service providers, there is no direct interaction between citizens and the government. Accountability relations are also less clear, since grievances for payment issues will most likely have to be directed to and resolved by the private payment provider. When making choices on payment mechanisms, programme designers therefore have to balance the need for effectivity and efficiency with the opportunity for interaction between citizens and local officials.

**Social accountability and grievance mechanisms:** The ability to handle grievances is important for the experience that citizens have of a programme. The international evidence points to the need to put in place several different mechanisms for citizens to raise grievances, and systems to ensure that there is follow up and feedback provided to citizens. Combining complaints mechanisms with other mechanisms, such as for example social audits and community score cards, can provide better mechanism for bringing state

representatives and citizens together to resolve programme issues (Ayliffe, Aslam and Schjødt, 2017; Nixon and Mallet 2017).

## **Lessons for social protection and social cohesion in Myanmar**

### **Political dimensions of social cohesion**

**Strengthening state-citizen relations:** In the context of Myanmar, it will be particularly important to take a 'do no harm' approach to programming to mitigate the potential de-legitimizing effects of poor quality service delivery, as well as increasing the ability of social protection to contribute to strengthening state-citizen relations. Lessons from Nepal show that cash transfers can be an important way for citizens to feel that the government recognises them as equal citizens. This could be very important in Myanmar, where the relationship between the state and citizens has been fraught for decades. Social protection transfers could be especially important for improving relationships between Ward and Village Tract authorities and citizens. Besides the direct provision of income support, social protection transfers can contribute to increased uptake of civil registration and access to other services such as education and health.

### **Social dimensions of social cohesion**

**Strengthening social relations:** Given the context of intercommunal tensions between religious and ethnic groups it is extremely important that no groups are seen as benefitting more from social protection transfers than others. Transparency in eligibility criteria is of the utmost importance. Poverty targeting, whether using community based targeting or forms of means-testing or proxy means-testing should therefore be avoided in all development efforts, as they are not transparent to citizens.

**Reducing violence:** Evidence from Colombia, the Philippines and India on the ability of cash transfer programmes to reduce violence, contribute to demobilisation and reduce support for insurgents could be relevant to Myanmar. While it is still premature to talk of re-integration of ex-combatants in Myanmar, and disarmament is not on the table, there are still potential lessons from experiences of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programmes in other countries. DDR programmes have generally moved away from an exclusive focus on ex-combatants to involve whole communities, and universal social protection programmes could be an important way to ensure that the majority of the population benefits from the peace dividend.

### **Economic dimensions of social cohesion**

**Reducing economic poverty and inequality:** Social protection in Myanmar is still at a very low level of investment. This means that the impact of social protection on social cohesion through pathways such as reduction in poverty and inequality will remain limited unless investment is increased. However, if the plans for expansion of social protection described in the NSPSP are implemented, including the expected expansion in coverage and increased benefit levels of the social pension, social protection could become a cornerstone of state-building, as it has been in countries such as Brazil, South Africa, Nepal and East Timor. Social protection programmes can also play an important role in addressing regional inequalities.

**Protection from covariate shocks:** Lessons from other countries in relation to price fluctuations, climate related shocks and energy subsidy reforms are all highly relevant to the Myanmar context. Social protection has proven effective in cushioning shocks to income as a result of reforms of energy subsidies. Energy subsidies in Myanmar are forecast to increase to more than one percent of GDP by 2020. In the event that the government decides to introduce reforms that will result in higher prices, it will be essential to increase social protection transfers to avoid social unrest.



## **Programme design**

***Ensuring conflict-sensitive targeting:*** As noted above, targeting mechanisms are of particular importance for how citizens perceive programmes. The policy choices that has been made so far by the Government of Myanmar points in the direction of universal, inclusive social protection programmes. Maintaining this direction will be very important for ensuring a positive impact on state-citizen relations. Ideally, the new social protection entitlements should be anchored in legislation in order to be fully rights-based and contribute to the strengthening of the rule of law.

***Involvement of ethnic minority stakeholders:*** The extensive research carried out by the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) research project on service delivery in fragile and conflict-affected settings emphasises the importance of investing in understanding the historical and political factors that influence how different social groups may respond to and interpret expansion of government services (Nixon and Mallett 2017). This is particularly important in relation to how delivery of social protection transfers by the Burmese-dominant state may be interpreted in areas under mixed control or formerly under the control of Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs). There could be opportunities for involvement of civil society in relation to outreach, case management and grievance redress mechanisms. The planned national roll-out of structures such as Inclusive Self-Help Groups and the establishment of Social Protection Centres staffed with newly trained social workers could also be an opportunity to involve local stakeholders in monitoring and implementation of programmes, including by hiring local staff.

***Strengthening social accountability:*** In the Myanmar context, historically characterised by limited trust between citizens and the state, it is particularly important to pay attention to how citizens experience their interaction with the state in connection with social protection programme implementation. Embedding social accountability mechanisms in social protection programmes can play an important role in shaping how citizens experience the state. This can for example include establishment of community committees or groups of women or older people and facilitating positive interactions between local officials and citizens in community meetings. The Inclusive Self-Help Groups can potentially be an important vehicle for strengthening accountability. This may draw on the extensive experience of HelpAge International of Older Citizen Monitoring in social protection programmes (Livingstone et al. 2016; Livingstone 2018). Experiences from other countries of implementing social accountability mechanisms in social protection programmes point to the importance of combining social accountability initiatives with internal reforms in the bureaucracy to achieve improvements in accountability (Ayliffe, Aslam and Schjødt, 2018).

## **1. Introduction**

In December 2014, Myanmar's government approved the National Social Protection Strategic Plan, which laid out eight flagship schemes including four cash transfers. Since then, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement has initiated two of these cash transfer schemes: the National Social Pension for everyone aged 85 years and older, and the Mother and Child Cash Transfer which has currently started in Chin State, the Naga Self-Administered Zone, Rakhine State, Kayin State and Kayah State and is gradually being rolled out to more states/regions. Social protection now represents a significant expansion of the Ministry's mission and also the government's services to the people, and is likely to continue expanding in the future.

With 135 officially recognised ethnic groups in the country, including eight major groups, Myanmar is a very diverse country. At the same time, Myanmar has been more deeply affected by subnational conflict than any other country in Southeast Asia and conflicts currently affect a substantial proportion of the country. An estimated 118 of the country's 330 townships, comprising almost one-quarter of Myanmar's population, are currently affected by active or latent conflict (Burke et al. 2017). In addition to conflict between the central government and ethnic armed organisations, there is the risk of inter-communal or inter-religious violence, which over the past several years has re-emerged as a serious threat to peace and unity.

This report presents findings from a desk study on how national social protection programmes have promoted social cohesion and national reconciliation in post-conflict contexts internationally. The study documents and analyses the dynamics of how government-provided social protection programmes in a variety of contexts, with various design features, have contributed to national reconciliation and social cohesion.

We show how national public services, including social protection programmes, has the potential to undermine or contribute to peace building and social cohesion: service delivery which is not conflict-sensitive risks contributing to conflict within and between groups, and exacerbate animosity between citizens and the state. On the other hand, improved provision of services can contribute to social cohesion and can form part of a strengthened social contract between citizens and the state.

The report then relates these findings to the Myanmar context and provides perspectives that may inform the national debates on peace building and social cohesion, and how social protection can contribute to these. While the current Government of Myanmar recognises the need to invest more in social sectors, including education, health and social protection, there is so far limited recognition of the way improved service delivery interacts with efforts of peace building and national reconciliation.

## **2. Background**

This section provides a brief introduction to the features of Myanmar's political and administrative system, as well as the social context, which are relevant to understanding how the expansion of social protection may affect social cohesion in the country.

### **2.1 The political and social context in Myanmar**

#### **Economic context and access to social services**

Myanmar has achieved a substantial reduction in the national poverty rate from 48.2 percent in 2004 to 32.1 percent in 2015.<sup>1</sup> However, poverty is still widespread across the country, with large differences in poverty rates between different regions and between rural and urban areas. The maternal mortality ratio and under-5 mortality in Myanmar are more than double the ASEAN average (HARP-L and MIMU 2018). There are also significant differences in poverty rates across geographic areas and significant variation in mortality rates across geographic, ethnic and socio-economic groups. The lowest per capita expenditure is in rural Chin and rural areas of Rakhine and Magway, where about 70 percent of expenditure is on food (HARP-F and MIMU 2018).

While agriculture is still the dominant source of livelihoods, with over half of households conducting some work in agriculture, the share of households working only in agriculture is declining (CSO, UNDP and WB 2018). People in rural areas are increasingly balancing income from various sources. However, not all households are able to diversify their income, and households which lack capital or productive labour are at risk of falling behind, leading to increasing inequality within villages. In addition, in many parts of the country agricultural livelihoods are very vulnerable to weather-related shocks (World Bank 2016).

While government health spending has increased, out-of-pocket spending by households is still the main source of financing for health, making households very vulnerable to health incidents. While 90 percent of the population is literate, 61.3 percent of the population aged 25 and over have no formal education or have attended only primary school and half a million children aged 7-15 have never attended school (HARP-F and MIMU 2018).

Myanmar is very vulnerable to environmental risks and vulnerabilities, including storm surge, flooding, drought, fire, earthquakes, destruction of crops due to pests and animals, landslides, food shortages and tsunamis. Climate change is expected to increase several of these risks in the near future and the UN Risk Model classifies Myanmar as a 'most-at-risk' country in the Asia Pacific region (Harp and MIMU 2018; World Bank 2017). According to the Global Climate Risk Index, Myanmar was one of the three countries most affected by extreme weather events between 1996 and 2015 (Harp and MIMU, 2018). Climate events have large economic consequences. According to the World Bank, severe flooding in 2015, which displaced 1.6 million people, resulted in a sharp rise in inflation and a decline of 12 percent in exports, leading to a loss of 3.1 percent of GDP. These economic shocks as a result of climate events fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable households (Harp and MIMU 2018).

#### **Political and administrative context**

Myanmar's current political system is defined by the 2008 constitution, which established a democratic system, albeit with significant power for the military. The constitution introduced elections for the national parliament, the *Pyidaungsu Hluttaw*, which consists of the People's Assembly (*Pyithu Hluttaw*) elected on the basis of township as well as population, and the House of Nationalities (*Amyotha Hluttaw*) with representatives elected from Regions and States. The constitution also established 14 new State/Region

---

<sup>1</sup> Based on revised poverty lines – joint study by World Bank and MoPF's joint study of poverty in Myanmar

governments, each with their own elected parliaments. However, the head of government in each State/Region, the Chief Minister, is nominated by the central government. While the constitution grants State/Region governments a mandate to provide services within a range of areas, decentralisation of service provision has so far been limited in practice (Minoletti 2016). Decentralisation is slowly increasing, but state and region budget allocations remain low at eight percent (HARP-F and MIMU 2018).

The change of government in 2011 brought a series of significant political reforms, including expansion of civil rights such as freedom of speech and of the press as well as political rights and electoral democracy. Elections in 2015 brought the National League for Democracy to power with a majority of seats in both chambers. However, in accordance with the 2008 constitution, the military controls a quarter of the seats in Parliament as well as three key ministries: the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Border Affairs, and the military remains a dominant political and economic force. Most Myanmar citizens support democracy when asked in surveys, but many may not have a clear conception of the meaning of the idea of democracy. Levels of trust in political institutions are low, there are limited opportunities for political participation and many people are still cautious about expressing criticism of the government publicly (Stokke, Vakulchuk and Øverland 2018).

The administrative structure consists of five layers, from the bottom up: Ward and Village Tracts, Townships, Districts, State/Regions and the national government. The backbone of the administration is the General Administration Department (GAD), which was until recently part of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) but has in 2018 been moved to the Ministry of the Union Government Office under the civilian government. The GAD is the main bureaucracy in the country, with approximately 16,700 Ward and Village Tract offices, and it serves as the bureaucracy for the 14 state and region governments (TAF 2014).

In conflict-affected areas, governance arrangements are often complex, since there is often a mixture of government-controlled, paramilitary-controlled and ethnic armed organisation-controlled and vast areas of mixed-authority arrangements. This in turn has implications for access to services – including who provides them and who can access them (HARP-F and MIMU 2018).

## **Social context**

According to the 2014 census, Myanmar has a population of about 50 million people, of which 70 percent live in rural areas. However, urbanisation is increasing, and large numbers of people are migrating for work either within the country or internationally. The 2014 census registered over 9 million internal migrants, corresponding to almost 20 percent of the population (Department of Population 2016). An additional 10 percent of the population is estimated to be migrating internationally (IOM 2016). As a result of falling fertility rates in recent decades, the proportion of the population below 15 fell from 41.5 percent in 1973 to 28.6 percent in 2014, with 65.6 percent of the population between 15 and 64 years old, and 5.8 percent above 65. As a result the total and child dependency ratios are falling, while the aged dependency ratio is increasing. The ratio of the aged population to the child population (ageing index) increased from 8.8 in 1973 to 20.1 in 2014, indicating an ageing society (Department of Population, 2015).

Myanmar is a demographically very complex society, with a large number of different ethnic groups and languages. While the majority of the country, 88 percent, are Buddhists, there are significant minorities of Christians and Muslims. There is some overlap between ethnicity and religion, with Buddhism mainly practiced by the Bamar, Rakhine, Shan, Mon and Karen ethnic groups, while most Christians are Chin, Kachin or Karen. Ethnicity and religion also overlap to some extent with geography, with the central parts of the country dominated by the Bamar and ethnic minorities primarily living in the areas around the country's borders. Conflict occurs along both ethnic and religious lines, between the Bamar majority and ethnic minorities, and between Buddhists and Christians and Muslims. From 2012 to 2014, violence between

Buddhists and Muslims occurred in several parts of the country, most seriously in Rakhine State, but with large-scale anti-Muslim violence also taking place in Mandalay Region and Shan State.

Gender inequalities continue to persist, as demonstrated by a Gender Inequality Index of 0.456, ranking Myanmar at 106 out of 188 countries (UNDP, 2018). In addition to these challenges, the people of Myanmar are exposed to age-specific risks and vulnerabilities – older persons, youth and young children, in particular, remain disadvantaged across a range of key indicators of vulnerability. People with disabilities are often excluded, and lack access to rehabilitation services, education, vocational training, protected job opportunities, opportunities for social inclusion and income security.

Given the limited provision of social protection services by the Myanmar Government in the past, the vast majority of people rely on personal networks, as well as community institutions such as churches, mosques and monasteries, for support in times of need. In Chin State, church-affiliated CSOs deliver social protection and have also played a role in peace building (Lian 2017). For Muslims, Zakat is an important social protection mechanism. In Buddhist communities, the concept of earning ‘merit’ is fundamental to social support, with certain activities that benefit others and the community considered important for earning merit. Village-wide rituals and religious festivals are important communal activities, with rituals and religious festivals forming the basis for community cohesion (HelpAge, 2016).

### **Conflict and peacebuilding**

Myanmar has a long history of civil strife between ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) and the armed forces of the government. Some of these groups have in recent years signed a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), but active conflict is still ongoing in many parts of the country, and has in some areas escalated in recent years. The NLD government, which came into power in 2015, recognises the need for political solutions to resolving the conflict, and has successfully brought discussions of establishing a federal union into negotiations. There is ongoing political dialogue between the government and EAOs with the aim of building a common vision of a democratic federal Union, and secure a Union Peace Accord (Government of Myanmar 2018).

Conflict affects general living standards and access to services. Analysis by HARP-F and MIMU (2018) found that, on average, living standards were 23 percent lower in conflict affected than in non-conflict affected areas. Conflict has a particularly negative impact on access to schooling, with townships affected by conflict having double the average number of persons who had never attended school or had no formal educational attainment: an average of 19.8 percent of children in areas that were directly conflict-affected in 2015-16 have never attended school. In conflict-affected townships an average of 34.7 percent of the population has no education (compared to 17.1 percent in non-conflict-affected townships) (HARP-F and MIMU, 2018).

Peace, national reconciliation, security and good governance is a key priority of the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (2018-2030) (MSDP). The MSDP emphasises the need to secure and further peace as well as promoting equitable and conflict-sensitive socio-economic development throughout the country. It recognises that peace building is intimately connected with issues of development, delivery of services by government and rule of law and good governance. According to the MSDP, considering peace building in development efforts means:

- Focusing on involvement of ethnic minority actors in service delivery;
- establishing transparent and accountable community feedback mechanisms;
- ensuring conflict-sensitive approaches to socio-economic development, with a focus on those most vulnerable and furthest behind;

- strengthening rule of law and ensuring the implementation of development efforts in a rights-based manner;
- enhancing good governance, institutional performance and improving the efficiency of administrative decision making at all levels;
- increasing the ability of all people to engage with government.

In this way, the Myanmar Governments views the adoption of inclusive and conflict-sensitive approaches to socio-economic development and services as a bridge toward building trust, social cohesion and peace.

## **2.2 Social protection in Myanmar**

As Myanmar's economy continues to grow, the Myanmar Government is increasingly aware of the need to provide better social protection support to the population. Social protection in Myanmar was established as part of the national development agenda with the commitment of former President U Thein Sein to establish an inclusive comprehensive social protection system at the National Social Protection Conference in June 2012 (Government of Myanmar, 2014). This was followed by the inclusion of social protection in the Framework for Economic and Social Reforms (FESR) 2012-2015 (ILO, 2015). The FESR emphasised the need to learn from the experience of other countries, and design a rights-based and inclusive social protection system which gives attention to 'alleviating poverty and addressing inequities, social exclusion and emergencies.'

The National Social Protection Strategic Plan (NSPSP) was published in December 2014, following a process of Assessment Based National Dialogue facilitated by the ILO and with support from a host of development partners.

The NSPSP defines social protection in the following way: 'Myanmar social protection includes policies, legal instruments and programmes for individuals and households that prevent and alleviate economic and social vulnerabilities, promote access to essential services and infrastructure and economic opportunity, and facilitate the ability to better manage and cope with shocks that arise from humanitarian emergencies and/or sudden loss of income' (Government of Myanmar, 2014). It includes a 10-year plan to establish a comprehensive social protection system in the country.

