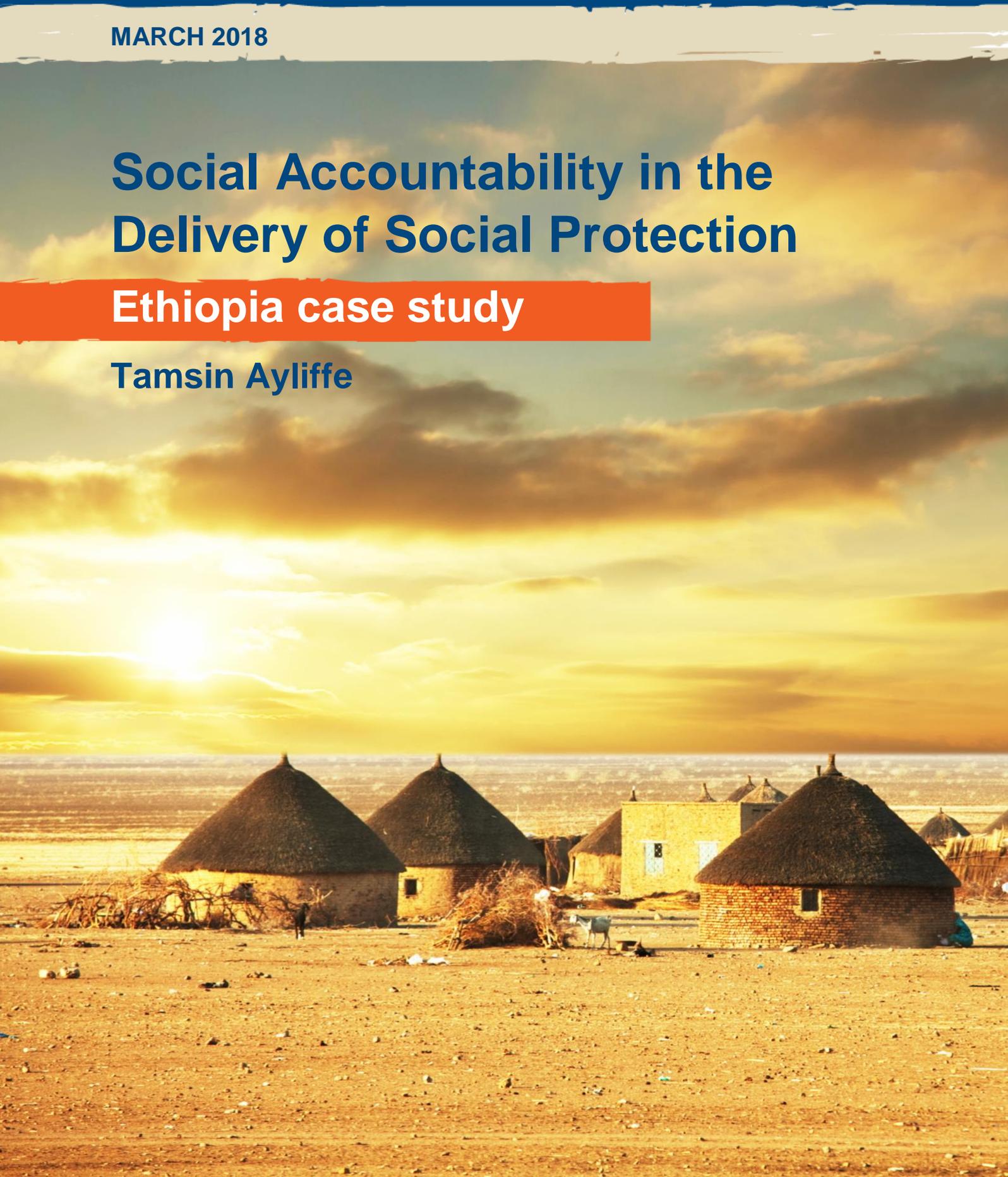


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# **Social Accountability in the Delivery of Social Protection**

**Ethiopia case study**

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## Acronyms

DA	Development Agent (agricultural extension worker)
DS	Direct Support (unconditional cash transfer)
ESAP2	Ethiopia Social Accountability Program phase 2
FG	Focus Group
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FHH	Female-headed Household
FSCD	The Food Security Co-ordination Directorate
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
KAC	<i>Kebele</i> Appeals Committee
KFSTF	<i>Kebele</i> Food Security Task Force
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MHH	Male-headed Household
MOANR	Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources
MOFEC	Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation
MOLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme
PW	Public Works
PwD	Person with a Disability
SAC	Social Accountability Committee
SAIP	Social Accountability Implementing Partner
SNNPR	Southern Nationalities, Nations and Peoples' Region

## Executive Summary

This is the report of a case study on social accountability in the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) of Ethiopia. It is one of four case studies, which taken together form one of the outputs of a global policy research project that DFID has contracted Development Pathways to undertake. These four case studies will inform the final outputs of this project: the final research report and a guidance note for practitioners.

The overall purpose of the global research project is to bring together existing evidence and generate new evidence on the effects that social accountability mechanisms have on the delivery of social protection services and on state-society relations. The four key research questions of the global research project are:

- Question 1: Where social accountability mechanisms have been used within social protection programmes, what are the intended direct and indirect outcomes (at household, community, state levels)?
- Question 2: What is the evidence of the impact of social accountability mechanisms in social protection programmes leading to improved service delivery outcomes and strengthening state-society relations?
- Question 3: Under what conditions have different social accountability mechanisms in social protection programmes been associated with improved service delivery outcomes and strengthening of state-society relations?
- Question 4: What can be learnt from other service delivery sectors about the use of different social accountability mechanisms?

We adopt a theory-based approach to our research and we have developed a draft conceptual framework (see Figure 1), which is grounded in the wider literature on social accountability, and has been adapted to the particular context of social protection.

This case study contributes to answering the first three of the global research questions. The purpose of our case study is to understand how social accountability processes around the PSNP are operating in practice in particular localities and to unpack the reasons why. We investigated social accountability processes in relation to the PSNP in two '*woredas*,' (local areas). These were purposively selected on the basis that they were sites of an interesting social accountability pilot in 2014-15 (the Ethiopia Social Accountability Program (ESAP2) pilot).