The NSPSP refers to the four dimensions of social protection described by Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004) as: protective, preventive, promotive and transformative. The transformative dimension of social protection is explicitly related in the NSPSP to the potential of social protection to contribute to equity and social cohesion. The Strategic Plan emphasises equity and coverage of social protection programmes, including social inclusion and gender-sensitivity. It recognises the importance of social protection for redistribution and for helping communities to prepare, respond to and recover from disasters and emergencies. In order to achieve these goals, universal access to programmes is a key principle (Government of Myanmar, 2014).

The MSDP includes social protection as a priority under Pillar 3: People and Planet, Goal 4: Human resources and social development for a 21st century society. It highlights the need for 'expanding an adaptive and systems based social safety net and extend social protection services throughout the life cycle.' In line with the NSPSP, the MSDP includes, among other programmes, the expansion of the universal cash allowance to all pregnant women and children up to age 2 and introduction of a universal cash transfer for children above 3, ensuring implementation of cash allowances for people with disabilities, expanding school feeding programmes and providing a universal cash transfer to older people.

Prior to the NSPSP, Myanmar spent less than 0.5 percent of GDP on social protection programmes and services, with almost all of the spending going to the civil service pension scheme (Government of Myanmar

2014). The NSPSP outlines a programme for gradually building a social protection system in Myanmar from this very low starting point, comprising the following ‘flagship’ programmes:

1. Cash allowance for pregnant women and children to age 2.
2. Gradual extension of that allowance to older children.
3. Cash allowance for people with disabilities.
4. School feeding programme.
5. Public employment and vocational education programmes.
6. Social pension.
7. Older Person Self-Help Groups (since renamed as Inclusive Self Help Groups).
8. Integrated Social Protection Services.

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR) has begun implementing two of these programmes: the Cash Allowance for Pregnant Women and Children to age 2 and the Social Pension. A more recent Costed Social Protection Sector Plan 2018-23 describes the detailed implementation plan. The most important programmes, as described in the Sector Plan, are described below (where not indicated otherwise, information is from the Sector Plan).

### **The Mother and Child Cash Transfer**

The Mother and Child Cash Transfer provides a cash benefit to all pregnant and lactating mothers and children up to 24 months. It provides a monthly benefit of MMK 15,000 (USD 10) in 2018/19, with planned increases of 5 percent per year. The programme is implemented by MSWRR in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS) and the General Administration Department of the Ministry of the Office of the Union Government. Cash transfers are combined with Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) on topics such as health, water, sanitation and hygiene, dietary intake, breastfeeding and complementary feeding. The Mother and Child Cash Transfer was initiated in Chin State, Rakhine State and the Naga Self-Administered Zone in the financial year 2017-18. It was expanded in the following financial year in Kayah and Kayah States and there are plans to expand into Ayeyawady Region and Shan State in 2019. This will be followed by roll-out in Sagaing Region, Mon State and Kachin State in 2021 and Magway Region in 2022. The sequence of the rolling out of the programme was decided based on criteria of nutrition and other development indicators. The NSPSP envisions the gradual introduction of a Child Allowance for older children up to age 15 by continuing transfers to children already enrolled in the Mother and Child Cash Transfer. According to the NSPSP, under the Child Allowance, every eligible child will receive MMK 15,700 in 2019/20 per month.

### **The Social Pension**

The Social Pension started modestly with annual one-off payments to people aged 100 and above in 2015, but have progressed rapidly and has since late 2018 provided all older persons at least 85 years old with a monthly cash transfer of MMK 10,000 (USD 6.5), paid quarterly. Benefit amounts are planned to increase progressively from MMK 10,000 per month in 2018/19 to MMK 15,000 per month by 2022/23. The MSWRR plans to gradually lower the age of eligibility to 65, with a lowering of the age of eligibility to 80 planned in the financial year 2020/21. The programme’s current take-up rate is estimated at 80 percent, although exclusion error has not been precisely calculated. Payments are currently done manually in cash, but mobile payments are planned to be introduced and progressively scaled up with the aim of covering 40 percent of programme beneficiaries by 2022/23 (SP-SCG 2018).

### **Inclusive Self-Help Groups (ISHGs)**

ISHGs in Myanmar represent a community-driven development initiative to enable older persons to meet their own needs and improve not only their well-being but also their communities. ISHGs are participatory, membership-driven organisations led and managed by older persons. They offer activities or benefits across multiple domains: health, income security and social integration. These include various activities such as basic health checks where primary care services are not easily accessible, limited financial assistance with the costs of care, including transport costs in emergencies, health education sessions, and home visitation and care, especially for the home-bound. ISHGs may, therefore, fill some of the functions of community-based Social Protection Committees. This objective is envisaged by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) as part of social protection expansion and is intended to assist in the rollout of disaster mitigation and response efforts. Currently, HelpAge International are supporting 130 ISHGs nationwide, and the Costed Social Protection Sector Plan envisions the Government to gradually expand this to 1,030 groups nationwide.

### **School feeding, Disability Allowance and Public Employment**

Three other programmes will be gradually rolled out in the near future:

**School feeding:** MSWRR is currently implementing school feeding at a limited number of Early Childhood Development centres, as well as in special schools for children with disabilities. The primary school feeding programme is implemented by the Ministry of Education with support from the World Food Programme, and provides one cooked meal per child per day (in government schools) and has been implemented in schools with low net enrolment rates in highly food insecure areas. Following expansion of the programmes, an estimated 471,000 children are expected to benefit from the school feeding programme by 2022/23.

**Disability Allowance:** The NSPSP envisages a modest yet systematic approach toward the universal coverage of all persons with disability. As a first step, the programme will develop a disability certification mechanism in Myanmar, to define eligibility criteria for social protection programmes for people with disabilities. The Department of Rehabilitation of the MSWRR, in collaboration with the MoHS, is responsible for developing a social model assessment tool. Once the disability verification process is finalised, the programme will provide a benefit value of MMK 16,000 per month in 2021/22, with an expected increase of five percent annually. Payments are set to commence in 2021/2022 and will first be delivered in Kayah State.

**Public Employment:** The Public Employment Programme will support local public employment. This will include seasonal and off-season disaster preparedness and recovery efforts, repair works, environmental works and village maintenance. The Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development and the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security will be the lead agencies for this programme. The programme will cover seven states between 2018/19 and 2022/23 (Chin, Kachin, Magway, Mon, Rakhine, Shan and Naga), with the broadest expansion occurring in Kachin and Rakhine states.

### **Implementation arrangements**

An additional flagship programme, the Integrated Social Protection System (ISPS), is envisioned to be the backbone of the delivery of the social protection programmes in a coherent manner. The Department of Social Welfare (DSW) of the MSWRR will lead the implementation of this programme, which will involve the training and employment of a large cadre of social workers and the expansion of DSW's presence at the township level.

In 2014, UNICEF supported the Child/Youth Unit of DSW to implement a Case Management System as one of the components of an integrated social protection service in 27 townships. The system was officially launched in June and July 2015 with case managers assigned subsequently to 37 Townships. As of 2017/18, DSW has



an operational presence in 302 locations and a total of 2,391 staff nationally. To open new DSW Offices in the remaining districts and townships, a new organisational set-up with a total of 9,419 staff was approved by the Ministry of Planning and Finance in August 2017. In the next nine years, 7,028 new staff are expected to be recruited (SP-SCG 2018).

Currently, while the implementation of social protection programmes is overseen by MSWRR, ground-level implementation is led by the General Administration Department (GAD). Until recently, the GAD was located in the Ministry of Home Affairs, one of the three military-led ministries. However, in late 2018 a decision was made to move the department to the Ministry of the Union Government Office under the civilian government. As the GAD forms the backbone of Myanmar's public administration, with 16,700 Ward and Village Tract offices and 36,080 staff, this is a significant reform (TAF 2014). The move will facilitate implementation of other planned reforms, including revisions of staff manuals and codes of conduct, the curriculum for training of officials at the Institute of Development Administration (IDA) and the establishment of a Corruption Prevention Unit.<sup>2</sup>

The Costed Social Protection Sector Plan envisions a gradual transition to digital payments in the future, but at the moment payments are done manually in cash by local GAD officials. Responsibility for some ground implementation of the social protection programmes may gradually be shifted from the GAD to the MSWRR as the capacity of the latter increases. However, identification and registration for the Social Pension will continue to be the responsibility of the GAD, as its network of Ward and Village Tract Authorities and the people who report to them is the only authority with the local presence needed to handle this function effectively. There are plans to strengthen transparency and accountability to ensure that payments are observed by other government staff, such as midwives or teachers, who sign the payment/receipt sheet alongside signatures of the beneficiary and Ward or Village Tract Administrator.

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/union-govt-office-minister-unveils-reform-plan-gad.html>

### **3. The relationship between social protection and social cohesion**

This chapter defines the key terms and describes the theoretical relationship between social protection and social cohesion, based on the existing literature. It describes the economic, political and social aspects of social cohesion, and how social protection programmes may theoretically influence each of these. While there has been very limited research specifically on the effects of social protection on social cohesion as such, there is by now a very large literature on the effects of social protection more generally. This literature also covers several components of social cohesion.

#### **3.1 Key concepts**

##### **Social protection**

There is not one specific definition of social protection. Some definitions are very broad, including for example DFID's definition of social protection as 'a sub-set of public actions that help address risk, vulnerability and chronic poverty'. However, social protection is also commonly defined more narrowly, and for the purpose of this report we define it as 'regular transfers, in-kind or in cash, paid to households or individuals'. This definition includes for example public works programmes, old age pensions, child benefits and conditional cash transfers, but excludes health sector policy. Social protection programmes include two main categories: contributory (social insurance) and non-contributory programmes. For the purpose of this report, we consider only non-contributory programmes.

##### **Social cohesion**

Social cohesion has been described as 'the glue that holds a society together and enables its members to peacefully coexist and develop' (UNDP and SCG 2015). Arriving at a precise universal definition has proven difficult, and definitions vary between institutions and countries. However, most definitions refer in some way to the quality of social relations and people's perceptions and feelings of belonging together. For example, according to UNDESA, a 'cohesive society is one where all groups have a sense of belonging, participation, recognition and legitimacy'.<sup>3</sup> The international peace-building NGO Search for Common Ground sees social cohesion as comprising four key components: 1) social relations, 2) connectedness, 3) orientation towards the common good and 4) equality. Social cohesion is therefore linked to a broad range of issues that affects the way people relate to each other and to the state, including governance, human rights, social accountability, poverty, inequality and social exclusion. It is linked to the concept of conflict sensitivity in the sense that conflict sensitive programming means programming that contributes to social cohesion and avoids creating or exacerbating conflict.

Two sets of social relations are important in relation to social cohesion. 1) Relationships between citizens and the state. This is also sometimes conceptualised as state-society relations or a social contract, defined as 'a dynamic agreement between state and society on their mutual roles and responsibilities' (Babajanian, 2012). The social contract refers to people's expectations from the state, and the state's capacity and will to deliver public goods and services. 2) Relationships between citizens. This includes relationships between different social groups, communities, families and between individual citizens. It includes both social relations and distribution of resources.

Social cohesion is important for many reasons, including individual wellbeing, fulfilling basic human needs and increasing access to public services. It is important for economic growth, and for preventing crime and violence. It is therefore also an important concept for understanding the causes of peace and stability. Social

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.un.org/development/desa/socialperspectiveondevelopment/issues/social-integration.html>

cohesion also underlies efforts of state building, state legitimacy and good governance. It is important for allowing governments to implement efficient and equitable public policy (Babajanian, 2012).

### **Peace building and national reconciliation**

Peace building is a broad concept relating to improving society's ability to prevent violence at all levels. Peace building 'aims to change or transform negative relationships and institutions while strengthening national capacities at all levels in order to better manage conflict dynamics, support the cohesiveness of society and build sustainable peace from the bottom up' (UNDP and SCG, 2015). National reconciliation is often used to refer to the process of peace building at the national level. Increased social cohesion can be seen as the outcome of successful peace building and national reconciliation efforts.

### **3.2 Analysing the relationship between social protection and social cohesion**

The fact that social cohesion is a complex and multi-dimensional concept means that it is most appropriate to examine the impact of social protection on distinct dimensions of social cohesion (Babajanian, 2012). For the analysis in this report, we draw on a conceptual framework developed by UNDP and Search for Common Ground for analysing social cohesion in the context of Myanmar (UNDP and SCG, 2015). This framework includes the following dimensions of social cohesion:

1. **Political:** including voting, participation, levels of trust in government.
2. **Social:** including levels of trust within the group and of other groups, perceptions of belonging, participation in social activities, social inclusion/exclusion.
3. **Economic:** including perceptions of social mobility, satisfaction with living standards, levels of access to basic services, perceptions of economic inequality.

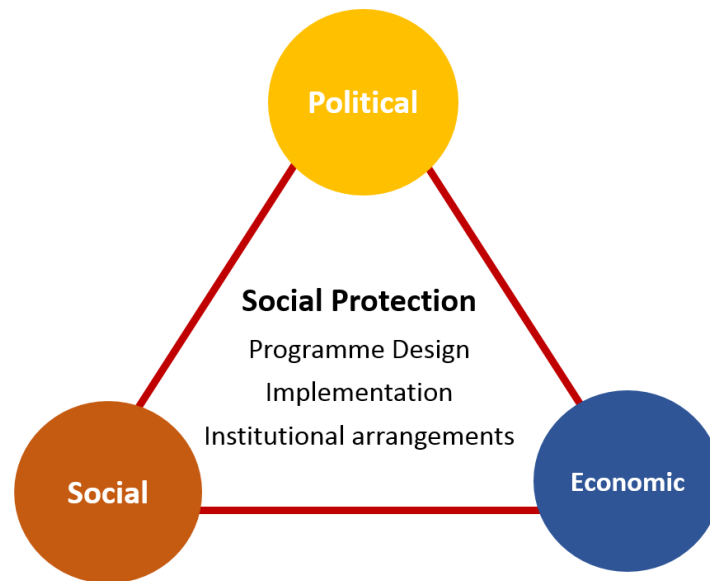
The framework also includes a fourth dimension of 'cultural' indicators, including stereotyping, preconceptions and prejudices, discrimination, contact with other groups and mechanisms for resolving conflicts between groups. For the sake of simplicity, we include these indicators here under the social dimension.

These indicators can form the basis for a detailed analysis of how and when social protection programmes influence different dimensions of social cohesion. This includes the impact of different aspects of social protection programme design, implementation and institutional arrangements. In addition, the political and social context will influence how these causal mechanisms work in practice, in particular the local power dynamics among citizens and between citizens and the state.

For each dimension, different theoretical frameworks are relevant for analysing the impact of social protection on social cohesion:

1. **Political:** this dimension is particularly important for understanding how social protection programmes affect the state-citizen relations aspect of social cohesion. In order to understand the causal mechanisms at play, our analysis draws on theories of accountability (in particular social accountability), state legitimacy and social contracts.
2. **Social:** this dimension is particularly important for understanding how social protection programmes affect relations between citizens. Our analysis draws in particular on theoretical frameworks of social exclusion and social capital.
3. **Economic:** this dimension is important for understanding how social protection affects social cohesion through poverty, vulnerability, inequality and insecurity. Here we can draw in particular on theories of the drivers and effects of poverty, vulnerability and inequality.

**Figure 1: Different dimensions of social cohesion**



### **3.3 Influence of social protection on political indicators of social cohesion**

As mentioned above, an important aspect of social cohesion is the relationship between citizens and the state. This includes the nature of day to day interactions of citizens with state representatives, but also how these repeated interactions create expectations of rights and responsibilities and shape the wider social contract. Political indicators of social cohesion relate to participation of citizens in political processes (including elections and consultation mechanisms between elections), government responsiveness to people’s needs and levels of trust in government (UNDP and SCG, 2015). This includes whether state representatives are (perceived by citizens to be) accountable to citizens. Another important aspect is whether citizens perceive the government to be legitimate, which can also affect public support for political and economic reform (Babajanian, 2012).

#### **Social protection and accountability of the state to citizens**

Accountability of the state to citizens refers to ‘the extent and capacity of citizens to hold the state and service providers accountable and make them responsive to needs of citizens and beneficiaries’ (World Bank, 2013). The most common definition of accountability entails that state representatives have an obligation to provide information and justification for their decisions and actions to citizens, and that citizens have the ability to sanction any misbehaviour.

Social protection can play an important role in strengthening accountability. This is particularly the case in countries with limited state capacity and presence, where social protection transfers may be one of the only tangible services that governments provide directly to citizens. Social protection programmes can be an effective mechanism for making citizens visible to the state, by bringing citizens and government officials together in face-to-face meetings in relation to payments, or by increasing incentives for citizens to register themselves. For example, it is common for social protection programmes to require national ID cards, which can facilitate large increases in registration. This is important, as having a national ID means that people gain official recognition as citizens in the eyes of the state, and often access to various rights that comes with citizen status. This is often also important for political participation, as national ID cards are often required in order to vote.

However, accountability requires that citizens are empowered to take action to claim their rights. To do this, they need to have information about their entitlements, and they need to be mobilised and enabled to interact with government representatives. Second, service providers need to have the incentives, information, authority and capacity to be able to respond to citizen demands (Ayliffe, Aslam and Schjødt, 2017).

### **Social protection and state legitimacy**

State-building is a crucial element of peace building and improving social cohesion, since institutionalising and sustaining peace requires a state with the capacity and legitimacy needed to be able to prevent violence. State legitimacy can be defined as ‘people’s acceptance of a particular form of rule, political order, institution or actor as being legitimate’ (OECD 2010). State legitimacy is crucial to state-building, and conversely a lack of legitimacy contributes to state fragility, undermines state authority and thus capacity (Babajanian, 2012).

State repression and violence results in negative experiences of citizens with the state, a legacy of mistrust, and rejection of the legitimacy of state institutions. In situations of fragility, the inability or unwillingness of states to provide for the welfare of citizens and to improve standards of living has also undermined legitimacy and trust between the state and society. On the other hand, expanding delivery of services, including social protection, can potentially contribute to building state legitimacy.<sup>4</sup> Gilley (2006) analysed statistically the determinants of state legitimacy for 72 countries, and found indications that the better that states do in providing quality governance, democratic rights, and welfare gains, the more they will be able to enjoy the support of their citizens (Gilley, 2006). A particular value of service delivery is that it is a clearly visible function of the state for citizens (Godamunne, 2017). However, if services are delivered in a manner which does not demonstrate fairness and professionalism on the part of state representatives, it may instead contribute to decreased legitimacy of the state in the eyes of citizens (Cummings and Paudel, 2019).

Other studies show that the causal relationship between service delivery and state legitimacy is not straightforward, but ‘is likely to be conditioned by shifting expectations of what the state should provide, subjective assessments of impartiality and distributive justice, the relational aspects of provision, how easy it is to attribute (credit or blame) performance to the state, and the technical and normative characteristics of particular services’ (McCloughlin 2013). Building trust in the state can theoretically be achieved through (Godamunne, 2017):

- Increasing the *capacity* of the state to allocate resources in a manner which is responsive to the needs of its people.
- Ensuring that political, economic and social *processes* of state activities affirm inclusivity at all levels of society.
- Meeting the *expectations* of citizens through interactions with the state.

### **The role of social protection in strengthening the social contract**

Social contract theory has been an important part of Western political thought since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The concept of a ‘social contract’ between citizens and the state is closely related to state legitimacy, as it refers to the expectations that the state have to conform to in order for citizens to perceive its authority as legitimate (Hickey 2011). One thing to note, in particular in fragile and conflict affected settings, is that there is not necessarily a single social contract within a particular society, but multiple kinds of social contract between various parts of the state and different parts of society. These social contracts are shaped by historical relationships between the state and different groups of society (Slater and Mallett 2017).

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://gsdrc.org/topic-guides/state-society-relations-and-citizenship/state-legitimacy/>

One of the propositions in the literature when discussing the role of service provision in building state legitimacy is the idea that welfare provision is an important aspect of the formation of the social contract between the state and its citizens (Mcloughlin, 2014). As noted above, an institutionalised social contract between the state and society emerges when a state is able to provide services to its citizens by mobilising state resources and its *capacity* to fulfil the social *expectations*. These are subsequently mediated by the political *processes* through which the contract between the state and society is established or reinforced (GSDRC, 2011).

### **3.4 Influence of social protection on social indicators of social cohesion**

The other main aspect of social cohesion is social relations between citizens. This includes levels of trust and solidarity within groups (family, friends, neighbours, ethnic groups) and between groups (strangers, other ethnic/religious groups, etc.), perceptions of belonging, access to support from social networks, levels of activism and volunteerism, levels of giving/donating and levels of social interaction (UNDP and SCG, 2015). Social indicators of social cohesion also include stereotyping, preconceptions and prejudice in society.

#### **The effect of social protection on social capital**

The social protection literature suggests that social protection can enhance individuals' ability to share their income and participate in social activities. Social protection transfers can theoretically increase labour market participation and cash transfers can promote citizen engagement in social networks and social activities. They can enable individuals to maintain or improve their economic status and thus increase their ability to participate in ceremonial, cultural and other social activities (Babajanian, 2012).

Active social participation in turn can help foster and strengthen social capital – i.e. the relations of trust and reciprocity that bind different individuals in a society. Reciprocity is one of the defining features of social exchange and social life: people who have no or very little income are not able to reciprocate and are therefore often excluded from social networks. This is for example often the case for older people, and old age pensions can provide the cash needed to contribute to family expenses and donating as a part of traditional or religious ceremonies. In a similar fashion, formal social protection can strengthen informal or traditional social protection mechanisms, by enabling otherwise marginalised people to participate.

#### **The effect of social protection on social exclusion**

The concept of social exclusion (and social inclusion) is closely related to social cohesion, as it also describes relationships between citizens and between citizens and the state. Social exclusion can be defined as 'the denial of full personhood and full citizenship to certain groups on the basis of who they are, where they live or what they believe' (Kabeer, 2010). It can be conceptualised as comprising three distinct but interrelated dimensions: exclusionary forces, structural disadvantage and limitations in capabilities. Exclusionary forces often derive from prejudices and are manifested in discriminatory practices, institutional blindness and cultural and social practices which all serve to exclude vulnerable groups. Structural disadvantage includes inadequate infrastructure, weak communication systems and the absence of public and private services. Finally, limitations in the capability to engage with public authorities and access services arise for example from disability, ill health, psychological wellbeing and self-confidence, as well as levels of education, literacy and numeracy (Kidd, 2014).

There is a strong link between social exclusion, social cohesion and insecurity. Minority groups become more insecure if they are marginalised because of their ethnicity, gender, culture or religion. This can lead to insecurity in the wider society, if a marginalised group decides to use violence to seek to redress inequalities. People who are excluded may feel that they have little to lose by taking violent action (Stewart et al. 2006).

Social protection can contribute to reducing social exclusion in several ways by reducing vulnerability (Babajanian and Hagen-Zanker, 2012). Social protection can help overcome structural disadvantage, such as for example covering transport costs, as well as limitations in capability by for example improving access to education. There is also likely to be an effect on social inclusion through enhanced social capital (Attanasio et al., 2008).

Typically marginalised groups include youth, older people, women, people with disabilities and ethnic and religious minorities. Social protection can support these groups to overcome barriers they face to inclusion. For example, besides food, basic things such as soap, clothes and shoes are often mentioned by older people with no source of income as the things they prioritise when they first gain access to a pension. This is because these are things that are important for social status and dignity and for social inclusion. By improving dignity, social protection transfers can improve the social status of beneficiaries, thereby enabling them to improve their social capital, participating in social gatherings and benefitting from support from family and social networks. Similarly, it has been found that social protection programmes that have gender-sensitive design features can have important effects on women's empowerment (Holmes and Jones, 2010). Disability benefits play an important role in facilitating inclusion of people with disabilities to participate in social life, education and employment (Kidd et al. 2019).

### **3.5 Influence of social protection on economic indicators of social cohesion**

Economic indicators of social cohesion include perceptions of social mobility (will my children be better off than me?), satisfaction with living standards, attitudes towards the future, levels of access to basic services and livelihood/employment opportunities, perceptions of economic inequality and satisfaction with the progress of development and economic opportunities (UNDP and SCG, 2015).

#### **The effect of social protection on poverty**

A key pathway of social protection effects on social cohesion is through reduction of poverty and provision of income security. For example, the ILO and IMF in a joint conference on Growth, Employment and Social Cohesion in 2010 agreed that economic hardship and unemployment threatens 'the stability of existing democracies and hinder the development of new democracies in countries undergoing political transitions.' As a result the conference recommended strengthening social protection to provide populations with better protection against economic shocks and to reduce income inequality (Babajanian, 2012).

Social protection transfers have a direct impact on the income of recipients. However, how large this impact is, and whether it can also be seen at a national level, depends on programme coverage and the adequacy of benefit levels. It is worth noting that not only effects on poverty reduction are important, but also the sense of security that social protection programmes provide, including to those who are not currently receiving a transfer. For example, contributory social insurance programmes provide workers with the sense of security that comes from knowing that their families will not be ruined if they are involved in an accident at work. Similarly, universal old age pensions provide the whole population with the sense of security that comes from knowing that they will still retain some economic independence in old age.

#### **The effect of social protection on economic inequality**

Social protection programmes are enormously important for reducing inequality in high-income countries. In European countries, taxes and transfers result in reduction of inequality with an average of 15 Gini points. However, in most low- and middle-income countries, investments in social protection are still too limited to have a significant impact on aggregate inequality (Babajanian, 2012). The effects on inequality are important, as inequality has been empirically linked to outbreaks of violence, social conflicts and crime.

Inequality creates disparate social development opportunities and outcomes. Disparities in for example health, education and life opportunities undermine trust and weaken bonds of solidarity, contributing to higher levels of crime and social unrest. When inequality is present along ethnic lines, it can lead to polarization, extremism and in the extreme case the failure of the state (UNESCAP 2015). Research has emphasised horizontal inequalities, in particular between different ethnic/religious groups or geographic areas (as opposed to vertical inequalities between different income groups) as an important source of conflict (Stewart 2002; Langer 2004; Stewart, Brown and Mancini 2005; Mancini 2005; Østby 2006).

Not only economic inequality between individuals or population groups is important; geographic disparities also matter, something which is especially relevant in the case of Myanmar. A study by the Asia Foundation of 26 sub-national conflict areas across Asia and the Pacific found that the uneven development between conflict-affected areas and the rest of the country increased the widespread perceptions of injustice, unequal opportunities, and marginalization that fuelled animosity and conflict (Parks et al., 2013). Social protection transfers implemented in marginalised parts of a country can therefore play an important role in redistributing resources within a country and contribute to national social cohesion.

### **Social protection as a tool for preventing unrest related to covariate income shocks**

Covariate shocks refer to shocks that are felt by entire communities at the same time. Social unrest is often triggered by economic shocks. Covariate shocks may be natural (e.g. drought, floods, typhoons, earthquakes), political (e.g. political crisis and armed conflict) or economic (e.g. economic downturns, price increases) (O'Brien et al. 2018; Nel and Richarts, 2008; Rezaeian 2013).

In many low- and middle-income countries, including Myanmar, the majority of the population relies on subsistence agriculture and are therefore very vulnerable to climate change. Social protection can be an important means of providing farmers with a safety net in the case of prolonged dry spells, droughts or flooding, which are likely to become much more frequent in Myanmar in the near future. Social protection transfers can also provide farmers with the means for adopting agricultural practices that are more resilient to climate change.

In recent years, a literature has developed on the topic of shock-responsive social protection, which describes when and how social protection programmes can aid responses to covariate shocks.<sup>5</sup> O'Brien et al. (2018) describes five main approaches for social protection programmes to respond to covariate shocks: making small adjustments to the design of the core programme ('design tweaks'); using elements of an existing programme or system while delivering a separate emergency response ('piggybacking'); topping up support to beneficiaries ('vertical expansion'); temporarily extending support to new households ('horizontal expansion'); and aligning social protection and/or humanitarian interventions with one another ('alignment').

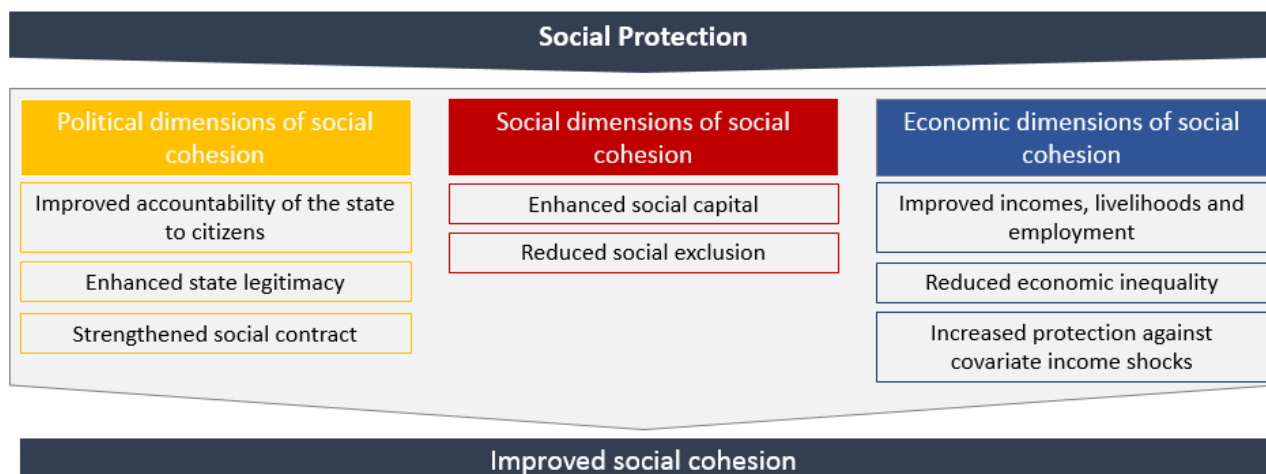
While most of the literature on shock-responsive social protection has considered responses to natural disasters, increases in prices of basic goods, especially energy, is also a frequent cause of violence and unrest, and social protection can be an effective tool for mitigating this. Several countries, including for example Indonesia and Iran, have successfully used social protection transfers as a way of compensating poor households for the losses they incur as a result of price hikes (Hossain, 2018; Salehi-Isfahani, Stucki and Deutschmann, 2014; World Bank, 2012).

---

<sup>5</sup> See for example the outputs from the DFID-funded study on Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems led by Oxford Policy Management: <https://www.opml.co.uk/projects/shock-responsive-social-protection-systems>



**Figure 2: Theoretical impact of social protection on political, social and economic dimensions of social cohesion**



#### 4. International experiences of using social protection as a tool for enhancing social cohesion and national reconciliation

Several countries have introduced or expanded social protection programmes to promote peace building, conflict prevention and inclusion of particular social groups, including ethnic minorities and indigenous populations.

In Latin America, **Argentina's** 'Jefes y Jefas', an unemployment benefit programme, was introduced as a response to rapidly rising unemployment and the threat of unrest, as a result of rising poverty levels following the 2001 economic crisis. In **Brazil**, rights to social protection formed a key part of the new social contract developed after the end of military dictatorship, as reflected in the 1988 constitution.

In **Mexico**, the large conditional cash transfer programme 'Progresa', which benefitted nearly 6 million families, was originally introduced in part to address the disaffection with the state that had fuelled the 'Zapatista' uprising among the indigenous people in the poor state of Chiapas. This uprising was in turn linked to the increase in inequality between different parts of the country that resulted from Mexico entering the NAFTA free trade agreement with the United States and Canada. The programme was especially directed at poorer regions such as Chiapas and Oaxaca, where the majority of the population was covered by the programme (UNDP, 2011).

In **Colombia**, the large conditional cash transfer programme 'Familias en Accion', which reaches 15 million people (30 percent of the population), was originally introduced as one component of the 'Plan Colombia' strategy for ending the war on narcotics trafficking and guerrilla groups. The programme has been effective in increasing school enrolment and eradicating child labour, and there is evidence that it has contributed to demobilisation of child soldiers from paramilitary groups (Pena, Urrego and Villa 2017).

In sub-Saharan Africa, **Kenya** has also used social protection transfers as a tool for promoting stability in the face of civil unrest (DFID, 2011). In **South Africa**, social protection transfers have been a key part of crafting a new and more inclusive social contract after the end of Apartheid. In **Rwanda**, expansion of social protection through the 'Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme' (VUP) has been a key part of the development strategy that aims to promote social stability and the legitimacy of the ruling coalition, following the 1994 genocide (Lavers 2016).

In Asia, **Indonesia** and **India** has used expansion of social protection (the conditional cash transfer programme 'Program Keluarga Harapan' (PKH) and the 'NREGA' public works programme respectively) as a

key element in building and strengthening the social contract. The rapid expansion of **China's** 'Minimum Living Standards Scheme' has also been a key strategy for countering rising unemployment and inequality between population groups and regions, thereby mitigating the risk of spreading social unrest.

In the **Philippines**, the 'Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program' (4P) conditional cash transfer programme is partly targeted at conflict-affected areas, and there is experimental evidence showing that the programme has caused a substantial decrease in conflict-related incidents and reduced insurgent influence in the villages where it is present (Croft, Felter and Johnston 2014).

In **Sri Lanka**, the state's long-term commitment to social welfare is a key part of the social contract between the state and citizens. Following the civil war between 1983 and 2009, social protection has been an important tool for re-creating linkages between citizens and the state and rebuild trust after the war (Gunetilleke, 2005; Godamunne, 2015 and 2017).

This Chapter looks in more detail at the experiences of two Asian countries, **Nepal** and **Timor-Leste**, which have both in different ways used investment in universal social protection programmes as a tool for increasing social cohesion during and following civil conflict.

#### **4.1 Timor-Leste**

Timor-Leste acquired independence in May 2002 after about 275 years as a Portuguese colony followed by almost a quarter of a century of Indonesian occupation. Timor-Leste has experienced severe unrest and violence for extended periods of its recent history, both before and after independence.

In the lead up to Portuguese withdrawal conflict broke out between the two main Timorese parties, the Revolutionary Front for Liberation of East Timor (FRETILIN) and the Uniao Democratic Timorese (Valters 2015). Subsequently, during Indonesian occupation, the Timorese population was also subjected to wide-scale violence, with an estimated 102,800 to 183,000 conflict-related deaths (Valters 2015).

The withdrawal of Indonesian forces in 1999 in the aftermath of the independence vote led to around 1,400 deaths, and it is estimated that 300,000 people fled to the hills and forests near their homes, with 250-280,000 people deported to West Timor (out of a population of less than 1 million). 70 percent of the already poor country's infrastructure was destroyed and positions in the civil service, industry and service sector left vacant by the Indonesians (Valters 2015). As a result of this, the UN Security Council authorised the Australian-led International Force for East Timor to take over the administration of the country until independence was finally declared on 20 May 2002 (Valters 2015).

While there were sporadic incidents of unrest in the period following independence, Timor-Leste experienced relative peace until 2006 when a major crisis erupted again. A group of soldiers, later known as 'the petitioners', wrote a petition to the Prime Minister and President calling for an investigation into discrimination within the military against people from the west of Timor-Leste. The petition sparked conflict between different groups within both the military and police forces as well as between different neighbourhoods in the capital. The ensuing violence led to up to 200 deaths, 150,000 people displaced (10 percent of the population) and widespread destruction of infrastructure (Valters 2015).

The many years of Indonesian occupation and then civil unrest has had an impact on the young country's infrastructure, education, health systems, productive capacity and the population's wellbeing (ILO 2018). The causes of the 2006-crisis were complex, but among other factors observers have blamed the failure of the government to meet the high expectations of the population following independence, with persistently high rates of poverty and poor service delivery (Dale et al. 2014).