We used three qualitative methods: case studies; institutional assessment; and (to a lesser extent) process tracing. For our institutional assessment, we reviewed documents and carried out key informant interviews at national level. We used case studies to investigate each of the five dimensions of social accountability set out in our conceptual framework; we purposively selected individuals for semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, ensuring that we spoke with community leaders, as well as a cross-section of PSNP beneficiaries, including the most vulnerable.

The key findings of our Ethiopia case study are as follows. We conclude that in the two localities studied, **social accountability processes around the PSNP have contributed to some improvements in both service delivery and state-citizen relations**. The main mechanisms through which they have done this are by: **raising citizen awareness and confidence; promoting direct dialogue between citizens and *kebele* officials (the lowest level of the administrative structure); and enabling citizens to bring local implementation issues to the attention of *woreda* officials**<sup>1</sup>. This last mechanism has been effective because of the political economy context in Ethiopia, with its strong focus on service delivery: *woreda* officials are highly motivated to ensure that *kebele* officials address any identified implementation gaps.

The service delivery issues that have been successfully addressed in this way include:

- implementation weaknesses linked to a lack of local knowledge of programme rules, such as inadequate implementation of gendered public works provisions;
- local abuses of power, including requests for bribes, illegitimate demands of public works participants to carry out unpaid work on private land, and theft of transfers; and
- exclusion errors in targeting, but only those that became apparent whilst the selection process was still ongoing.

The ESAP2 programme has been important in addressing the first two sets of issues. Local PSNP committees, including the *Kebele* Appeals Committees (KACs) where functional, have been key to addressing targeting exclusion error.

On the other hand, we found two key limitations of existing social accountability processes: firstly, **processes and impacts are 'locally-bounded'**; secondly, **they appear to have benefited the most marginalised PSNP beneficiaries less than others**. Furthermore, **certain design features of the PSNP programme create challenges for social accountability**.

Both the ESAP and targeting appeals processes are examples of '**locally-bounded voice**' (Fox 2007)<sup>2</sup>. Their main influence has been on the behaviour of *kebele* level service providers, rather than officials at any higher levels within the state machinery. This is due to both the design of the social accountability mechanisms and to the political economy context. ESAP does not (and was not set up to) impact on higher levels of the state machinery where many of the key decisions are made; ESAP establishes active service user/service provider interfaces at *kebele* and to a lesser extent *woreda* levels, but not at higher levels. As for the influence of the political economy context, local officials face strong disincentives against articulating citizen concerns up within the state hierarchy. As a result of the locally-bounded nature of the social accountability processes, these have not succeeded in addressing issues that have budgetary implications or that require action at a higher level. These unresolved issues include some that are of key concern to citizens such

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<sup>1</sup> Woreda is the level above the *kebele*. There are five levels of the Ethiopia state: federal, regional, zone, *woreda* and *kebele*.

<sup>2</sup> Fox, J. (2007). *Accessing Accountability: Individual Versus Collective Voices*; Chapter 9 from: *Accountability Politics: Power and Voice in Rural Mexico*, Oxford University Press, UK.

as: lack of full-family targeting; timeliness of payments; slow delivery of client cards; premature graduation; and targeting exclusion error (outside the targeting process).

As for impacts on the most **marginalised citizens**, whilst some citizens are remarkably well informed about the PSNP, partly due to ESAP, there are glaring disparities in information held, awareness, sense of entitlement and propensity to voice concerns between different beneficiary households. Persons with disabilities (PwDs) and direct support (DS) beneficiaries are generally much less aware of programme provisions and of their rights than others and report lower levels of citizen action. We noted that involvement in some key stages of the ESAP process, at which citizens learn about entitlements and then debate and prioritise their concerns, are limited to small groups of selected representatives. Despite efforts to ensure inclusivity of this group of representatives and to encourage them to share their learning with others, our research suggests that in the localities studied, the approach had done little to overcome the disparities between PSNP beneficiaries, in terms of awareness and engagement. This is potentially problematic, because in a context of perceived fluidity of targeting criteria, quotas and widespread poverty, citizens at local level are essentially in a competition with each other for access to the programme. Citizen representatives trained and mobilised under ESAP might act in the interests of the most marginalised citizens, but they might equally act in the interests of their own families: some of the representatives we met had themselves raised appeals around their inclusion in the PSNP.

Another key observation is that the complexity of the **PSNP design** and the high degree of decentralisation in delivery both create challenges for social accountability (even if they have other benefits) because they militate against a clear sense of entitlement to PSNP transfers on the part of citizens. Quotas dominate the discourse at local level and, in a context where need is seen as outstripping the quota, access to the programme is perceived not as an entitlement, but as 'a gift from God'. Furthermore, pressures on *kebele* representatives and officials mean that they often reduce transfer levels below those specified in the programme rules (non-implementation of full-family targeting), in order to include more households in the PSNP. As a result, not only access to the programme, but also how much one receives if one is lucky enough to access it, are both perceived as highly discretionary: local officials are understood to have the power to remove people from the programme and to increase/reduce their transfer levels at will. This has profound implications for social accountability, because the lack of a sense of entitlement and fear of being removed from the programme are reported as the top two constraints to citizen action.

Key recommendations on how to strengthen existing social accountability processes are to: prioritise awareness-raising of the most marginalised beneficiaries, including direct support beneficiaries and people with disabilities; to exercise caution about over-reliance on intermediaries and do more to support mobilisation of the most marginalised and to ensure they have opportunities to interface directly with service providers; deepen the analysis of the constraints and enablers of state response to citizen voice and strengthen this dimension of social accountability; and to create much stronger linkages between local social accountability processes and the existing top-down PSNP monitoring and

accountability mechanisms, in order to better address the many issues of priority to citizens that are decided at regional and federal levels.

## Introduction

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- Question 4: What can be learnt from other service delivery sectors about the use of different social accountability mechanisms?

This case study contributes to answering the first three of these questions. The case studies are limited in scope – this Ethiopia report focuses on just two *woredas* (local areas) – and they are not intended as comprehensive, stand-alone reports. Rather, they complement the extensive global literature review already undertaken and will inform the remaining key outputs of the project: the final global research report and the guidance note for DFID staff and other practitioners.