In order to address these issues, the government started investing significant parts of the budget in social protection transfers in the years after the 2006-crisis. The 26 programmes that make up the current social protection system added up to government investment of 15.5 percent of non-oil GDP in 2015 (8 percent of GDP including oil revenue) (ILO, 2018). This makes Timor-Leste one of the Asian countries which invests the most in its social protection system.

Social protection is a right defined in Article 56 of the Constitution of Timor-Leste. Furthermore, Articles 20 and 21 reinforce the right to protection for older persons and persons with disabilities (Bongestabs, 2016). Already in the first National Development Plan from 2002, social protection was seen as a way of ensuring stability. However, it was not until after the 2006 crisis that investment in tax-financed social protection was scaled up. Following the crisis, the Government changed its approach to social protection to respond to the causes of the conflict and to provide more visible benefits to the population, and thereby improving social peace and cohesion (ILO 2018).

Timor-Leste's Minister of Finance, Emilia Peres, explained the motivation for introducing social protection programmes by linking issues of poverty, social exclusion and security: 'In the immediate post-conflict period the poorest people are the most exposed to misinformation, corruption and disillusionment wilfully brought on by players interested in capturing the aforementioned power vacuum. Direct cash transfers to the most vulnerable groups can play a key role in counteracting those negative forces and securing stability' (Peres 2009: 18-19 in Babajanian, 2012).

As part of the National Recovery Strategy following the 2006 crisis, a range of new programmes were established, including:

- Pension for Older Persons and People with Disabilities (Subsídio de Apoio a Idosos e Inválidos, SAll), a universal social pension and disability benefit.
- Bolsa de Mãe (Mother's Purse). A social protection transfer to low income families.
- Payments to veterans of the resistance to Indonesia's occupation of the country and their survivors.
- Payments to internally displaced persons (IDPs). These one-off payments targeted approximately 100,000 persons who were internally displaced during, and in the aftermath of, the 2006 crisis in order to cover the costs of damaged or destroyed houses and lost possessions.
- 'Petitioner' payments. This was a demobilisation program consisting of payments of USD 8,000 to each of the 591 disgruntled soldiers which helped instigate the 2006 crisis in order reintegrate into civilian life.

The tax-financed universal Pension for Older Persons and People with Disabilities (Subsídio de Apoio a Idosos e Inválidos, SAll) was introduced by law in 2008. The programme is universal for everybody above the age of 60 and everybody above 18 with a disability. It currently provides 30 USD per month (14.6 percent of GDP per capita) paid twice a year – corresponding to about 8 percent of average household income. The total cost is about 1.1 percent of total GDP (1.8 percent of GDP excluding oil income). The first payments were made in August 2008 and the programme was rapidly rolled out thereafter. As of 2016 it was delivering benefits to 86,974 older persons (100 percent of the target group) and 7,313 people with disabilities (18.2 percent of the target group) (Bongestabs, 2016).

Although older persons make up only about 6 percent of the population in Timor-Leste, almost one in three households have a person aged above 60, so the programme reaches a significant part of the population. There is a strong intergenerational transfer, with an average of 28.1 percent of the transfer being spent on grandchildren's education. As in other countries, older people contribute to the overall household economy and invest a significant share of their resources into the improvement of the family earning capacity (Bongestabs, 2016).

The SAI and Bolsa de Mãe have wide coverage, but provide relatively low benefit levels. In contrast, the programmes aimed at veterans cover a very small part of the population, but provide very high benefit levels (ILO, 2018). As a result of the very generous benefits, programmes for veterans consume more than half the total investment in social protection. Given budget limitations, this puts pressure on other social protection budgets (ILO 2018). These priorities underscore the fact that securing stability by providing payments to potential ‘spoilers’ of the peace (veterans) has been more important than poverty reduction in the prioritisation of social protection spending by the Timor-Leste government.

In line with these priorities, the most important impact of the social protection programmes has arguably been its role in peace building. Transfers has been important for returning and resettling IDPs, resulting in a largely peaceful return of people to communities (Wallis, 2015). Similarly, the payments to veterans and the ‘petitioners’ have been an effective way to deal with the risk that these veterans posed to the stability of the state, encouraging former soldiers to demobilise and re-integrate into society (Wallis, 2015).

Overall, the initiatives in the National Recovery Strategy appear to have been effective in securing peace in Timor-Leste. Instances of violence has declined since 2008, the numbers of homicides are now lower than the pre-crisis average and relatively low for a conflict-affected setting (Valters, 2015). International indicators support the hypothesis that, relative to its violent history, Timor-Leste has made strong progress on security since the 2006 crisis. Of course attributing this to the social protection investment is difficult. Analysts point to several things that have played a role in the improved security situation, including peace keeping interventions and international support, a relatively stable political settlement, development of a national police force, effective state responses to security threats and local responses to violence.

However, there is broad agreement that social protection cash transfers have contributed significantly to improvements in personal security (Valters, 2015). Many stakeholders argue that compensating veterans has been key to ensuring the stability of the country. The National Recovery Strategy, including cash transfers to IDPs, has been praised as a *‘remarkably efficient and effective way of ending a displacement crisis in what, so far at least, appears to be durable manner’* (Van der Auweraert 2012 in Valters 2015).

However, there are also challenges related to the large payments to veterans, including resentment among those not benefitting, and the creation of pressure groups that are lobbying for more payments to these particular groups. Universal programmes with broader constituents and a potential for strengthening the broader social contract are in this respect preferable to benefits targeted at specific pressure groups. The latter risks politicisation of payments to veterans in return for political support, and can be seen as strengthening clientelistic forms of state-society relations rather than the social contract between the general population and the state. Analysts worry that the approach of paying veterans risks creating a sense of entitlement among these actors and deepen inequalities that could lead to conflict in the future (Valters, 2015).

Another challenge is that the prioritisation of a small group of veterans is taking resources away from the broader programmes. The result is that poverty and inequality remain relatively high, and the income from oil and gas extraction may not be sufficient to address them (Valters, 2015). This is particularly troubling as a wealth of research highlights the potential for inequality to lead to conflict (Stewart, 2008 in Valters, 2015).

‘Solutions that encourage patronage and centralise political power with individuals are likely to be effective only in the short term. Beyond that, it is critical that citizens experience a development dividend in order to ensure grievances are not fomented that could undermine peace in the longer term. This means shifting to inclusive development, in which the peace dividend is shared widely and not just with elites or those that pose a threat.’ (Valters, 2015)

Micro-simulation of the impact of social protection on poverty levels in Timor-Leste shows impacts that are comparable to other countries in the region, but that are not commensurate with the higher level of

investment (Dale et al. 2014). This is because of the disproportionate amount of spending on veterans' payments, and low benefit levels of the old age and disability pension and family benefit. The family benefit currently has almost no impact on the national poverty rate because of the low coverage and low benefit level (Dale et al. 2014).

In summary, Timor-Leste spends a comparatively large amount of GDP on social protection programmes, with the purpose of ensuring stability and peace. However, the majority of spending goes to a small group of veterans, with benefit levels of programmes with broader coverage relatively low. Transfers to veterans who are potential 'spoilers' in the peace-building effort have so far been effective in securing political stability. However, in order to ensure stability in the long-term and build an inclusive social contract, it will be necessary to direct more resources to the social protection programmes with broader coverage, such as the old age pension which reaches a third of the population, so that the general population also benefit from the peace dividend.

## **4.2 Nepal**

Nepal experienced a violent conflict between 1996 and 2006, when the government fought a violent Maoist insurgency. During the ten years of conflict about 17,000 people were killed and hundreds of thousands internally displaced. In 2006, a Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed, but it was only after a prolonged process and severe political instability that a new constitution finally took effect in 2017. Although the new constitution is a major milestone on the country's path towards peace and stability, periodic unrest and violence continues to flare up. Violence in Nepal is closely linked to social exclusion, which happens along lines of geography, ethnicity, language, caste, gender, age and ability, and these issues have also dominated discussions to agree on the new constitution (Bennett 2006; Adhikari 2014). The constitution introduces very significant changes to the administrative and political structure of the country, with the establishment of a federal state with seven provinces.

Social protection has played a key role in successive governments' efforts to forge a more inclusive social contract in Nepal (Holmes and Uphadya, 2009). In particular in the period after the peace agreement, and especially since 2008, social protection programmes have expanded greatly, focused on fostering social inclusion, in the realisation that this is a prerequisite of peace and stability (World Bank, 2011).

As in Timor-Leste, the post-conflict process in Nepal has also included support to families of martyrs, those affected by conflict and the wounded, and providing payments to de-mobilising ex-Maoist combatants (World Bank, 2011). However, the foundation of the social protection system was already laid before the conflict, with the introduction in 1994 of a universal Old Age Allowance. The backbone of the social protection system today consists of a range of universal or categorically targeted tax-financed social protection programmes.

Already the Nepalese Constitution of 1990 aimed to create a more inclusive society, and cash transfers were seen as a form of affirmative action for marginalised groups. The 1996-2006 violence highlighted the issue of social exclusion, which was seen as a major cause of the conflict and is also outlined in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended the civil war (Drucza, 2016).

During the armed conflict, many government offices were closed and one of the first challenges in the post-peace agreement period was therefore to restore government services in the areas affected by conflict (Jones, 2012). For successive governments, cash transfers have been seen as a very visible and direct way for the government to extend services to the people, many of whom will not otherwise come into contact with the state (Holmes and Uphadya 2009).

The first programme to be introduced was the tax-financed universal Old Age Allowance in 1994. This was followed by a widow's allowance and a disability allowance, and later a child allowance targeted at Dalit

children. The child grant for Dalits can be seen as an affirmative action, and it was introduced by the Maoist government in 2009 in recognition of the exclusion of lower caste groups. But also coverage and spending of other programmes were expanded, and under the Maoists expenditure on social protection increased from 0.6 percent of GDP in 2008 to 3 percent in 2010 (Drucza, 2016).

Evaluations of the impact of Nepal's programmes show that benefit levels are generally too low to make a significant impact on poverty and inequality in the country, although recent increases may change this (Drucza, 2016; KC et al. 2014; Adhikari et al. 2014). However, even though they have limited impact on material well-being, some research shows that Nepal's social protection programmes are in fact effective in meeting their objectives of contributing to peace building and state legitimacy (Holmes and Uphadya, 2009).

Social protection transfers allow recipients to participate more in community activities, increase their access to information and social networks and enhance the social contract and people's relationship with the state (Drucza, 2016). A survey carried out by Adhikari et al. (2014) found that 93 percent of beneficiaries felt the introduction of the Child Grant was an indication that the government cared about their socioeconomic situation and 85 percent said it had improved their opinion of the government.

'Giving excluded citizens access to government benefits enables them to feel part of the system of the state and to have a relationship with the government. It gives them a sense of citizenship, rights consciousness, and of feeling included, respected, and cared for.' (Drucza, 2016)

The research by Drucza (2016) shows that the relationship that people have with the state is important, not just for state legitimacy, but also for people's sense of inclusion and well-being. Schjødt (2017) also found a clear difference in the level of trust expressed by beneficiaries of the social protection programmes and non-beneficiaries without any opportunity for direct contact with local officials. There are important effects on social indicators of social cohesion as well, with recipients of the Old Age Allowance reporting increased self-esteem. The programme also contributes to strengthening family bonds, as recipients have increased capacity to contribute to the household, for example through small gifts for grandchildren such as snacks or stationary items (KC et al. 2014). One survey found that almost half of spending of the old age allowance is on family needs (HelpAge International, 2009).

The payments can also enable recipients to participate in social activities. A survey carried out by the government in 2012 found that 75 percent of beneficiaries of the social protection benefits reported that they used part of the allowance for social and religious activities, and qualitative research by HelpAge International similarly showed how older people had increased social interactions and were proud to be able to donate during religious ceremonies (HelpAge International 2009; Government of Nepal, 2012).

Nepal's experience shows the importance of the principle of universality in a post-conflict context with multiple lines of divisions and social exclusion. The social protection transfers provide a social mechanism that publicly demonstrates equality, something which is closely associated with the universality of transfers, as transfers directed at 'the poor' would not provide the same message of equality.

The simple eligibility criteria and high levels of coverage mean that information levels are generally high, and that programmes are more effective in reaching the intended beneficiaries than would be expected given the low capacity of the Nepal administration and the challenging geography of the country (Schjødt 2017). Social protection programmes, like most public programmes, have the potential to entrench local power structures if cash is leveraged for patronage or for vote-buying purposes. This is especially the case in weak states such as Nepal, where accountability mechanisms are limited (Harland 2011 in Drucza 2016). However, in practice, research indicate that social protection is not widely used for patronage in Nepal, something that is most likely associated with the simple and transparent eligibility criteria of universal or categorically targeted programmes (Samson, 2012; Schjødt 2017).

On the other hand, the fact that Dalits have a lower age of eligibility for the Old Age Allowance and that they receive the Child Grant contributes to exacerbating existing animosities between Dalits and high caste Hindus (Schjødt, 2017; KC et al. 2014; Druca 2016).

Another important design element is the fact that transfers are delivered manually in cash by government officials to citizens. This personal interaction with a government representative is very rare for many people in Nepal (Druca 2016; Schjødt, 2017). Druca (2016) suggests that 'in a post-conflict country with severe social exclusion, maintaining a relationship between citizens and the lowest tier of government official and finding ways to make the latter locally accountable could have important effects.' The manual delivery of cash transfers offer a 'sighting of the state' and payments provide a form of interface between beneficiaries and officials that would otherwise be missing (Druca 2016; Corbridge et al. 2005).

Nepal shows how universal social protection programmes can function as tools for social inclusion and strengthening of state-society relations even in low-income countries. From this perspective, the strategy of successive Nepalese governments has been to prioritise programmes with broad coverage but (until recently) low benefit levels. This means that large parts of the population can be reached without programmes becoming prohibitively expensive. Programmes may not have a large effect on poverty levels in the beginning, but a sound institutional and political foundation have been established for the gradual expansion of programmes as fiscal space becomes available (Samson, 2012). Nepal also shows that high benefit levels are not necessary for cash transfers to contribute to social inclusion, citizenship and well-being, but that even small amounts of transfers can have an impact on social exclusion (Druca 2016).

## **5. International evidence on the effects of social protection on indicators of social cohesion**

This Chapter reviews the empirical evidence for the theoretical pathways outlined in Chapter 3, drawing on the country experiences described in Chapter 4. We consider general programme effects, as well as the importance of programme design.

### **5.1 General programme effects**

#### **Political indicators of social cohesion: strengthening state-citizen relations**

There is evidence that social protection can contribute to strengthening accountability of government officials to citizens and increase state legitimacy.

##### **Strengthening accountability**

A prerequisite for strengthening state-citizen relations is that the state recognises people as citizens with rights. This requires that the state has a way to recognise citizens through some form of national identification. It is common for social protection programmes to require national ID cards, and this has in several cases led to large increases in registration. This has for example been the case in the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) in Northern Kenya (Osofisan, 2011). In Brazil, Bolsa Familia has been an important vehicle for women in remote areas to access national identity cards and gain a greater understanding of citizenship rights (Hunter and Sugiyama, 2014). In Pakistan, an estimated four million women have registered in the national identity card registry after the introduction of the BISP cash transfer programme (Jamil nd). In Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Nepal, programmes have led to significant improvements in birth registration (Owusu-Addo, Renzaho and Smith, 2018; Schjødt, 2018).

This registration is important, since it is often a requirement for accessing other public services. For example, in Pakistan, having a national identity card is a prerequisite for de jure citizenship, granting basic rights such as marriage, divorce, issuance of a passport, registration of child birth and voting. Experiences from countries such as Brazil suggests that de jure rights are not sufficient, but are a necessary first step towards a wider process of rights claims, particularly in states with emergent democratic systems and a long history of authoritarian rule (Jamil nd). In some cases, social protection programmes have explicitly had as a goal to strengthen citizenship, for example in El Salvador's conditional cash transfer programme, where payments were combined with trainings on gender equality, participation and community organisation, and the establishment of community and municipal committees (Adato et al. 2016).

As noted above, there is theoretically a risk that social protection transfers can reinforce existing clientelistic relationships between citizens and the state by providing more resources for powerful individuals to distribute to their supporters. On the other hand, social protection transfers could theoretically contribute to undermining this kind of clientelism by distributing resources according to set rules, rather than through personal networks, and by making citizens more independent of resources from powerful patrons (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; De La O 2015; Hunter and Sugiyama 2014; Garay 2017).

There is evidence that social protection transfers increase support for the incumbent in elections (Labonne, J. 2013). This can theoretically be a result of either vote-buying (with negative implications for accountability) or an expression of voter support for popular programmes (with positive implications for accountability). For example, in Nepal the expansion of social protection programmes has been a result of competition for voters between different parties. This can be seen as a case of political competition in a democracy bringing forth programmes supported by voters. On the contrary, there is no indication that social protection programmes in Nepal are being used for clientelistic purposes to buy support for political actors. The empirical evidence generally indicates that whether social protection transfers have a positive or negative impact on



accountability depends on programme design and implementation (Jamil nd; Zucho Jr. 2010, De La O 2013, Weitz-Shapiro 2012, Stokes et al 2013). These factors are discussed in more detail below in relation to programme design.

### **Increasing state legitimacy**

The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) has since 2011 provided much needed empirical evidence on the linkages between service delivery, including social protection, and state legitimacy.<sup>6</sup> The research provides evidence from eight fragile and conflict-affected countries: Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sri Lanka and Uganda. The SLRC has used a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods to examine the links between people's experiences with service delivery and their relationships with the state (Nixon and Mallet 2017). The SLRC research generally shows that many other factors than service delivery are important for how citizens perceive state legitimacy. The research also confirms that *how* services are provided is just as, or even more, important for their ability to strengthen state legitimacy than *what* is delivered. SLRC's qualitative research shows that 'perceived unfairness, corruption or exclusion are important factors influencing how people connect their experience of services to their views of government' (Nixon and Mallet 2017).

The connection between service delivery and state legitimacy is therefore empirically much more complex than is often assumed, with perceptions varying according to people's previous experiences and also differing in relation to different levels of government (Maxwell et al. 2016). When the state fails to meet expectations of fair and respectful treatment, its legitimacy is weakened. For state legitimacy to be strengthened, the state must engage with citizens fairly and with respect. This concerns how citizens participate in and experience state functions, but also how citizens see their social identity represented in state discourse and actions (Cummings and Paudel, 2019).

Slater and Mallett (2017) therefore recommend that social protection programme implementers should not just be concerned with getting the right amount of money to the right people at the right time, but also with how these processes are experienced by citizens:

'Start thinking about service-delivery programming less in terms of tangible assets and structures - service-delivery facilities, human resourcing, payroll systems - and more in terms of the relationships and behaviours through which people experience service delivery... How are users being treated? Is the nature of that treatment potentially undermining not only the quality of the service but also their views towards the state?' (Slater and Mallett 2017).

For social protection specifically, the SLRC research found that the simple receipt of a payment was generally not associated with changes in perception of government. One exception is Pakistan, where beneficiaries of social protection transfers had more positive perceptions of the government (Nixon and Mallet 2017).

Another study from Tanzania also found positive effects. The study exploited the randomized introduction of a conditional cash transfer programme to examine the effects on trust in local leaders. The results indicate that, two and a half years after start of implementation, the transfers had significantly increased trust in elected local leaders among beneficiaries of the programme (the study did not ask non-beneficiaries). The effect was larger in communities where more information was available to citizens through more frequent village meetings. Perceptions of government responsiveness to citizens' concerns and perceptions of the honesty of local leaders also increased (Evans, Holtemeyer and Kosec, 2018).

There is also evidence from Peru showing that the 'Juntos' conditional cash transfer programme increased trust among beneficiaries in the government institutions directly related to programme conditions (e.g. health services). However, among non-beneficiaries, the poverty-targeted programme led to less trust in the

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://securelivelihoods.org/>

ombudsman's office, which was responsible for receiving grievances about targeting, but was not able to address these grievances by changing eligibility status (Camacho, 2014).

### **Social indicators of social cohesion: strengthening relations between citizens**

There is evidence from the literature that social protection transfers can contribute to preventing violence and unrest, improving social inclusion and strengthening social capital.

#### **Preventing violence and unrest**

Studies from several countries show that social protection can be an effective tool for preventing violence and unrest at the micro level. Comparing levels of social transfers over time in fourteen Indian states, Justino (2011) finds that higher levels of redistributive transfers are associated with decreases in civil unrest across India. She finds that social protection transfers are a more effective and efficient way of reducing civil unrest than policing, and that policing may actually trigger further social discontent in the long run (Justino, 2011). Similarly, Fetzer (2019) finds that the large Indian cash for work programme NREGA, by mitigating income shocks, has been successful in lowering levels of violence (Fetzer, 2019).

In Colombia, one study found evidence that the Familias en Accion conditional cash transfer programme had positive effects on the demobilisation of combatants (Pena, Urrego and Villa, 2017). Similarly, in the Philippines, the 4P conditional cash transfer programme decreased conflict and insurgent influence at the village level (Croft, Felter and Johnston 2016). The authors explain this finding by the programme weakening the ability of insurgents to recruit combatants from villages that received the programme. A study from India similarly found that the NREGA cash for work programme increased cooperation by the local population with police against Maoist insurgents (Khanna and Zimmermann 2014).

These micro-level effects are also reflected at the macro-level in cross-national analyses of the relationship between investment in social protection and social unrest. As Figure 3 below shows, there is a correlation between levels of investment in social protection and levels of social unrest in Asian countries, with those investing more in social protection also less likely to experience social unrest (UNESCAP 2015). Ascertaining whether there is also a causal effect of social protection on unrest is more difficult. However, analysis by Taydas and Peksen (2012), examining cross-national data for the 1975-2005 period, found similar results: as the level of government investment in welfare policies (education, health and social protection) increases, the likelihood of civil conflict onset declines significantly. The study controlled for several other possible explanations of internal conflict. On the contrary, general public spending and military expenditures did not have any effect on the probability of civil unrest (Taydas and Peksen, 2012).

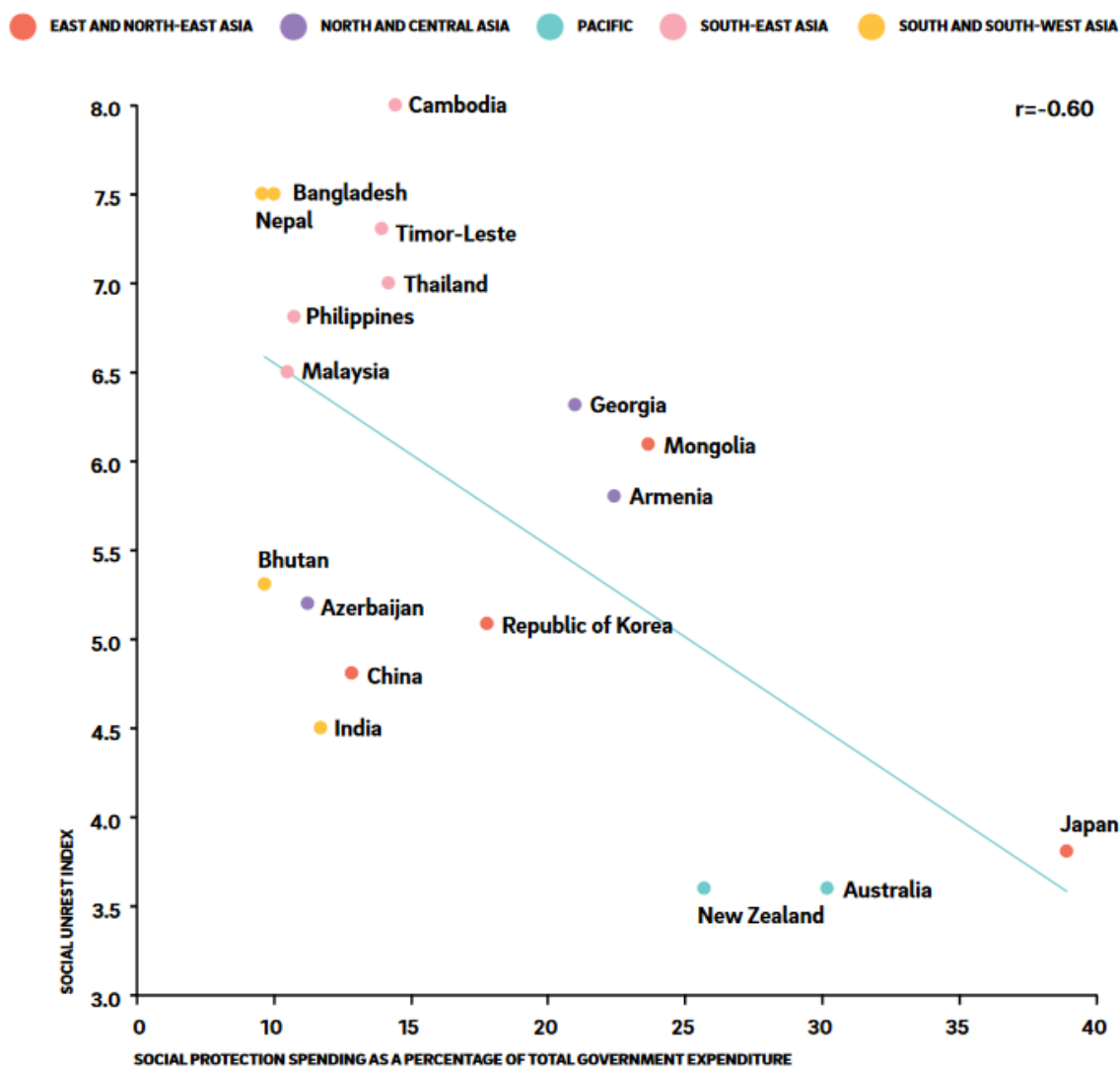
The literature on 'Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration' (DDR) describes how social protection programmes have often been involved in providing transitional assistance to ex-combatants in the form of cash payments, in-kind assistance, and vocational training, among others. DDR programmes in several countries including Sierra Leone and Liberia have been implemented in conjunction with longer-term social protection instruments such as social funds in the effort to rebuild war-torn communities, reintegrate displaced populations, and help ex-combatant find jobs and livelihoods (World Bank 2012).

In Liberia, The Sustainable Transformation of Youth in Liberia (STYL) programme, combined behavioural therapy and unconditional cash transfers. This included an eight-week programme of cognitive behaviour therapy developed by a local community organization. The therapy, led by reformed street youth and ex-combatants, aimed to foster self-control and a new self-image. The therapy programme led to persistent falls in crime, drug use, and violence, especially in the group receiving cash in addition to therapy (Jung, 2017).

There is evidence that the use of cash transfers during reintegration of ex-combatants can have a positive impact on local and national security. For example lower levels of violence have been reported in parts of Liberia where the Danish Refugee Council was implementing a cash transfer programme for ex-combatants.

Sierra Leone’s relatively low crime rate is also often attributed to transitional cash transfers to ex-combatants.

**Figure 3: Asian countries with higher investments in social protection are less susceptible to social unrest**



Source: UNESCAP (2015), Figure 2.3 page 41

DRR can be seen as a social contract specifically between combatants and the government. Combatants surrender their weapons in return for assistance from the government to find new livelihoods. Re-integration programmes often include temporary social protection transfers, lasting 6-12 months. This has, however, in some cases caused tensions with other community members (for example in Liberia and Sierra Leone), who resent ex-combatants being rewarded and civilians being excluded. This risks creating the basis for new hostilities. The precondition of handing in a weapon to receive a cash benefit can create loopholes that may be exploited, which also highlights the potential advantages of using broader eligibility criteria (Willibald, 2006).

### Addressing social exclusion

The ability of social protection transfers to increase access to education is well documented, and this can have important effects on social inclusion (Bastagli et al. 2016). For example, Mexico’s Oportunidades has contributed to closing the education gap between indigenous and non-indigenous children (Holmes & Slater, 2007). In turn, more equal access to education is associated with lower risk of conflict. A large study of the

relationship between education inequality and conflict across nearly 100 countries and a 50-year time-span found that the likelihood of experiencing violent conflict doubles in countries with high education inequality between ethnic and religious groups. The findings hold when controlling for other possible explanations of conflict (FHI 360, 2015). An ODI research project carried out between 2011 and 2014 examined the potential for social protection to contribute to social inclusion in four countries in South Asia (Nepal, Bangladesh, India and Afghanistan).<sup>7</sup> The synthesis report from the project shows that social protection programmes can be designed and implemented in ways that addresses the outcomes and drivers of social exclusion (Babajanian, Hagen-Zanker and Holmes, 2014). As described above, Nepal is an example of a country which has explicitly used social protection transfers to counter social exclusion. On the one hand, there is some evidence that the universal transfers provide a sense of equality for marginalised groups. On the other hand, benefit levels are too low to be able to compensate for structural barriers to inclusion, for example in terms of access to employment, land and services, and indicators of social exclusion remain high (Koehler, 2011). In addition, some research has found that the targeting of the child benefits to Dalits only exacerbates existing prejudice and discrimination.

### **Increasing social capital**

Studies from several countries show that social protection transfers increase social capital by enabling participation in social events. Attanasio et al. (2009) provides evidence from an experiment in two poor neighbourhoods in the city of Cartagena in Colombia, showing that measures of social capital, in the form of cooperation among neighbours, was higher in beneficiary than in non-beneficiary neighbourhoods.

The systematic review of the impact of cash transfer programmes in sub-Saharan Africa carried out by Owusu-Addo, Renzaho and Smith (2018) found four programmes that evaluated their impacts on social capital, with three of these (in Lesotho, Tanzania and Uganda) reporting significant improvements. In addition, ten qualitative studies found that cash transfers improved the social capital of beneficiaries by enabling reciprocity and increasing networks and civic engagement. Two studies showed that cash transfer significantly enhanced involvement of beneficiaries in community decision-making and six qualitative studies found that cash transfers increased beneficiaries' involvement in decision-making, facilitated reintegration into community life and increase the perception of state institutions being accountable to citizens (Owusu-Addo, Renzaho and Smith 2018).

Research in Nepal and Bangladesh also found support for the hypothesis that social protection can enhance social participation. Beneficiaries have increased financial means to buy gifts and better clothing and participate in ceremonial activities. In Nepal, the process of applying for and collecting the transfer facilitated interaction and dialogue between different community members, mostly women. While these interactions usually happened within existing ethnic groups, in Bangladesh the research found that beneficiaries also perceived their confidence in dealing with community members of another ethnicity/religion or talking to local government officials to have increased (Babajanian, Hagen-Zanker and Holmes, 2014).

Research on the effects of conditional cash transfers in South America highlights how they provide opportunities for social interaction. In the case of Mexico's Progresa, for example, bonds between participants have been strengthened by participation in monthly meetings, health education talks, and community work activities. In the case of Peru's Juntos, one study indicates that mothers of beneficiary households tend to form organisations that provide opportunities for interaction as well as support for members in the event of unexpected shocks such as illness (Camacho, 2014).

There is also evidence that social protection can strengthen informal or traditional social protection mechanisms, by enabling otherwise marginalised people to take part. On the contrary, there does not seem

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.odi.org/projects/2440-strengthening-social-protection-informal-workers-supporting-poverty-reduction-and-social-inclusion>

to be any empirical support for the notion that social protection transfers ‘crowd out’ or replaces traditional modes of support (Evans, Holtemeyer and Kosec 2018).

## **Economic indicators of social cohesion: more equitable distribution of resources**

### **Decreasing poverty**

Poverty can be a contributing factor in violence and conflict, with poorer countries more prone to civil war (Marks 2016). The impact of social protection transfers on poverty indicators has been extensively documented. The review by Bastagli et al. (2016) analysed 44 studies, with the majority finding an increase in total household expenditure and increases in food expenditure. Where this is not the case, the explanations are related to design and implementation features such as low level of transfers, delays in disbursements, as well as changes in household behaviour. Fewer studies have looked at the impacts on aggregate poverty levels, but these also highlight the importance of transfer levels and duration of programmes for impact on national level poverty rates. In addition, it is important to consider the combined effects of taxes and transfers on poverty levels. For example, in Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Uganda and Tanzania, the combined effects of taxes and transfers is to *increase* poverty. This is a result primarily of high consumption taxes on basic goods (e.g. VAT) combined with insufficient investment in social protection transfers. It is important to note, however, that efficient regressive taxes such as VAT combined with generous transfers can result in a combined positive effect on poverty levels. The recommendation is therefore not to avoid or reduce such taxation, but rather to invest more in social protection transfers (Lustig, 2018).

### **Decreasing inequality**

As mentioned above, the combination of taxes and social protection transfers play a key role in decreasing inequality in high-income countries. However, comprehensive analysis by the Commitment to Equity research project shows that, in low- and middle-income countries, the effects are more heterogeneous. The redistributive impact of social protection on inequality depends on how much is invested in social protection transfers, and whether the combined effect of taxes and transfers is regressive or progressive (Lustig, 2018).

### **Protection from covariate shocks**

Increases in the price of fuel and electricity as a result of energy subsidy reforms has been a cause of protests and violence in many countries, including Egypt, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan and Zimbabwe. In Myanmar, unrest in 2007 was also triggered by the removal of energy subsidies, which led to sharp increases in consumer energy prices on petrol, diesel and CNG (Hossain, 2018).

Violence can also be triggered by shocks resulting from fluctuations in international prices of main crops: in Colombia, a drop in coffee prices by 73 percent between 1998 and 2003 has been linked to increased conflict in the country’s coffee growing regions, as a result of increased poverty (Dube, 2006). Finally, climate related shocks have also been linked with violence: in India, Fetzer (2019) shows a strong correlation between rainfall and agricultural production, income and violence.

In order to prevent this, several countries have successfully used social protection transfers as a way of compensating poor households for the losses they incur as a result of price hikes, and protecting them from the negative impact of income shocks.

Examples of countries that have used social protection transfers successfully to compensate the population for energy price increases include Iran and Indonesia. In 2010, Iran started an ambitious programme to reduce energy subsidies, which increased prices on bread and various energy products by two to nine times. However, because a universal social protection transfer was at the same time introduced to the whole population, poverty and inequality actually *decreased*, despite the price increases (Salehi-Isfahani, Stucki and Deutschmann, 2014).

In Indonesia, reductions in energy subsidies in 2005 led to gasoline and price increases of between 150 and 185 percent. In order to mitigate the shock to the poorest households, a temporary targeted unconditional cash transfer was distributed to 19 million low-income households in four transfers. The programme was repeated in connection with further price hikes in 2008 and 2013 (World Bank, 2012). The government has since continued reductions of energy subsidies, and have at the same time gradually increased investment in permanent social protection transfers (TNP2K, 2018).

In India, the government introduced the large NREGA cash for work scheme in 2005, which provides an alternative source of income in the face of climate shocks by providing a right to 100 days of work. The programme appears to have completely removed the previously strong relationship between the extent of Monsoon rain and conflict, and have contributed to lowering conflict levels (Fetzer, 2019).

Finally, social protection transfers can also support people to cope with shocks as a result of violence. For example, the Child Development Grant Programme (CDGP) in Northern Nigeria helped people cope with the loss of assets as a result of frequent raids by bandits in conflict-affected areas (Sharp, Cornelius and Gadhavi 2018).

## **5.2 Programme design**

The existing research points to the importance of programme design in relation to many of the outcomes described above. Particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings, it is important to take a 'do no harm' approach, paying attention to the quality of services, including strong systems for ensuring accountability, assessing how programmes work at the local level and taking grievances, unfairness and exclusion seriously (Slater and Mallett, 2017). From a peace building perspective, these factors should be of major concern to policy makers, since perceptions of unfairness and exclusion have a strong influence on people's perception of government and may exacerbate grievances against the state and contribute to inter-communal resentment.