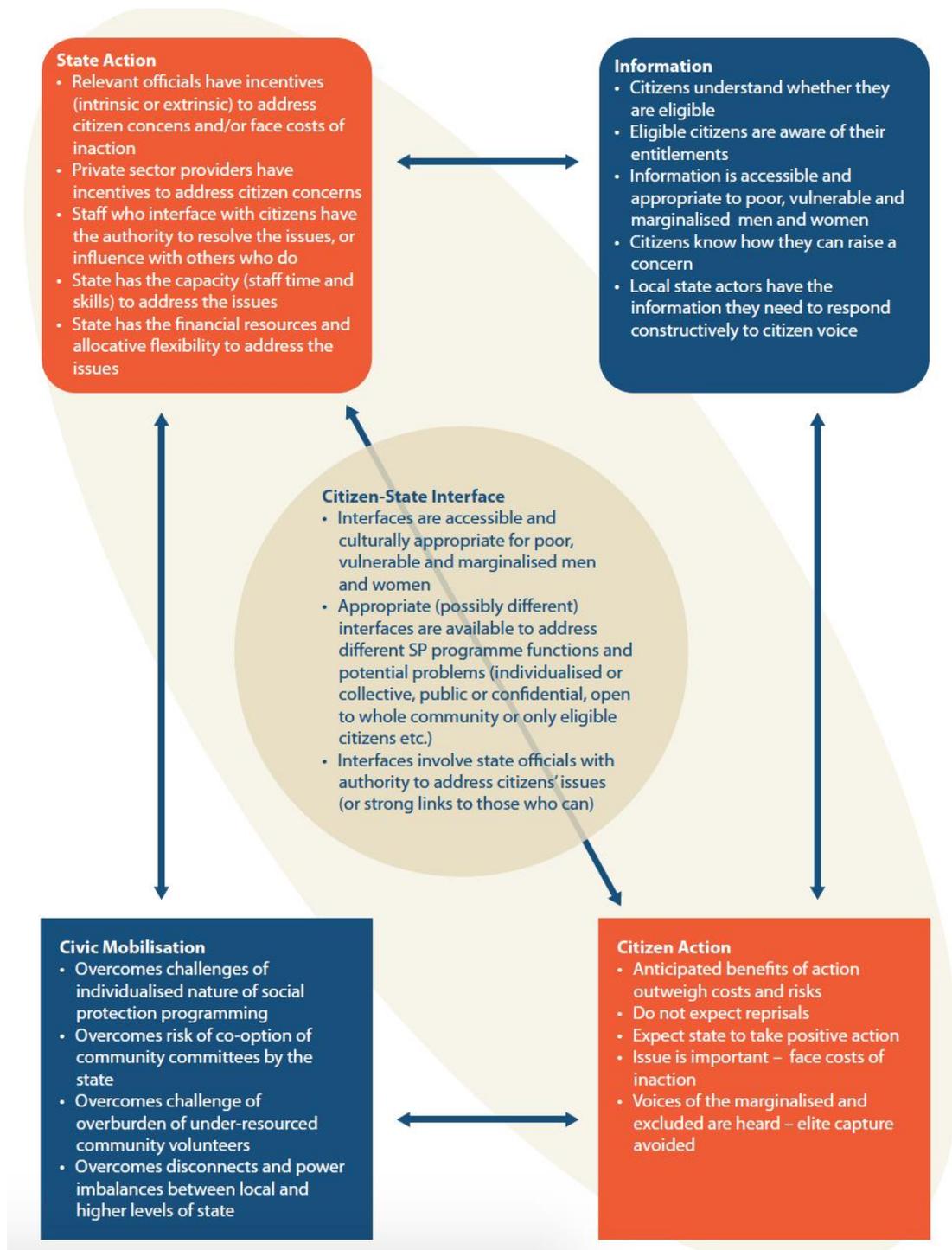
For the purposes of our research we define ‘social accountability’ and ‘social protection’ in the following ways. **Accountability** is the obligation of power holders to take responsibility for their actions, it is a ‘*process by which public officials inform about and justify their plans of action,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

DFID defines **social protection** as ‘*a sub-set of public actions that help address risk, vulnerability and chronic poverty*’ (DFID, 2006). We follow this definition, but, in line with the terms of reference of the research project, our focus will be on non-contributory programmes, including conditional and unconditional cash transfers, either universal or means-tested, as well as public works programmes. As such, the following types of programme fall outside the scope of this review: contributory social protection; social

insurance; services (except as complementary to cash transfers); subsidies; and short-term humanitarian cash transfer programmes.

We adopt a theory-based approach to our research and we have developed a conceptual framework (see Figure 1) to inform our research, which is grounded in the wider literature on social accountability, and has been adapted to the particular context of social protection. The terms are defined in box 1.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**



**Box 1: Conceptual Framework Terminology**

**Citizen action** is comprised of diverse activities and typically includes demand making by citizens (for information, justification, or sanctions); protests against injustice; or claims for better public goods.

**State action** is the second primary element of social accountability, as the role of state is pivotal to the social accountability concept. State action can be in the form of positive response, for example improved services and reduced corruption, or, alternatively, a negative response, such as repression and backlash. Whilst most initiatives have primarily focused on citizen action, it is increasingly clear that without positive state action the intended outcomes of social accountability cannot be realised.

**Information flows** are essential for an accountable and responsive state that engages citizens in decision-making. These flows need to take place in various directions – from citizens to the state, from the state to citizens, between the various parts of civil society, and within the state apparatus.

**Interface** is a locus of interaction between state and citizen actors. It is necessary to bring citizens, whether individuals or collectives, together in an interface.

**Civic mobilisation** can facilitate citizen ‘voice’, especially for vulnerable or marginalised individuals and groups. The role of civil society organisations in fostering social accountability is often a critical part of civic mobilisation.

In our case study we use this framework to investigate social accountability processes in relation to the PSNP in two *woredas* in different regions of Ethiopia (SNNPR and Oromia), purposively selected on the basis that they were sites of an interesting social accountability pilot project (ESAP2). In line with our identification of research gaps in the global literature, we give particular attention to three issues: the factors that incentivise, enable and constrain state response to citizen voice; how effectiveness of social accountability mechanisms is affected by programme design and varies between programme functions; and the extent to which and how social accountability mechanisms represent excluded and marginalised groups.