### **Targeting**

The choice of how to select beneficiaries for participation in the programme is one of the most important decisions in social protection programme design.

Social protection programmes can be divided into universal programmes, which provide benefits to everybody within a certain group, such as older people, children or people with disabilities, and poverty-targeted programmes, which provide benefits to a selected group on the basis of criteria of poverty or vulnerability. Poverty targeting in low- and middle-income countries is usually done using either community-based targeting, where 'communities' decide who should participate, or proxy means-tests, where data on income, assets etc. are used in a mathematical formula to decide who will receive payments. In addition, programmes are often targeted at specific geographic regions. Finally, less common is targeting of specific population groups, such as for example Nepal's child benefit targeted at Dalits.

What is common to the countries where social protection has been perceived as a tool for increasing state legitimacy, such as in Nepal and Timor-Leste, is investment in universal programmes. This has been the case even if it has been recognised that programmes would not have large impacts on poverty because of low benefit levels. Whether social protection is seen mainly as a tool for building state legitimacy or as an anti-poverty intervention can therefore drive different approaches to programme design.

### **Effects of different targeting mechanisms on social relations**

A review of the literature carried out in 2017 found that targeting is crucial for determining whether social protection has a positive or negative effect on social cohesion (Idris 2017). Many studies find that poverty-

targeting create animosity between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, and weakens social relations, as beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries see themselves as having less in common and non-beneficiaries refuse to take part in community activities (Holmes & Slater, 2007; Chong et al. 2009; MacAusland and Riemenschneider, 2011; Camacho, 2014; Kardan et al. 2010). This is particularly the case because there is, in most contexts, very little material difference in living standards between those selected to participate in a programme and non-beneficiaries (Ellis, 2008).

The same risk exists when targeting specific population groups: the fact that Nepal's child benefit is only available for Dalits, and that Dalits receive the old age pension at an earlier age, has been found to exacerbate animosities between Dalits and high-caste Hindus (KC et al., 2014; Druzca, 2016; Schjødt, 2018a). As mentioned above, there are also concerns among analysts that the practice of 'buying the peace' in Timor-Leste by targeting cash transfers to veterans is not a sustainable route to lasting peace. This concern is supported by research from other countries, including Sierra Leone, where findings indicates that focusing on specific groups may create social tensions and can be detrimental to the peace process and social cohesion (Holmes and Jackson 2008; Holmes 2009; Willibald 2006).

There are documented cases of the use of proxy means tests for targeting of cash transfer programmes leading to unrest in humanitarian contexts. In Turkey, an assessment of an e-voucher programme implemented by the Danish Refugee Council faced difficulties because of the 'widespread, strong negative reaction among households who were assessed by DRC but not selected for monthly assistance – culminating in protests outside DRC offices and harassment of staff' (Jacobsen and Armstrong, 2016). Because of the high levels of exclusion errors, a report on refugee vulnerability and targeting in Kakuma refugee settlement in Kenya concluded that proxy means testing would not be in line with a 'do no harm' principle (Guyatt, Della Rosa and Spencer 2016).

Particularly in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, Slater and Mallett (2017), based on the comprehensive SLRC research, recommends thinking carefully about whether to target support: 'Churning in people's livelihood and wellbeing status suggests we need to be careful about trying to find ever more complex criteria to identify vulnerable households. In many cases, it would be better to find simple targeting methods that are locally understood and perceived as fair. In others, there could be credible arguments for providing blanket support.' (Slater and Mallett 2017).

While universal benefits convey a perception of equality, poverty targeting conveys social stigma attached to being labelled as 'poor', and stigma has been acknowledged as one of the main social and psychological costs of targeting (Mkandawire 2005; Coady, Grosh and Hoddinot, 2004). Stigmatised individuals may not only be rejected or excluded from social interactions but also refrain from engaging others due to low self-esteem. Stigmatisation can contribute to severing existing social ties and hinder the development of new ones (Idris, 2017).

### **Effects of different targeting mechanisms on state-citizen relations**

Accountability in social protection programmes requires that citizens have information about who should and should not benefit from the programme. Simple eligibility criteria, such as age, facilitate accountability, while more complex or opaque criteria impede it (Ayliffe, Schjødt and Aslam, 2018).

Use of quotas to limit access to programmes also makes it very difficult for citizens to know who should and should not benefit from the programme. This opens up space for power holders to allocate resources according to their discretion. For example, in the Ethiopian Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), which uses quotas, local government officials have admitted to removing from the programme those citizens that were considered to be 'difficult' (Ayliffe, 2018). If not designed to facilitate accountability, social protection transfers may instead become a tool of clientelism and repression, contributing to negative relations between citizens and the state.

Research by HelpAge International in Sierra Leone found that relying on community committees to select beneficiaries for the poverty targeted Social Safety Net resulted in high rates of leakage and abuse, discretionary and subjective selection of beneficiaries and manipulation and abuse of the selection process by local administrative and political authorities. This led to lower trust in public institutions and state actors (Osofisan, 2011). Similarly, in Pakistan, qualitative research found a strong perception of politicisation and favouritism in the delivery of social protection, as a result of the community based targeting approach (Shah and Shahbaz, 2015).

These perceptions can be damaging to citizens' perceptions of state legitimacy: qualitative research in Liberia, Nepal, and Colombia found that unequal or exclusionary access to public goods was detrimental to citizens' views of the state's right to rule (Dix et al., 2012).

### **Conditionalities**

Conditional cash transfer programmes usually require beneficiaries to ensure that their children attend school and health check-ups. However, programmes enforce these conditions in different ways, and many now employ so-called 'soft conditionalities', where there is no sanction for not complying with the requirements, as is the case in Myanmar's Mother and Child Cash Transfer. This is usually a result of a recognition of the administrative difficulties involved in monitoring compliance, as well as the fact that education and health attendance is often hindered by a lack of availability of services, rather than a lack of demand.

In relation to social cohesion, some research shows that the use of conditions risks providing officials with a tool for sanctioning citizens, rather than empowering citizens to hold state representatives accountable for their actions (Fox, 2007; Jones et al. 2008; Cookson, 2016). In addition, ethnographic research from Peru has shown how conditionalities can increase women's work burden and exacerbate gender inequality (Cookson, 2018).

A special case of conditionality are public works programmes, where participating in work is a condition for receiving payments. Research from the large public works programmes in India and Ethiopia has shown that the complexity of implementing a public works programme, including procurement of materials, means that there are larger risks of leakage and corruption than in simpler cash transfer programmes (Subbarao et al. 2013). The many ways that officials and politicians can divert funds in public works programmes, make these particularly vulnerable to elite capture (Schjødt, 2018b).

### **Payments**

The primary concern in relation to payment mechanisms is usually to ensure that the right amount of money is paid to the right people at the right time. This is obviously important, also for citizens' perceptions of the state, with research showing that irregular and unreliable payments can affect beneficiaries' assessment of the programme.

However, the choice of payment mechanism is also important because it affects the space for interaction between citizens and representatives of the state. For example, the manual delivery of cash payments by local officials in Nepal presents a rare opportunity for citizens to interact with government representatives (Drucza, 2016; Schjødt 2018a). On the contrary, where payments are contracted out to private service providers, there is no direct interaction between citizens and the government. Accountability relations are also less clear, since grievances for payment issues will most likely have to be directed to and resolved by the private payment provider. When making choices on payment mechanisms, programme designers therefore have to balance the need for effectivity and efficiency with the opportunity for interaction between citizens and local officials.



### **Management Information Systems**

An effective programme management information system can be an important mechanism for ensuring effective programme implementation, and for accountability. For example, the effective implementation of social audits as a social accountability mechanism in NREGA in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh has been enabled by the development of a management information system with records of all beneficiaries, payments, time worked etc. (Schjødt 2018b).

### **Adequacy of benefits**

On the one hand, even low benefit levels can have positive effects on perceptions of the state (Drucza 2015). On the other hand, there is also some evidence showing that *too* low benefit levels can have negative effects on people's assessment of a programme. In Nepal, research indicated that the initially low value of social protection programmes, combined with irregular delivery and the difficulty of accessing payments undermined views of the programme. This finding was consistent with studies reporting that receipt of the Child Grant by Dalit households had no impact on perceptions of government for similar reasons (Adhikari *et al.*, 2014; Hagen-Zanker and Mallett, 2015).

### **Social accountability and grievance mechanisms**

The ability to handle grievances is important for the experience that citizens have of a programme. Unfortunately few social protection programmes in low- and middle-income countries have effective grievance mechanisms. In most cases, the mechanisms that exist are able to collect grievances, but are not effective in addressing them. The international evidence points to the need to put in place several different mechanisms for citizens to raise grievances, and systems to ensure that there is follow up and feedback provided to citizens. Combining complaints mechanisms with other mechanisms, such as for example social audits and community score cards, can provide better mechanism for bringing state representatives and citizens together to resolve programme issues (Ayliffe, Aslam and Schjødt, 2017).

Based on the comprehensive research by the SLRC over many years in eight conflict-affected and fragile contexts, Nixon, H. and Mallet, R. (2017) found that social accountability is particularly important for shaping how service delivery influence the way people think about government. International evidence shows that social accountability mechanisms cannot make up for poor programme design, and cannot solve all accountability issues, but *can* contribute to more positive experiences of the interaction with the state (Ayliffe, Aslam and Schjødt, 2017).

## **6. Social protection and social cohesion in Myanmar**

This Chapter reflects on what social protection policy and design would be most effective in strengthening social cohesion in Myanmar, based on the experience of other countries, but taking into account the specific characteristics of the Myanmar context.

### **6.1 Strengthening state-citizen relations**

In the context of Myanmar, it will be particularly essential to take a ‘do no harm’ approach to programming to mitigate the potential de-legitimizing effects of bad service delivery, as well as increasing the ability of social protection to contribute to strengthening state-citizen relations.

#### **Strengthening perception of citizenship**

Lessons from Nepal show that cash transfers can be an important way for citizens to feel that the government recognises them as equal citizens. This could be very important in Myanmar, where the relationship between the state and citizens has been fraught for decades. It is important to recognise how delivery of social protection can contribute to improving people’s perceptions of different levels of government. Social protection transfers could be especially important for improving relationships between the lowest levels of the state and citizens. Analysts of the peace process in Myanmar emphasise that durable peace will only be possible, when communities in EAO areas see a value in citizenship, including experiencing improvements in service delivery (Kyed and Gravers 2014).

Besides the direct provision of income support, social protection transfers can contribute to civil registration and access to education and health. A third of the population in conflict-affected townships have no ID (26 percent in other townships), and access to registration is important for example for obtaining land titles (HARP-F and MIMU 2018). The delivery of social protection transfers can also help build the state capacity that is necessary to provide services in accordance with citizen expectations, in line with the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan’s focus on ‘enhancing good governance, institutional performance and improve the efficiency of administrative decision making at all levels’.

#### **Ensuring conflict-sensitive targeting**

As noted above, targeting mechanisms are of particular importance for how citizens perceive programmes. The policy choices that has been made so far by the Government of Myanmar points in the direction of universal, inclusive social protection programmes. Maintaining this direction will be very important for ensuring a positive impact on state-citizen relations, as the international experiences point to universal programmes as conducive to strengthening accountability and transparency. These policy choices are also aligned with the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan’s focus on ‘rule of law and the implementation of development efforts in a rights-based manner’, since universal programmes provide citizens with rights in a way that poverty targeted programmes cannot (Schjødt 2018c). Ideally, the new social protection entitlements should be anchored in legislation in order to be fully rights-based and contribute to the strengthening of the rule of law.

For particular programmes envisioned under the National Social Protection Strategic Plan, such as the public works programme, which are likely to involve some form of targeting of beneficiaries, it will be important to ensure that the targeting mechanism is designed and implemented in a conflict-sensitive manner. This is particularly important since the largest expansion of the public works programme is envisioned to happen in the severely conflict-affected states of Rakhine and Kachin.

Conflict-sensitive targeting means selecting beneficiaries in a way that is transparent and does not favour particular groups, with effective appeals mechanisms for those who are excluded. Myanmar could perhaps learn from India in this respect, where the large NREGA cash for work programme, contrary to most other cash for work programmes, provides a judicable right to 100 days of work per year. There is therefore no poverty targeting which excludes people from participating, and any exclusion that does happen can be appealed in the courts. At the same time, the programme incorporates strong social accountability measures and have also taken efforts to include persons with disabilities (Schjødt, 2018b).

### **Involvement of ethnic minority actors**

The extensive research carried out by the SLRC research project on service delivery in fragile and conflict-affected settings emphasises the importance of investing in understanding the historical and political factors that influence how different social groups may responded to and interpret expansion of government services (Nixon and Mallett 2017). This is particularly important in relation to how delivery of social protection transfers by the Burmese-dominant state may be interpreted in areas under mixed control or formerly under the control of Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs). The Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan therefore also emphasises that development efforts should focus on involvement of ethnic minority actors in service delivery.

There could be opportunities for involvement of local civil society in relation to outreach, case management and grievance redress mechanisms of social protection cash transfers. The planned national roll-out of structures such as the Inclusive Self-Help Groups and the establishment of decentralised DSW offices staffed with newly trained social workers could be an opportunity to involve local stakeholders in monitoring and implementation of programmes, including by hiring local staff. Experiences with local community mobilisers hired by the government in Nepal's social protection programmes point to the important role that these can play in providing information to citizens and bridge the gap between citizens and local officials. This is particularly important in ethnic minority areas where distrust in local officials may be higher, and where cultural and language barriers make interactions more challenging (Schjødt, 2018a).

### **Strengthening social accountability**

In the Myanmar context, historically characterised by limited trust between citizens and the state, it is particularly important to pay attention to how citizens experience their interaction with the state in connection with social protection programme communications, registration, payments, complaints etc. As noted above, when the state fails to meet expectations of fair and respectful treatment, its legitimacy is weakened (Cummings and Paudel, 2019). The Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan therefore also emphasises the importance of 'establishing transparent and accountable community feedback mechanisms' and 'increase the ability of all people to engage with government.'

Embedding social accountability mechanisms in social protection programmes can play an important role in shaping how citizens experience the state. This can for example include establishment of community committees or groups of women or older people and facilitating positive interactions between local officials and citizens in community meetings. The Inclusive Self-Help Groups can potentially be an important vehicle for strengthening accountability. This may draw on the extensive experience of HelpAge International with Older Citizen Monitoring in social protection programmes (Livingstone et al. 2016; Livingstone et al. 2018).

Similarly, mother's groups could be supported in relation to the Mother and Child Cash Transfer, to ensure that all eligible persons are aware of the programme. Some social accountability mechanisms are likely to be more suitable to the Myanmar context than others. For example, social audits have played an important role in some Indian states, but this is a relatively confrontational approach, which may not be suitable to the

Myanmar context, where initiatives focused on building trust, for example through community meetings with participation by local officials, may be more constructive.

In relation to payments, it is important to recognise the value of the personal interaction between citizens and government staff which happens during manual cash payments. If payments are done through banks or other means, local officials could still be present when payments are made, potentially to provide citizens with an opportunity to raise grievances.

Social protection transfers represent an opportunity for improving relations between the population and the lowest levels of government, Ward and Village Tract Authorities. This is especially pertinent now that the GAD has come under civilian control. It is however important that the GAD is provided with the resources it needs to perform its duties in relation to the social protection transfers, and it will be important to monitor closely citizens' perceptions of interacting with local officials.

Social accountability mechanisms can complement new top-down accountability mechanisms being implemented as part of the GAD reform process, including revisions of staff manuals and code of conducts and the establishment of a Corruption Prevention Unit, to ensure that local officials have both the capacity and the incentives to respond to requests from citizens. Experiences from other countries of implementing social accountability mechanisms in social protection programmes point to the importance of combining social accountability initiatives with this type of internal reforms in the bureaucracy to achieve improvements in accountability (Ayliffe, Aslam and Schjødt, 2018).

## **6.2 Strengthening social relations**

General levels of trust are extremely low in Myanmar: surveys have consistently shown that less than 20 percent of the population believes that most people can be trusted (PACE 2018, TAF 2014, Asia Barometer 2015, PACE 2017). 20 percent of people in the PACE (2018) survey replied that people with a different religion would be unwanted as neighbours, with 13 percent responding that people with a different ethnicity would be unwelcome. However, there are stronger indicators of social capital, such as for example participation in social activities, and about a third of respondents in the PACE (2018) survey described having participated in gatherings to seek solutions to community problems (40 percent of men and 21 percent of women). If designed and implemented in the right way, social protection programmes could be a mechanism for improving trust.

### **Improving social inclusion**

Countries such as Nepal has utilised social protection programmes with wide coverage to increase social inclusion in a heterogenous population similar to Myanmar's. This has partly been through universal old age and widow's pensions, but also through affirmative action, with transfers to Dalits and other marginalised groups. However, this targeting of marginalised groups has been found to lead to resentment among other groups and exacerbation of social exclusion, and is therefore not a recommended strategy for Myanmar to follow. Rather, the experience of Nepal points to the importance of the principle of universality to convey a perception of equality between groups in the eyes of the government.

Older people, children and people with disabilities are recognised by most people as being among the vulnerable groups that need support, and the provision of universal transfers to these groups can therefore be seen to be well aligned with the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan's emphasis on 'ensuring conflict-sensitive approaches to socio-economic development, with a focus on those most vulnerable and furthest behind'.

## **Reducing violence and unrest**

Evidence from Colombia, the Philippines and India on the ability of cash transfer programmes to reduce violence, increase demobilisation and reduce support for insurgents could be relevant to Myanmar. While it is still premature to talk of re-integration of ex-combatants in Myanmar, and disarmament is not on the table, there are still potential lessons from experiences of DDR in other countries.

In Timor-Leste, social protection transfers to veterans as well as to the broader population has played an important role in maintaining stability following the 2006 crisis. However, in Myanmar, because of the large number of combatants in EAOs and militias, it would not be affordable to follow the strategy of paying off these groups.

DDR programmes have generally moved away from an exclusive focus on ex-combatants to involve whole communities in joint community development and re-construction work, where both civilians and ex-combatants participate and get on-the-job training (such as the rebuilding of schools, clinics, roads and wells). This is because of experiences from several countries which point to the dangers of a narrow focus on ex-combatants, as it may lead to animosities between ex-combatants and civilians. Instead it would be both more affordable and more equitable to increase investment in rolling out the social protection programmes described in the National Social Protection Strategic Plan. This is especially the case because IDPs also need income support, and there is unlikely to be sufficient employment and livelihoods options available.

Given the context of intercommunal tensions, in particular between Buddhists and Muslims, it is extremely important that no groups are seen as benefitting more from social protection transfers than others. Transparency in eligibility criteria is of the utmost importance. Poverty targeting, whether using community based targeting or forms of means-testing or proxy means-testing should be avoided in all development efforts, as they are not transparent to citizens.

## **6.3 Potential impact on economic dimensions of social cohesion**

### **Reducing poverty and inequality**

Social protection in Myanmar is still at a very low level of investment. This means that the impact of social protection on social cohesion through pathways such as reduction in poverty and inequality, will remain limited unless investment is increased. However, if the plans for expansion of social protection described in the NSPSP are implemented, including the expected expansion in coverage and increased benefit levels of the social pension, social protection could become a cornerstone for state-building, as it has been in countries such as Brazil, South Africa, Nepal and Timor-Leste.

The benefits of these social protection programmes are likely to be felt by the entire community, not only by beneficiaries, as the international research shows (Thome et al. 2016; Davis et al. 2016). Given the limited household expenditures in many areas, any regularly-disbursed additional financial resources would immediately be directed towards increasing consumption, especially given that in no area are households spending less than 55 percent of its household budget on food (HARP-F and MIMU 2018). This means that there are likely to be high multiplier effects of cash transfers in these communities, increasing economic opportunities for the wider population and contributing to the development of local markets.

Social protection programmes may also be important for addressing regional inequalities. For example, in Indonesia, part of peace building efforts between the central government and separatist movements, has been the granting of Special Autonomy Status to three provinces (Aceh, Papua and West Papua). Besides granting a degree of administrative autonomy, this status also entails large transfers of Special Autonomy Funds from the central government to the provincial governments. These funds have contributed to creating the fiscal space needed to improve social services. For example, the provincial government of Papua is now

implementing the 'BANGGA Papua', a child grant for all indigenous Papuan children under the age of four, and Aceh is implementing a universal social pension for everybody aged 70 and above (TNP2K, 2018).

As mentioned above, in Mexico, the large conditional cash transfer programme 'Progresa' was originally introduced in part to address the disaffection with the state that had fuelled the 'Zapatista' uprising among the indigenous people in the poor state of Chiapas (UNDP, 2011). There are clear lessons here for Myanmar, as the country's economy becomes more open and integrated with the more developed economies of other ASEAN countries. While increasing trade is likely to generate general economic gains, there will be both winners and losers. Substantial investments in redistribution through social protection transfers will therefore be necessary to pre-empt grievances among those population groups and regions that stand to lose.

### **Protection from covariate shocks**

Research has linked covariate income shocks to poverty and violence in several countries, and also shown how social protection programmes can help mitigate the effects of these shocks. The lessons from other countries in relation to price fluctuations, climate related shocks and energy subsidy reforms are all highly relevant to the Myanmar context. Shock-responsive social protection should in this context be conceived more broadly than responding to climate-related shocks, also encompassing income shocks as a result of international price fluctuations and reform of energy subsidies.

The NSPSP identifies the role of social protection in addressing vulnerability to disasters as: (i) provide relief assistance and help restore access to basic services and livelihoods for affected populations after a disaster (relief, recovery and rehabilitation services); (ii) contribute to reducing people's vulnerabilities to disasters and climate change through enhanced access to disaster risk information, basic services and predictable income, and investment in human capital and capacity; and (iii) contribute to reducing disaster risk through improved infrastructure and risk transfer mechanisms.

In relation to shocks, one way to make the system more shock-responsive would be to increase coverage of the flagship programmes. With sufficiently high coverage, for example through the fully implemented Social Pension and Child Allowance, a large proportion of the population could be reached by pushing additional or increased payments through the existing delivery system. This model has for example been used successfully by UNICEF in Nepal in response to the 2015 earthquake (Merttens et al. 2017). Regardless of the methodology used, it will be imperative that any disaster response is conflict sensitive. The advantage of this kind of 'vertical expansion' by providing top-ups to existing beneficiaries of universal programmes is that support is provided to groups that are already accepted by communities to be in particular need of support.

Similarly, social protection has proven effective in cushioning shocks to income as a result of reforms of energy subsidies. Energy subsidies in Myanmar are forecast to increase to more than one percent of GDP by 2020. In the event that the government decides to introduce reforms that will result in higher prices, it will be essential to increase social protection transfers to avoid social unrest, and this would have to be through programmes with wide coverage.

## **7. Conclusions and recommendations**

The research reviewed here shows how social protection can contribute in important ways to peace building and national cohesion. In general, countries that invest more in social protection also have less risk of social unrest.

### **Political dimensions of social cohesion**

Building state legitimacy, and thereby also public support for economic and political reform, is crucial in Myanmar. As the government continues carrying out the ambitious reform programme, it is essential to secure public support for reforms. This is particularly the case for peace building efforts, which depend on public support to make headway. Social protection, in particular universal programmes with broad coverage and a high level of public awareness, can play an important role in showing the population that the government is responsive to their needs, and thereby increasing perceptions of the government's legitimacy. And, as the case of Nepal shows, high benefit levels are not necessary for cash transfers to contribute to social inclusion and a perception of citizenship: even small amounts of transfers can have an impact on social exclusion (Drucza 2016). These findings provide support for the Myanmar Government's strategy of prioritising universal programmes with high coverage over more narrowly targeted programmes. This is also likely to contribute to increased uptake of National Registration Cards.

The international research also shows that *how* services are provided is just as, or even more, important for their ability to strengthen state legitimacy than *what* is delivered. Social protection programme implementers should therefore not just be concerned with getting the right amount of money to the right people at the right time, but also with how these processes are experienced by citizens. Social protection should be conceived as a way for the state to signal values of fairness, inclusion and recognition. In practice this means putting in place systems for monitoring how citizens experience accessing social protection programmes, and embedding social accountability mechanisms in programmes.

### **Social dimensions of social cohesion**

Research in Nepal and Bangladesh also found support for the hypothesis that social protection can enhance social participation. Beneficiaries have increased financial means to buy gifts and better clothing and participate in ceremonial activities. In Nepal, the process of applying for and collecting the transfer facilitated interaction and dialogue between different community members, mostly women. While these interactions usually happened within existing ethnic groups, the research did find some evidence that beneficiaries have increased confidence to dealing with community members of another ethnicity/religion or talking to local government officials had increased (Babajanian, Hagen-Zanker and Holmes, 2014).

The international experience shows that targeting specific population groups risks increasing social exclusion: the fact that Nepal's child benefit is only available for Dalits, and that Dalits receive the old age pension at an earlier age, has been found to exacerbate animosities between Dalits and high-caste Hindus (KC et al., 2014; Drucza, 2016; Schjødt, 2018a). There are also concerns among analysts that the practice of 'buying the peace' in Timor-Leste by targeting cash transfers to veterans is not a sustainable route to lasting peace. This concern is backed by research from other countries, including Sierra Leone, where findings indicates that focusing on specific groups may create social tensions and can be detrimental to the peace process and social cohesion (Holmes and Jackson 2008; Holmes 2009; Willibald 2006).

## **Economic dimensions of social cohesion**

Social protection is not only an important tool for reducing economic inequality between individuals or population groups, but also for reducing economic disparities between ethnic groups and geographic areas within a country. This type of ‘horizontal’ inequalities has been shown to correlate strongly with violence and unrest, and are especially relevant for Myanmar. Social protection transfers implemented in marginalised parts of the country can play an important role in redistributing resources and contribute to national social cohesion.

Inequalities in access to education between population groups or geographic areas has been found to be particularly strongly correlated with the risk of conflict (FHI 360, 2015). In Myanmar, townships affected by conflict have double the average number of persons who had never attended school or had no formal educational attainment (HARP-F and MIMU, 2018). The ability of social protection transfers to increase access to education is well documented and social protection programmes have been used in other countries to reduce inequality in access to education (Bastagli et al. 2016). For example, Mexico’s Oportunidades contributed to closing the education gap between indigenous and non-indigenous children (Holmes & Slater, 2007). The planned implementation of a universal Child Allowance for school-age children would therefore be expected to be particularly important for increasing social cohesion and national reconciliation. This is particularly the case because such a programme would cover a significant proportion of the population.

A comprehensive social protection system is also essential for protecting the population from covariate shocks. Covariate shocks refer to shocks that are felt by entire communities at the same time, and may be natural (e.g. drought, floods, typhoons, earthquakes), political (e.g. political crisis and armed conflict) or economic (e.g. economic downturns, price increases) (O’Brien et al. 2018; Nel and Richarts, 2008; Rezaeian 2013). Increases in the price of fuel and electricity as a result of energy subsidy reforms has been a cause of protests and violence in many countries, including Egypt, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan and Zimbabwe. In Myanmar, unrest in 2007 was also triggered by the removal of energy subsidies, which led to sharp increases in consumer energy prices on petrol, diesel and CNG (Hossain, 2018). Climate related shocks and shocks resulting from fluctuations in international prices of main crops have also been shown to be a cause of violence (Fetzer 2019; Dube 2006). Social protection can be an important means of providing farmers with a safety net in the case of prolonged dry spells, droughts or flooding, and several countries have successfully used social protection transfers as a way of compensating poor households for the losses they incur as a result of energy price hikes, thereby avoiding unrest (Hossain, 2018; Salehi-Isfahani, Stucki and Deutschmann, 2014; World Bank, 2012).

## **Social protection programme design**

The Myanmar Government has established a solid basis for the future expansion of social protection as a means of strengthening social cohesion. The strategy for expansion, as described in the National Social Protection Strategic Plan, the Costed Social Protection Sector Plan and the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan prioritises reaching a high level of coverage, based on the principle of universality. This approach would be important from a perspective of peace building and conflict sensitivity.

Accountability in social protection programmes requires that citizens have information about who should and should not benefit from the programme. Simple eligibility criteria, such as age, facilitate accountability, while more complex or opaque criteria impede it (Ayliffe, Schjødt and Aslam, 2018). Research by HelpAge



International in Sierra Leone found that relying on community committees to select beneficiaries for the poverty targeted Social Safety Net resulted in high rates of leakage and abuse, discretionary and subjective selection of beneficiaries and manipulation and abuse of the selection process by local administrative and political authorities. This led to lower trust in public institutions and state actors (Osofisan, 2011). Similarly, in Pakistan, qualitative research found a strong perception of politicisation and favouritism in the delivery of social protection, as a result of the community based targeting approach (Shah and Shahbaz, 2015).

However, the choice of payment mechanism is also important because it affects the space for interaction between citizens and representatives of the state. For example, the manual delivery of cash payments by local officials in Nepal presents a rare opportunity for citizens to interact with government representatives (Druzca, 2016; Schjødt 2018a). On the contrary, where payments are contracted out to private service providers, there is no direct interaction between citizens and the government. Accountability relations are also less clear, since grievances for payment issues will most likely have to be directed to and resolved by the private payment provider. When making choices on payment mechanisms, programme designers therefore have to balance the need for effectivity and efficiency with the opportunity for interaction between citizens and local officials.

The ability to handle grievances is important for the experience that citizens have of a programme. Unfortunately few social protection programmes in low- and middle-income countries have effective grievance mechanisms. In most cases, the mechanisms that exist are able to collect grievances, but are not effective in addressing them. The international evidence points to the need to put in place several different mechanisms for citizens to raise grievances, and systems to ensure that there is follow up and feedback provided to citizens. Combining complaints mechanisms with other social accountability mechanisms, such as for example social audits and community score cards, can provide better mechanism for bringing state representatives and citizens together to resolve programme issues (Ayliffe, Aslam and Schjødt, 2017; Nixon and Mallet 2017).

## **Recommendations**

- Social protection has the potential to contribute to reducing horizontal inequalities, including inequality in access to education and other services, and investing more in social protection programmes can therefore play an important role in peace building in Myanmar.
- Considering the high level of inequality in access to education between conflict-affected areas and other parts of the country, the Myanmar Government should prioritise rolling out the planned universal Child Allowance for school-age children. This programme could become a cornerstone of the peace building efforts, in particular because it would reach a large proportion of the population.
- Maintaining the principle of universality and prioritising increases in coverage would be the best strategy for strengthening state-citizen relations. The principle of universality is also important for ensuring transparency and accountability in the implementation of social protection programmes.
- The *process* of implementation is just as important as the services that are delivered in determining how social protection affects state-citizen relations. This means considering how payment mechanisms impact on interactions between citizens and state representatives, and prioritising the establishment of strong monitoring and grievance redress mechanisms. This can be combined with other forms of social accountability mechanisms.

## References

- Adato, M.; Barahona, O.M.; Roopnaraine, T. (2016). Programming for Citizenship: The Conditional Cash Transfer Programme in El Salvador. *The Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 8, 1177-1191.
- Adhikari et al. (2014). How does social protection contribute to social inclusion in Nepal? Evidence from the Child Grant in the Karnali Region. Overseas Development Institute.
- Attanasio, Orazio Luca Pellerano and Sandra Polania (2008). Building Trust? Conditional Cash Transfers and Social Capital. IFS Working Papers (EWP08/02), Institute for Fiscal Studies, London.
- Ayliffe, T. (2018). Social Accountability in the Delivery of Social Protection: Ethiopia case study. Development Pathways.
- Ayliffe, T.; Aslam, G. and Schjødt, R. (2017). Social Accountability in the Delivery of Social Protection: Final research report. Development Pathways.
- Ayliffe, T.; Schjødt, R. and Aslam, G. (2018). Social Accountability in the Delivery of Social Protection: Technical Guidance Note. Development Pathways.
- Babajanian, B. (2012). Social Protection and its Contribution to Social Cohesion and State-Building. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).
- Babajanian, Babken and Jessica Hagen-Zanker (2012). Social Protection and Social Exclusion: An Analytical Framework to Assess the Links. Overseas Development Institute Background Note, London.
- Babajanian, B., Hagen-Zanker, J., and Holmes, R. (2014) How do social protection and labour programmes contribute to social inclusion? Evidence from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Nepal. ODI Report.
- Bastagli, F.; Hagen-Zanker, J.; Harman, L.; Barca, V.; Sturge, G. and Schmidt, T. (2016). Cash transfers: what does the evidence say? A rigorous review of programme impact and of the role of design and implementation features. Overseas Development Institute.
- Bennett, L. (2006). Unequal Citizens. Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal. DFID/World Bank.
- Bongestabs, A. (2016). Universal old age and disability pensions in Timor-Leste. Universal Social Protection Brief. International Labour Organisation.
- Burke, A.; Williams, N.; Barron, P.; Joliffe, K. and Carr, T. (2017). The Contested Areas of Myanmar: Sub-National Conflict, Aid and Development. The Asia Foundation.
- Camacho, L. (2014). The effects of conditional cash transfers on social engagement and trust in institutions: Evidence from Peru's Juntos programme. German Development Institute.
- Central Statistical Organization (CSO), UNDP and WB (2018) "Myanmar Living Conditions Survey 2017: Key Indicators Report", Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon, Myanmar: Ministry of Planning and Finance, UNDP and WB.
- Chong, A., Ñopo, H. and Ríos, V. (2009). Do welfare programmes damage interpersonal trust? Experimental evidence from representative samples for four Latin American cities. Inter American Development Bank, Working Paper 668
- Coady, D., Grosh, M. and Hoddinott, J. (2004). Targeting of transfers in developing countries: Review of lessons and experience, Washington DC: World Bank.
- Cookson, T. P. (2016). Working for Inclusion? Conditional Cash Transfers, Rural Women, and the Reproduction of Inequality. *Antipode*, 48: 1187–1205.

- Carpenter, S.; Slater, R. and Mallett, R. (2012). Social Protection and Basic Services in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations. Working Paper 8, Secure Livelihoods and Research Consortium.
- Cookson, T. (2018). Unjust Conditions: Women's work and the hidden costs of cash transfer programs. University of California Press.
- Cummings, Clare and Paudel, Suman Babu (2019). Services and legitimacy: exploring everyday experiences of the state in Nepal's Terai region. SLRC Working Paper 78.
- Crost, B.; Felter, J.H. and Johnston, P.B. (2016). Conditional cash transfers, civil conflict and insurgent influence: Experimental evidence from the Philippines. *Journal of Development Economics*, Volume 118, January 2016, pp 171-182.
- Davis, B.; Handa, Sudanshu; Hypher, N.; Rossi, N.W; Winters, P. and Yablonski, J. (2016). From Evidence to Action: The Story of Cash Transfers and Impact Evaluation in Sub-Saharan Africa. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Children's Fund and Oxford University Press.
- De La O, A. (2013). Do Conditional Cash Transfers Affect Electoral Behavior? Evidence from a Randomized Experiment in Mexico. *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol 57, Issue 1, 1-14
- De La O, A.L. (2015). *Crafting Policies to End Poverty in Latin America. The Quiet Transformation.* Cambridge University Press 2015.
- Department of Population (2015). *The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census: The Union Report, Volume 2.* Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.
- Department of Population (2016). *The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census: Thematic Report on Migration and Urbanization.* Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.
- Devereux, S. and Sabates-Wheeler, R. (2004). Transformative social protection. IDS Working Paper 232, Institute of Development Studies.
- DFID (2011). *Cash Transfers – Evidence Paper.* DFID Policy Division.
- Diamond, Larry (2008). "The Rule of Law Versus the Big Man", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 19, No. 2.
- Diamond, Larry & Morlino, Leonardo (2005). "Introduction", in Diamond, Larry & Morlino, Leonardo (eds.), *Assessing the Quality of Democracy*, pp. ix-xliii. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press
- Drucza, K. (2016). Cash Transfers in Nepal: Do They Contribute to Social Inclusion? *Oxford Development Studies*, 2016. Vol. 44, No. 1, 49-69.
- Dube, O. & Vargas, J.F. (2006). Resource curse in reverse: The coffee crisis and armed conflict in Colombia. Documentos CEDE 003460, Universidad de los Andes - CEDE.
- Ellis, F. (2008) "We Are All Poor Here": Economic Difference, Social Divisiveness, and Targeting Cash Transfers in Sub-Saharan Africa'. Paper prepared for the Conference on Social Protection for the Poorest in Africa: Learning from Experience, Uganda 8-10 September 2008.
- Evans, David K.; Holtemeyer, B. and Kosec, K. (2018). Cash Transfers Increase Trust in Local Government. Policy Research Working Paper 8333. World Bank Group, Africa Region, Office of the Chief Economist, February 2018.
- Fetzer, Thimo (2019). Can Workfare Programs Moderate Conflict? Evidence from India. Working Paper No. 436, University of Warwick.