The report is structured as follows:

**Section one** describes the context for social accountability in social protection in Ethiopia. How social accountability processes work in social protection programmes is highly dependent on contextual factors, including the political economy and social protection programme design. So it is important that we start by outlining key features of the context.

**Section two** explains the methodology of the case study, the reasons for the choices we made and some of the limitations of our approach.

**Section three** presents the findings from our fieldwork, structured in line with our conceptual framework as set out in Figure 1 above.

Finally, **section four** draws out the conclusions of this case study.

## Chapter 1: The Context

In this section, we provide essential background information important to an understanding of our case study findings and conclusions. Sub-section 1.1 focuses on the context for social accountability in Ethiopia; section 1.2 provides background on social protection, in particular the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP); and sub-section 1.3 pulls these two dimensions of the work together by looking at existing social accountability mechanisms in the PSNP.

### 1.1 Social Accountability in Ethiopia

#### 1.1.1 The Political Economy Context for Social Accountability

Ethiopia is an aspiring developmental state, with a political settlement characterised by close relationships between the party and the state, and a hierarchical system of governance. This might suggest limited space for citizen engagement, but there is a great deal of enthusiasm from government to engage with citizens.

Key factors that underpin the incentives of the Ethiopian state to promote citizen engagement, and its limitations seem to include the following.

- ❖ **Citizen engagement can enable the state to gain credibility and the trust of citizens and mitigate the risk of more confrontational forms of citizen action.**

Within the developmental state structure, proactive engagement with citizens is a key way for the government to progressively build trust and support and help prevent the build-up of frustrations that might lead to further social unrest. Yet, commentators suggest a need to contextualise the meaning of 'citizen engagement'; and to understand that the nature of citizen engagement sought is not the same as the pluralist kind found in Western democracies, but more a kind of collective mobilisation led by the ruling coalition, through which people are encouraged to contribute to centrally defined plans, rather than to define or shape them<sup>3</sup>.

- ❖ **As an aspiring developmental state, Ethiopia stakes its legitimacy on delivering results for its citizens, yet has limited capacity at local levels to monitor delivery.**

Delivering results requires learning quickly what works and what does not and correcting any deficiencies in service delivery. In Ethiopia, the party considers itself a 'learning organisation': it constantly assesses its performance and is willing to change course where appropriate (World Bank, 2012) But the impressive progress that Ethiopia has made on the decentralisation of authority and service delivery, taken together with local capacity limitations, create challenges for the state in terms of knowing how services are actually delivered on the ground. Citizen feedback through social accountability mechanisms is thus valued for the role it can play in providing monitoring information to inform delivery improvements. On the other hand, there is a tension with the dominant narrative of success and progress; feedback that challenges this narrative is not necessarily welcome.

- ❖ **Citizen engagement may help address local-level corruption.**

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<sup>3</sup> See Vaughan and Tronvoll, 2003

The Ethiopian state has recently started to perceive corruption as a problem and to crack down on it. So a further perceived benefit of citizen engagement is its ability to identify corrupt local officials and help stamp out local forms of corruption that might otherwise be invisible to higher levels of the state.

❖ **Given the limited resources and capacities at sub-regional levels, the state is heavily reliant on mobilisation of community resources (labour, in-kind and cash contributions) to deliver services.**

A benefit of citizen engagement frequently mentioned by officials at regional and *woreda* levels in Ethiopia is its potential to mobilise increased community contributions, which links back to a key purpose of participation from the perspective of the state: to encourage people to contribute to centrally defined plans. The state is already heavily reliant on community mobilisation in terms of labour, and in-kind and cash contributions<sup>4</sup>; and citizen engagement processes are seen as a way of reinforcing this.

The preference of the state is for direct local engagement with citizens, rather than engagement via civil society representation: by definition the ruling coalition is supposed to represent the interests of the people, so debate should take place within this, rather than as a counterbalance to it. The space for civil society to engage in advocacy or civic mobilisation is highly constrained. International civil society organisations and national civil society organisations that receive more than ten per cent of their funding from foreign sources are not allowed to work on political governance and rights-based advocacy (Charities and Societies Proclamation, No.621/2009). This restriction has implications for civic mobilisation in support of social accountability, because political governance and rights-based advocacy is broadly defined as including: the advancement of human and democratic rights; the promotion of equality of nations, nationalities, peoples, gender and religion; the promotion of child rights and of the rights of people with disabilities; the promotion of conflict resolution or reconciliation; and the promotion of efficient justice and law enforcement services.

### 1.1.2 Social Accountability Initiatives in Ethiopia

For the reasons outlined above, the Government of Ethiopia has become increasingly convinced of the need to engage citizens in planning and monitoring of basic service delivery, and ownership of the social accountability agenda is strong: key Government plans make reference to it.

The first Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP I) (2010/11 – 2014/15) had as one of its four key objectives to:

*Establish suitable conditions for sustainable nation-building through creation of a stable democratic and developmental state.*

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<sup>4</sup> No recent or national data is available, but one study found that in FY 2006/7 community contributions amounted to 22 per cent of total on-budget *woreda* expenditure in Oromiya district. PBS Secretariat, 2008, *Off - Woreda Budget Expenditure - the cases of Oromiya, Amhara and Tigray Regions*, Working paper no 2/2008.

To achieve this ambition, it included several specific commitments on social accountability, notably the establishment of a system for citizens' access to information and the strengthening of public participation at all levels, to ensure better transparency and accountability in public decision making. A public participation strategy was developed and put in place in order to strengthen public engagement. Every government office is now required to identify and engage relevant community groups, civil society organisations or the private sector before it makes any major decisions.

The second plan, GTP II (2015/16 – 2019/20) states that public mobilisation for effective, higher quality and sustainable community participation will continue to be central:

*Leadership commitment is central in improving transparency and accountability and hence also in combating malpractices in public financial management, public procurement, government project management and contract administration. Equally important in transforming the governance of public financial management system is an organised and active engagement of communities at all levels. Hence further deepening the on-going public participation programs coupled with the necessary reform measures will be given due attention in the upcoming development strategy.*

The following Government-led citizen engagement mechanisms to promote awareness, voice and responsiveness are now widely implemented across Ethiopia.

#### *Information and Citizen Mobilisation*

Public meetings remain the dominant means by which citizens receive information about local budgets. In addition, more than 90 per cent of all woredas and city administrations across the country are now posting information on their local budget and expenditure information in public places and more than 50 per cent of service delivery units (schools, health centres, agricultural extension services) disclose their service delivery targets and performance information to the public<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, the level of aggregation of this budget information may reduce its perceived relevance in the eyes of citizens. A recent study found that citizens find it hard to take an active interest in the *woreda* budget, because it is not specific about where and on what the capital budget will be spent; and that budget information on *kebele*-specific facilities or individual projects might be more interesting to them (Teffera and Nass, 2016).

#### *Interfaces and Citizen Action*

In all regions, these include public meetings in *kebeles* for pre-budget planning and end of year monitoring. There are also some systems in place for promoting citizen voice. Key service standards have been developed at federal level for most basic services, and there have been efforts at dissemination. There are also established mechanisms for receiving and integrating citizen feedback in a way that informs decision-making, largely through public meetings. But the effectiveness with which feedback is generated and consolidated to inform decision-making is questionable. A recent World Bank Environmental and Social Systems Assessment (World Bank, 2015) comments that, 'While many projects involve

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<sup>5</sup> World Bank, Joint Review and Implementation Support (JRIS) Aide Memoires for PBS project (2013-2016).

community-level participation, in some cases, such participation does not go beyond attending meetings to be informed about the project to be implemented in the area.’

#### *State Action*

One particular way in which the state can be responsive to citizens’ demands is in answering to complaints. In Ethiopia, cross-sectoral grievance redress mechanisms (GRMs) are now in existence in all regions.

The Ethiopian Institute of Ombudsman (EIO) is a federal institution with branch offices in most regions and a fairly robust legal framework. There is a hierarchy in terms of an appeal system, whereby cases can be escalated from the branch offices to the head office and from the head office to the Parliament. On the other hand, there is a lack of clarity around enforcement mechanisms in the case of non-compliance with a decision (IPE Global, 2016). Alongside the EIO, Regional offices have established GRMs: these are only linked to the EIO insofar as the EIO has provided some capacity building support to them – there is no cross-referral of cases.

One point of interest is that, whilst in theory any complaints can be brought to these institutions, land and civil service employment issues predominate amongst complaints received by both the GRMs and the EIO – very few unresolved complaints about social protection or other basic services are referred on to these structures. Citizens generally report their complaints about basic services to service providers, and then, if unresolved, upwards to the relevant *woreda* office (World Bank, 2015).

Relating this back to our framework in Figure 1, we can conclude that across sectors there appears to have been very strong recent progress in Ethiopia regarding *citizen information*, and some notable and more patchy advances regarding the creation of *interfaces*, and promotion of *citizen action* and *state response*. Given the limitations around the activities of civil society organisations, opportunities for *civic mobilisation* are generally weak.

### 1.1.3 Institutional Arrangements

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation (MoFEC) has the policy lead on social accountability. There is also a high-level Steering Committee meeting chaired by the Minister of State in MoFEC and a donor Transparency and Accountability Group, both of which meet quarterly.

The following are the key institutions of decentralised governance with roles in social accountability.

***Woreda Council:*** The *woreda* council is the elected *woreda* level oversight body and the highest authority in the *woreda*. As an elected local body, the council is designed to promote citizens’ engagement through representation and its roles include overseeing the executive *woreda* cabinets and approving budget allocation.

**Kebele Council:** The *kebele* council, similarly to the *woreda* council, is the highest government organ at the *kebele* level. Members are elected from the *kebele* population and generally number over one hundred. Similar to the *woreda* council, its role is to oversee *kebele*-level execution of development activities entrusted to the *kebele* cabinets.

**Kebele Cabinet:** The *kebele* cabinet is appointed by the council to plan and implement development activities at the *kebele* level. It is headed by the **Kebele Chair** (not a salaried post). The **Kebele Manager** is based at the *kebele* level, but is employed by and answerable to the *woreda*.

**Development Army:** This is a community mobilisation mechanism modelled in the form of a military command structure. The smallest cell is composed of five ordinary members and one additional member who is the head. The development team constitutes 15-30 cells. Three to four development teams form a *kebele* command post, headed by the *Kebele* Chairman and the cabinet members. All development activities of all sectors are carried out through these structures. The main approach of the Development Army is top-down, and citizens' main role is to provide information, though there are certain decisions on which they input. These structures are highly gendered – agricultural development teams (under which the PSNP falls) are predominately male, while women make up the majority of the health teams.

**Mass Organisations:** At the *kebele* level there are different types of mass organisations: Women's Associations, Women's Leagues, Youth Associations, and Youth Leagues. These associations are intended to represent their respective interest groups.

**Traditional Civil Society Organisations:** There exist many traditional organisations, the most famous of which is the *iddir*, or burial association, which provides a kind of life insurance. The vast majority of Ethiopians belong to at least one *iddir* and it is common to belong to several. Evidence suggests that *iddir* membership is rather inclusive and that poor households are no less likely than others to belong to one, though better-off households do tend to enjoy higher insurance coverage, as a result of belonging to a greater number of *iddirs* and/or to *iddirs* that offer higher pay-outs (Dercon et al, 2006). Theoretically, these could play a role in social accountability, though it is not clear they do and this is one of the issues we investigated in our field research.

## 1.2 Social Protection in Ethiopia: the PSNP

### 1.2.1 Overview

Despite rapid economic growth and gains in human development over the last decade, Ethiopia remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Food insecurity is widespread and has both chronic and transitory components. Many people live with chronic hunger, every year being unable to secure enough food for a significant part of the year: 34 per cent of Ethiopians lived below the food poverty line in 2011. Ethiopia is also highly prone to natural disasters, especially droughts, which push more households into food insecurity and those who are already food insecure further into hunger.