- FHI 360 Education Policy and Data Center. (2015). Does horizontal education inequality lead to violent conflict? A global analysis. New York, NY: UNICEF PBEA
- Fox, J. (2007). Accessing Accountability: Individual Versus Collective Voices. Chapter 9 in Accountability Politics: Power and Voice in Rural Mexico. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Garay, C. (2017). Social Policy Expansion in Latin America. Cambridge University Press.
- Gilley, B. 2006. The Determinants of State Legitimacy: Results for 72 Countries, International Political Science Review, 27 (47):24
- Godamunne, N. (2015). The role of social protection in state legitimacy in the former conflict areas of Sri Lanka. Overseas Development Institute.
- Godamunne, N. (2017). Delivering Services During Crisis: Social Protection Provision and State Legitimacy in Post-War Sri Lanka. SLRC Working Paper 58. Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, Overseas Development Institute.
- Government of Nepal (2012). Assessment of Social Security Allowance Program in Nepal. National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal.
- Government of Myanmar (2014). Myanmar National Social Protection Strategic Plan. The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, December 2014.
- Government of Myanmar (2018). Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (2018-2030). Ministry of Planning and Finance, The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.
- Gunetilleke, G. 2005. Negotiating Development in an Evolving Democracy – Lessons from Sri Lanka. Harvard Asia Pacific Review.
- Guyatt, Helen; Flavia Della Rosa and Jenny Spencer (2016). Refugees Vulnerability Study, Kakuma, Kenya. UNHCR, WFP and Kimetrica.
- Hagen-Zanker, J.; Mallett, R. and Ghimire, A. (2015). How does Nepal's Child Grant work for Dalit children and their families? Overseas Development Institute and UNICEF.
- HARP-F and MIMU (2018). Vulnerability in Myanmar – A secondary data review of needs, coverage and gaps. Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience Programme Facility & the Myanmar Information Management Unit
- HelpAge International (2009). The universal social pension in Nepal: an assessment of its impact on older people in Tanahun district. HelpAge International.
- HelpAge International (2016). Informal social protection in Myanmar's central dry zone. HelpAge International.
- Hickey, S. (2011). The politics of social protection: what do we get from a 'social contract' approach? Working Paper No. 2016, July 2011. Chronic Poverty Research Centre, University of Manchester.
- Holmes, R. & Slater, R. (2007). Conditional Cash Transfers: What implications for equality and social cohesion? The experience of Oportunidades in Mexico. Overseas Development Institute (ODI).
- Holmes and Uphadya (2009). The Role of Cash Transfers in Post-Conflict Nepal. Overseas Development Institute.
- Holmes, Rebecca and Nicola Jones (2010). "How to Design and Implement Gender-Sensitive Social Protection Programmes." Overseas Development Institute, London

- Hossain, N. (2018). Energy Protests in Fragile Settings: The Unruly Politics of Provisions in Egypt, Myanmar, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Zimbabwe, 2007-2017. IDS Working Paper, Volume 2018 No. 513.
- Hunter, W. and Borges, S. N. (2014). Transforming Subjects into Citizens: Insights from Brazil's Bolsa Familia. *Perspectives on Politics* 12: 4(December): 829–845.
- Idris, I. (2017). Conflict-sensitive cash transfers: social cohesion. K4D Helpdesk Report 201. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.
- ILO (2015). Social protection assessment based national dialogue : Towards a nationally defined social protection floor in Myanmar. International Labour Office, Liaison Office for Myanmar.
- ILO (2018). Challenges and Ways Forward to Extend Social Protection to All in Timor-Leste, Assessment-Based National Dialogue Report. International Labour Organisation and the Ministry of Social Solidarity of Timor-Leste.
- IOM (2016). Migrants from Myanmar and risks faced abroad: a desk study. International Organization for Migration.
- IRS (2017). Survey of Burma/Myanmar Public Opinion, March 9-April 1 2017. Center for Insights in Survey Research, International Republican Institute.
- Jacobsen, Karen and Armstrong, Paula (2016). Cash Transfer Programming for Syrian Refugees: Lessons learned on vulnerability, targeting and protection from the Danish Refugee Council's e-voucher intervention in Southern Turkey. UNHCR, DRC, Feinstein International Center and Tufts University.
- Jamil, Rehan Rafay (nd). Understanding the Citizenship Implications of Targeted Social Welfare Expansion in the Global South. Policy Brief, Socio-Economic Outlooks, Agenda for International Development.
- Jones, N., Villar E. and Vargas, R. (2008). Cash Transfers to Tackle Childhood Poverty and Vulnerability: An Analysis of Peru's Juntos Programme. *Environment and Urbanization* 20.1: 255-73.
- Justino, Patricia (2011). Carrot or Stick? Redistributive Transfers versus Policing in Contexts of Civil Unrest. IDS Working Paper No. 382, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton.
- Jung (2017): Innovation in reintegration programming: Which approaches can be relevant for South Sudan? Bonn International Center for Conversion.
- Kardan, I. Mac Auslan, A. and Marimo, N. (2010). Evaluation of Zimbabwe's emergency cash transfer (zect) programme. Final report. OPM-World Food Program-Concern.
- Khan, M. (2010). Political Settlements and the Governance of Growth-Enhancing Institutions. Unpublished manuscript.
- Khanna, G. and Zimmerman, L. (2014). Fighting Maoist violence with promises: evidence from India's employment guarantee scheme. *The Economics of Peace and Security Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2014).
- Kidd, S. (2014). Social exclusion and access to social protection schemes. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government.
- Kidd, S.; Wapling, L.; Schjødt, R.; Gelders, B.; Bailey-Athias, D.; Tran, A. and Salomon, H. (2019). Leaving No-one Behind: Building Inclusive Social Protection Systems for Persons with Disabilities. Working Paper, February 2019. Development Pathways.

- Kitschelt, H. and Wilkinson, S. (2007). *Patrons, Clients and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Koehler, G. (2011) *Social protection and socioeconomic security in Nepal*. IDS Working Paper 370. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.
- Kyed, Helene Maria & Gravers, Mikael (2014). *Non-State Armed Groups in the Myanmar Peace Process: What are the Future Options?* DIIS Working Paper 2014:07.
- Labonne, J. (2013). The local electoral impacts of conditional cash transfers: evidence from a field experiment. *Journal of Development Economics*, Volume 104, September 2013, pp 73-88.
- Langer, A. (2004) *Horizontal Inequalities and Violent Conflict: the Case of Côte d'Ivoire*, CRISE Working Paper 13, Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, University of Oxford.
- Lavers, T. (2016) *Understanding elite commitment to social protection: Rwanda's Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme*. ESID working paper no. 68. Manchester: Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre, The University of Manchester.
- Lian, Thawng Tha (2017). *The church and peace building in Chin State*. New Mandala 20<sup>th</sup> December 2017: <https://www.newmandala.org/church-peacebuilding-chin-state/>
- Livingstone, A.; Knox-Vydmanov, C.; Donaldson, L. and Heslop, M. (2016). *Older citizen monitoring: achievements and learning*. HelpAge International.
- Livingstone, A. (2018). *Voice and accountability in social protection: Lessons from social pensions in Africa*. HelpAge International.
- Lustig, N. (2018). *Fiscal Policy, Income Redistribution, and Poverty Reduction in Low- and Middle-Income Countries*. Chapter 10 in Lustig, N. (Ed.), *Commitment to Equity Handbook: Estimating the Impact of Fiscal Policy on Inequality and Poverty*. CEQ Institute at Tulane University and Brookings Institution Press.
- MacAusland and Riemenschneider (2011). *Richer but Resented: What do Cash Transfers do to Social Relations?* IDS Bulletin Volume 42 Number 6, November 2011
- Mancini, L. (2005) *Horizontal Inequalities and Communal Violence: Evidence from Indonesian Districts*, CRISE Working Paper 22, Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, University of Oxford
- Marks, Z. (2016). *Conflict and poverty*. GSDRC Professional Development Reading Pack no. 52. Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham. Maxwell, D.; Gordon, R.; Moro, L.; Santschi M. and Dau P. (2016). *Complexities of service delivery and state-building*. Briefing paper 21, October 2016. SLRC.
- Merttens, F., Upadhyay, J., Kukrety, N., Karki, S., Majeed, Z. (2017). *Evaluation of the Nepal Emergency Cash Transfer Programme through Social Assistance, Final Report*. Oxford Policy Management.
- Mcloughlin, C. (2013). *Performing to expectations? (Re-)Building state legitimacy via service delivery in fragile and conflict-affected situations*, Paper to be presented at ISA Annual Convention panel on 'Theorizing Intervention' San Francisco, 3-6 April 20.
- Minoletti, P. (2016). *Fiscal decentralisation and national reconciliation in Myanmar: key issues and avenues for reform*. International Growth Centre.
- Mkandawire, T. (2005). *Targeting and universalism in poverty reduction, social policy and development*. Program paper No. 23, Geneva: UNRISD.

- Nel, P. and Righarts, M. (2008). Natural Disasters and the Risk of Violent Civil Conflict. *International Studies Quarterly*, 52, 159-185.
- Nixon, H. and Mallett R. (2017). Service delivery, public perceptions and state legitimacy: Findings from the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, June 2017. Overseas Development Institute.
- North, Douglass C.; Wallis, John Joseph and Weingast, Barry, R. (2009). *Violence and social orders: a conceptual framework for interpreting recorded human history*. Cambridge University Press.
- O'Brien, C.; Scott, Z.; Smith, G.; Barca, V.; Kardan, A.; Holmes, R.; Watson, C.; Congrave, J. (2018). *Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems Research: Synthesis Report*. Oxford Policy Management.
- Osofisan, W. (2011). Strengthening state-citizen relations in fragile contexts: the role of cash transfers. *Pension Watch Briefings on Social Protection in Older Age*, No. 3. HelpAge International.
- Owuzo-Addo, E.; Renzaho, Andre M.N. og Smith, B.J. (2018). The impact of cash transfers on social determinants of health and health inequalities in sub-Saharan Africa: a systematic review. *Health Policy and Planning*, 2018 Jun: 33(5): 675-696.
- Pavanello, S.; C. Watson, W. Onyango-Ouma and P. Bukuluki (2016). Effects of Cash Transfers on Community Interactions: Emerging Evidence. *The Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 52, 2016 Issue 8: Can Cash Transfers have 'Transformative' Effects?
- Pena, P.; Urrego, J. and Villa, J.M. (2017). Civil Conflict and Conditional Cash Transfers: Effects on Demobilization. *World Development*, Volume 99, November 2017, pp 431-440.
- People's Alliance for Credible Elections (PACE) (2017). *Public Opinions on Citizen's Democratic Aspirations*.
- People's Alliance for Credible Elections (PACE) (2018). *Citizens' Mid-Term Perceptions of Government Performance*.
- Rezaeian, M. (2013). The association between natural disasters and violence: A systematic review of the literature and a call for more epidemiological studies. *Journal of Research in Medical Sciences*, 18(12): 1103-1107.
- Salahi-Isfahani, D., Stucki, B.W. and Deutchmann, J. (2014). The reform of energy subsidies in Iran: The role of cash transfers. *Emerging Markets Finance and Trade*, Volume 51, 2015.
- Samson, Michael (2013). *Nepal's Senior Citizens' Allowance: A Model of Universalism in a Low-income Country Context*. International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG).
- Shahbaz, B.; Suleri, A.; Ali, M. and Khan, H. with Sturge, G., Mallett, R. and Hagen-Zanker, J. (2017). Tracking change in livelihoods, service delivery and governance: evidence from a 2012–2015 panel survey in Pakistan. SLRC Working Paper 52. London: SLRC
- Sharp, K.; Cornelius, A. and Gadhavi, V. (2018). *Child Development Grant Programme Evaluation: Qualitative Endline Report*. Epact, Oxford Policy Management and Itad.
- Schjødt, Rasmus (2018a). *Social Accountability in the Delivery of Social Protection: Nepal Case Study. Development Pathways*.
- Schjødt, Rasmus (2018b). *Social Accountability in the Delivery of Social Protection: India Case Study. Development Pathways*.
- Schjødt, Rasmus (2018c). *The Need for Transparency: Designing Rights-Based and Accountable Social Protection Systems*. Expert Commentary, Social Protection and Human Rights.

<https://socialprotection-humanrights.org/expertcom/the-need-for-transparency-designing-rights-based-and-accountable-social-protection-systems/>

SP-SCG (2018). Costed Social Protection Sector Plan, Myanmar, 2018-2023. Social Protection Sub-Sector Coordination Group, Government of Myanmar.

Slater, R. and Mallett, R. (2017). How to support state-building, service delivery and recovery in fragile and conflict-affected situations: lessons from six years of SLRC research. Synthesis briefing 2, September 2017, Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium.

Stewart, F. (2002) *Horizontal Inequalities: a Neglected Dimension of Development*, Queen Elisabeth House Working Paper 81, University of Oxford

Stewart, F.; Brown, G. and Mancini, L. (2005) *Why Horizontal Inequalities Matter: Some Implications for Measurement*, CRISE Working Paper 19, Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, University of Oxford

Stewart et al. Social Exclusion and Conflict: Analysis and Policy Implications. Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, 2006.

Stokes, S.; Dunning, T.; Nazareno, M. og Brusco, V. (2013). *Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism: The Puzzle of Distributive Politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Stokke, K.; Vakulchuk, R. and Øverland, I. (2018). *Myanmar: A Political Economy Analysis*. Norwegian Institute of International Affairs.

Subbarao, K.; Ninno, C.; Andrews, C. and Rodriguez-Alas, C. (2013). *Public Works as a Safety Net: Design, Evidence, and Implementation*. Directions in Development, World Bank.

The Asia Foundation (2014). *MYANMAR 2014: Civic Knowledge and Values in a Changing Society*

Taydas, Zeynep and Peksen, Dursun (2012). Can states buy peace? Social welfare spending and civil conflicts. *Journal of Peace Research* 49(2) 273-287.

Thome, K.; Taylor, J.E.; Filipsky, M., Davis, B. and Handa, Sudhanshu (2016). *The local economy impacts of social cash transfers: a comparative analysis of seven sub-Saharan countries*. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

TNP2K (2018). *The future of the social protection system in Indonesia: social protection for all*. First Edition, 2018. The National Team for the Acceleration of Poverty Reduction (TNP2K), Office of the Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia.

UNDP and Search for Common Ground (2015). *Social Cohesion Framework: social cohesion for stronger communities*. UNDP and Search for Common Ground.

UNDP (2017). *Human Development Report: Myanmar*. UNDP.

UNDP (2018). *Human Development Reports*. UNDP: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>

UNESCAP (2015). *Time for Equality: the role of social protection in reducing inequalities in Asia and the Pacific*. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

Valters, C.; Dewhurst, S and de Catheu, J. (2015). *After the Buffaloes Clash: Moving from political violence to personal security in Timor-Leste*. Overseas Development Institute.



- Wallis, J. (2015). Assessing the Implementation and Impact of Timor-Leste's Cash Payment Schemes. Chapter 16 in Ingram, S., Kent, L. and McWilliam, A. (2015). *A New Era? Timor-Leste After the UN*. Australian National University Press.
- Weitz-Shapiro, R. (2012). What Wins Votes: Why Some Politicians Opt Out of Clientelism. *American Journal of Political Science* 56(3) 568-583.
- Welsh, Bridget & Huang, Kai-Ping. 2015. *Myanmar's Political Aspirations & Perceptions 2015*. [Asian Barometer Survey Report]
- Willibald (2006). Does money work? Cash transfers to ex-combatants in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes. *Disasters*, 2006, 30(3): 316-339.
- World Bank (2011). *Can Social Safety Nets Help Peace Building in Nepal? Results from a social protection technical assistance program*. Presentation, July 2011. World Bank.
- World Bank (2012). *BLT Temporary Unconditional Cash Transfer. Social Assistance Program and Public Expenditure Review 2*. World Bank Jakarta Office.
- World Bank (2012). *Targeted Service Delivery to the Poor. Africa Social Protection Policy Briefs*.
- World Bank (2016). *Livelihoods & Social Change in Rural Myanmar. Qualitative Social and Economic Monitoring Series: Round Five Report*. Enlightened Myanmar Research and World Bank.
- World Bank (2017). *Myanmar Poverty Assessment 2017: Part One - Examination of Trends between 2004 and 2015*. The World Bank and Ministry of Planning and Finance.
- World Bank (2017). *An Analysis of Poverty in Myanmar: Poverty Profile (Part 2)*. The World Bank.
- Østby, G. (2006) *Horizontal Inequalities, Political Environment and Civil Conflict: Evidence from 55 Developing Countries*, CRISE Working Paper 28, Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, University of Oxford
- Zucho Jr., C. 2013. When Pay Outs Pay Off: Conditional Cash Transfers and Voting Behaviour in Brazil 2002-2010. *American Journal of Political Science* 47(3) 810-822.