In 2005, in response to these challenges, the Government of Ethiopia launched the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). The drivers of this innovation have been much debated. Lavers (2016) concludes that, whilst donors played a key role in supporting its launch by arguing that the PSNP was a more effective and efficient way of responding to the underlying chronic food insecurity problem than repeated humanitarian action, a programme of this size would never have come into being in Ethiopia without the active political support of the government. The 2003 food crisis was a key driver. Coming as it did after a series of other political and humanitarian crises, it was perceived as posing a threat to the existence of the ruling coalition and as a source of national embarrassment, and it led to a shift in ideas about food security. The food security problem came to be re-framed as not only about agricultural productivity but also about stabilising household consumption and assets as a basis for future productivity improvements. Importantly, however, the adoption of the PSNP has not represented a total shift in approach. The PSNP was (and largely remains) productionist in focus and embedded within a food security strategy and agricultural development programme, even though there is increasing recognition that social protection systems can be a positive feature of an effective state.

The PSNP currently supports eight million individuals with regular multi-year transfers (World Bank, 2017) (approximately eight per cent of the Ethiopian population) and consists of four components (Ministry of Agriculture, 2016):

**Public works and temporary direct support:** Households that have able-bodied adult labour engage in public works and receive transfers for six months of the year. These households constitute about 80 per cent of the total beneficiary caseload (in line with its productionist focus). Public works focus on integrated community-based watershed development and the development of community assets; they are intended to contribute to improved livelihoods, strengthened disaster risk management and climate resilience, and nutrition. Pregnant and lactating women move to **temporary direct support** (a kind of maternity leave provision), and there are soft conditionalities attached to this.

**Direct support:** Households without labour capacity, about 20 per cent of the caseload, receive 12 months of permanent direct support (unconditional transfers) and are linked with social protection services.

**Risk management component:** There is additional budgetary provision, including through a **woreda contingency budget**, for three categories of household: those who successfully appeal their wrongful exclusion from the PSNP; households with children suffering from acute malnutrition; and households affected by shocks.

**Livelihoods support:** The programme provides technical assistance and training in livelihood activities to enable households to increase and diversify their incomes and build their assets. For the poorest households, the programme provides livelihood transfers that do not need to be repaid.

Given the scope of our global research project, the focus of this case study is primarily on the first three of these components.

### 1.2.2 Targeting and Graduation

The PSNP is a poverty-targeted programme and, given its origins in humanitarian response to food crises, poverty is defined largely in terms of food insecurity.

Firstly, the programme is geographically targeted. It is operational in eight regions, but within these only in food insecure *woredas* and *kebeles* (*kebeles* must have been in receipt of emergency food assistance in three of the past five years to be included). A quota of beneficiaries for each *kebele* is developed based on the average number of relief beneficiaries.

Secondly, households are targeted through a community-based targeting process. The eligibility criteria are the following (from Ministry of Agriculture, 2016):

Basic PSNP eligibility criteria:

- The households should be members of the community;
- Chronically food insecure households who have faced continuous food shortages (3 months of food gap or more per year) in the last 3 years;
- Households who suddenly become more food insecure as a result of a severe loss of assets (financial, livestock, means of production, assets), especially if linked to the onset of severe chronic illness, such as AIDS, or other debilitating conditions, and who have been unable to support themselves over the last 3 to 6 months;
- Households without adequate family support and other means of social protection and support.

Supplementary criteria (and there may be additional local ones):

- Status of household assets: land holding, quality of land, livestock holding, food stock, labour availability etc.; and
- Income from agricultural and non-agricultural activities.

Households are then allocated to either direct support or public works. Households with adult able-bodied labour have access to the public works component. Households with no able-bodied adults are eligible for direct support. The following criteria are used to determine whether an individual household member is counted as an able-bodied adult:

- is above the age of 18;
- is not chronically sick, disabled or mentally challenged in such a way as to prevent them from undertaking work;
- is not a female head of household with four or more dependents.

Households are expected to exit (graduate from) the programme once they achieve food sufficiency in the absence of external support. In the past, graduation was only supposed to happen if the household's assets met a clearly defined threshold (which varied between regions), and then they should be given 12 months' notice that they would graduate. Although the current programme manual proposes a different graduation approach, the

previous guidelines were current at the time of the ESAP2 PSNP pilot and so are relevant for our purposes.

Multiple evaluations have found targeting to be very pro-poor in highland areas of Ethiopia, but much less so in lowland areas (Berhane et al, 2016). On the other hand, the graduation system generally did not work as planned. Under pressure to graduate large numbers (graduation targets were often understood as quotas at local level), asset thresholds and notice periods were often not respected (Ministry of Agriculture, 2013).

### 1.2.3 Size and Periodicity of Transfers

A key principle of the PSNP is the primacy of transfers. Since the PSNP is a safety net, ensuring that clients receive transfers takes priority over all considerations, and transfers should not be delayed for any reason, including those related to public works implementation.

The transfer level for both public works and direct support beneficiaries depends on the size of the household. As part of the design of the new phase of the programme, the transfer level was quite substantially increased and now stands at the equivalent of 15kg of cereals and 4kg of pulses per person per month. This is usually provided in cash and the cash amount varies by locality, depending on local prices.

It has not always been the case that households have received their full intended transfer level (full-family targeting). They have sometimes received a transfer level equivalent to a smaller number of household members than they actually have, although this has tended to be a problem mainly for households with more than five members (Berhane et al, 2016, section 7.5, pages 129 onwards). In the new phase, the transfer is still correlated with household size up to a maximum household size of five members, but a cap of five members is now applied.

Public works beneficiaries receive transfers for six months of the year and direct support beneficiaries for twelve months. Payments are made monthly and a key principle is that they should be timely and predictable. Beneficiaries are supposed to be informed of the payment schedule at the start of the year; and, if payments are ever delayed, they are meant to be informed when they can expect the payment.

Unlike in many public works programmes that simply provide a wage, in the PSNP there is not a direct correlation between transfer level and days worked by the household. Whereas the transfer level depends on the size of the household, the work requirement depends on the number of able-bodied adults in the household. Households are expected to work for 5 days per month for every household member who is receiving support, but this work requirement is capped at 15 days per able-bodied adult in the household. So, for example, a four-person household with only one able-bodied adult would only be expected to work 15 days per month. Once women are four months pregnant, and for twelve months after the birth, they are switched to temporary direct support. Other able-bodied adults in the household are required to work to cover their own transfers and that of other

household members (up to the cap of fifteen days per month), but the transfer of the woman is not included in this work requirement – it is provided as direct support.

These provisions make the design of PSNP public works more socially protective than programmes that simply provide a wage. On the other hand, they introduce a level of complexity that, as we shall see later, creates some challenges for social accountability.

#### 1.2.4 Institutional Arrangements

Whilst PSNP is designed at federal level, implementation is largely a local responsibility. Key roles and responsibilities include the following:

Planning and implementation of the PSNP starts at the **community level**. The Community Food Security Task Force is responsible for targeting of PSNP clients.

At the **kebele** level, the PSNP is managed by the *Kebele* Food Security Task Force (KFSTF) under the oversight of the *Kebele* Cabinet and the *Kebele* Council. The KFSTF comprises the *Kebele* Manager, Development Agents (DAs), other *kebele* officials, and community members, such as representatives of youth and women's associations. Programme implementation is primarily the responsibility of DAs, who are agricultural extension staff and are responsible for implementing livelihoods activities and overseeing public works.

The **woreda** is the key level of Government that determines needs, undertakes planning and implements the PSNP. The *Woreda* Food Security Task Force and Food Security Desk/Process manage and coordinate PSNP implementation, under the oversight of the *Woreda* Council through the *Woreda* Food Security Steering Committee.

In Amhara, Oromia, and SNNP regions, **zones** play a role as a bridge between regional and *woreda* levels. Zones collect and communicate information, and support training and capacity development efforts.

**Regional** offices play a key role in programme oversight and monitoring as well as supporting the development of adequate implementation capacity at *woreda* level. They also ensure that PSNP plans and budgets are consistent with, and effectively integrated into, regional development plans.

At the **federal** level, the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources (MOANR), in close partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA), is responsible for the design, review, management and coordination of the programme. Responsibility for implementation of the direct support component of the PSNP will be transferred from MOANR to MOLSA, but this transfer of responsibilities had not yet taken place at the time of our fieldwork. The Food Security Co-ordination Directorate (FSCD) coordinates and organises monthly management meetings with implementing partners.

#### 1.3 Social accountability in the PSNP

The PSNP has implemented a range of measures of relevance to social accountability. Sub-section 1.3.1 describes information/ awareness-raising initiatives. Even if these do not in themselves meet our definition of social accountability initiatives, they can nevertheless be

understood as crucial underpinnings to social accountability, since access to information is necessary to, if not sufficient for, social accountability. Sub-section 1.3.2 outlines the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, which, again, has linkages to social accountability. Then sub-section 1.3.3 goes on to describe the specific social accountability mechanisms in the programme.

### 1.3.1 PSNP Information and Awareness-Raising Initiatives

The PSNP has progressively strengthened its information provision and awareness-raising measures. Current mechanisms include the following (from PSNP Social Development Task Force, 2015):

*Charter of Rights and Responsibilities.* The Charter was introduced in 2010, with the aim of ensuring that beneficiaries are informed of their rights and responsibilities with regards to the programme.

*Communications Strategy.* The roll-out of the PSNP Communication Strategy was initiated in 2007 to ensure that clients have the necessary, appropriate and accessible information to fulfil their role in the PSNP and hold local decision-makers to account.

*Client Cards.* Client Cards were introduced in 2010 across all Regions<sup>6</sup> to provide evidence of entitlements under the PSNP and proof of payment.

*Public Disclosure and Awareness Creation.* The Government of Ethiopia committed to publicly disclosing key programme information, including budgetary information and the outcomes of the targeting process. The PSNP budget, public works plans, transfer schedules, together with client lists and list of appeals and appeal resolutions are posted in *woredas* and *kebeles*.

*Posting of Client Lists.* Once the list of clients has been approved at *woreda* level, it is posted in public locations on the *woreda* and *kebele* centres. The aim is to ensure that clients and non-clients in PSNP areas are well informed of which households will participate in the PSNP for the coming year.

### 1.3.2 Monitoring and Evaluation in the PSNP

The PSNP also has a highly-developed M&E system. Whilst not set up primarily to promote social accountability, many of the M&E mechanisms involve an element of consultation with communities or qualitative research that enables voices to be heard. They include:

- *Regular monitoring:* *kebele* and *woreda* monthly and quarterly monitoring reports, regional and federal quarterly reports, and interim financial reports. Roles and responsibilities for this reporting are clearly set out in the PSNP Programme Implementation Manual.
-

- *Periodic process assessments*: including public works reviews, roving appeals audits, rapid response missions, six-monthly joint reviews (JRIS) that involve regional and national meetings, and a bi-annual performance evaluation.
- *Periodic household surveys and impact assessments*: including baselines of each phase and bi-annual outcome evaluations.

### 1.3.3 Social Accountability Mechanisms in the PSNP

As for specific social accountability initiatives, there are two key mechanisms:

**Kebele Appeals Committees.** A GRM, in the form of *Kebele* Appeals Committees (KACs), was introduced into the PSNP in 2007 to address targeting appeals and other complaints. By design, this system is separate from that of targeting, and reports directly to locally elected councils. Membership is supposed to consist of: an elected *Kebele* Council member (not the Chairperson); a Development Agent (agricultural extension worker); one or two members of the Community Care Coalition (if existing in the *kebele*); a Health Extension Worker or Volunteer Community Health Worker; a Social worker (if represented in the *kebele*); two elder representatives (of which one female). A detailed description of how these committees are supposed to operate is set out in a manual<sup>7</sup>. The roles of the KAC are summarised in the manual as follows:

- Hear and resolve complaints, claims and appeals from *kebele* residents on the targeting process and other implementation issues in a timely manner (anyone can raise a complaint/appeal whether or not a PSNP beneficiary).
- Submit a complete listing of appeals cases by sex of appellant, appeals resolutions, and unresolved appeals each quarter to the *Kebele* Council, which reviews them and forwards them to the *Woreda* Council and the *Woreda* Office of Agriculture every quarter.
- Convene within one month of the establishment of a new annual listing of clients to hear appeals submitted in their jurisdiction and to resolve a minimum of 95 per cent of these cases within the month.
- Provide the listing of the appeals and the associated resolutions to the *Kebele* Council no later than two months after the announcement of the listing of the clients.

The manual also states that the complainant/appellant must be provided with feedback on the outcome of their complaint, and that comprehensive records must be kept. Successive roving appeals audits have found that these KACs do not always operate as intended and that record keeping is often poor, but that their implementation is improving. The number of recorded complaints is still low, however: the recent baseline evaluation report found that, on average, *kebeles* had only recorded 80 complaints in the past eight years (Berhane

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<sup>7</sup> A Manual for PSNP IV Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) *Kebele* Appeal Committee (KAC), 2016

et al, 2016). As we shall see later, this contrasts with a very large number of beneficiaries in the *kebeles* we visited who reported having raised concerns (often orally).

**Ethiopia Social Accountability Programme (ESAP2) Social Protection Pilot.** The ESAP2 programme, led by MoFEC, has been using a range of social accountability tools, including Community Score Cards, Citizen Report Cards and Gender Responsive Budgeting in the education, health, water and sanitation, agriculture and rural roads sectors since 2006. The purpose of the ESAP2 is to give voice to the needs and concerns of all citizens regarding basic public services and to open up channels of communication between citizens and the responsible government bodies, so that they can work together to improve the quality and delivery of services. CSOs are contracted to facilitate this process and it is important to note that, given the restrictions placed on these kinds of activities by the Charities and Societies Proclamation, a special arrangement has been necessary to allow them to play this role. The programme is currently operational in 223 *woredas* (around a quarter of the total).

The PSNP pilot only began in 2014. Whilst PSNP is part of the agricultural sector, it had not received much attention until this dedicated pilot. The 2014-15 pilot was carried out in only four *woredas* and in three *kebeles* in each of these, though from 2016 it scaled up to 19 *woredas*. Community score cards were the most widely-used social accountability tool used in the pilots and the process involved the following steps:

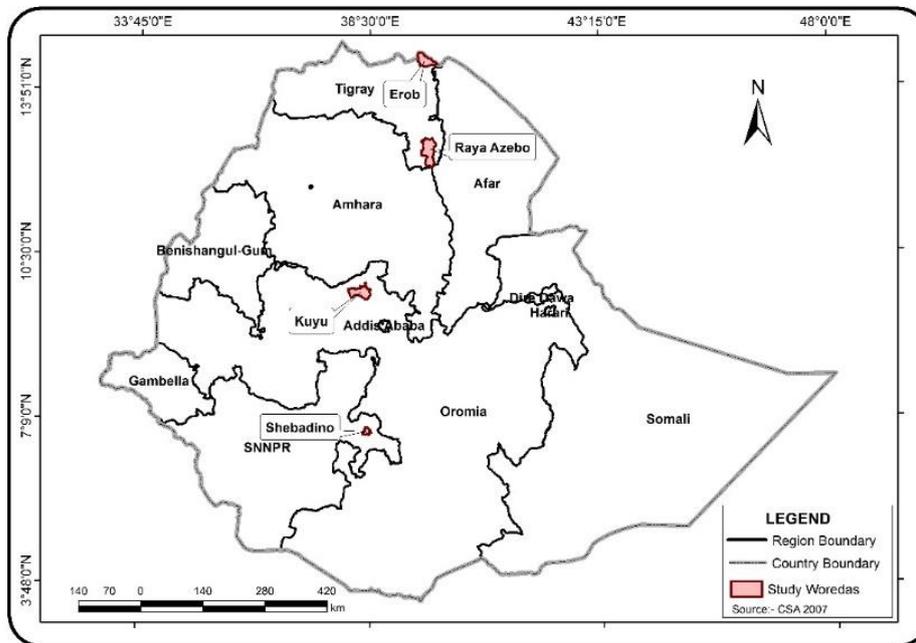
- community awareness-raising about the project, followed by selection of representatives;
- training of representatives on both social accountability and PSNP service standards;
- discussions by service user and service provider focus groups (composed of the selected representatives) to separately score services (the ESAP focus groups);
- interface meetings between service users and service providers at both *kebele* and *woreda* levels to discuss and agree scorings and to develop a joint action plan, to which the whole community is invited; and
- monitoring of service improvements and, as necessary, repeating of the score card process.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

The purpose of our case study was to understand how social accountability processes around the PSNP are operating in practice in selected localities. Whereas the implementation of the KACs has proven problematic in practice, the ESAP2 is generally seen as a promising approach for possible scale-up. For this reason, we focused our attention particularly, but not exclusively, on the ESAP2 pilot.

Of the four *woredas* where the 2014 ESAP2 PSNP pilot was carried out, the Government of Ethiopia selected two *woredas* where they were happy for us to carry out fieldwork: Shebadino and Kuyu. These are in different regions and offer quite different cultural and political contexts. Kuyu *woreda*, for example, has been strongly affected by the recent political conflict in Oromia region, but this has not touched Shebadino.

Figure 1: ESAP2 PSNP Pilot Woreda



Within each of these *woredas*, we selected two of the three *kebeles* where the programme had been piloted, largely based on logistical considerations: in each *woreda* one *kebele* was extremely distant and could not have been covered within our timeframe. Given the small size of our sample and the non-random selection, we make no claims that our findings are representative of the country as a whole.

We used three qualitative methods: case studies, institutional assessment, and (to a lesser extent) process tracing.

### Institutional Assessment

Key informant interviews at federal, *woreda* and *kebele* levels, as well as documentary review, enabled us to gain insights into the following issues: political settlements at national level and how these affect social protection; social protection programme design,

operations and implementation capacities and how programme systems facilitate or constrain response to citizen concerns; roles and responsibilities of programme implementers, managers and senior decision makers; relationships between national and local levels and authorities at each level; and the culture and policy regarding engagement with citizens.

### Case Studies

Cases were the communities covered by the social accountability initiatives. We carried out key informant interviews with local officials at *woreda* and *kebele* level and, within each community, we purposively selected individuals for semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. We used these cases to investigate each of the five dimensions of social accountability as set out in our theory of change; and the effects of the ESAP2 pilot, KAC and any other social accountability processes. Our selection criteria were designed to ensure that we spoke with community leaders, as well as a cross-section of PSNP beneficiaries, including the most vulnerable.

**Focus group participants** were selected according to the following criteria:

- Membership of a relevant committee: Social Accountability Committee (SAC) or KAC.
- Involvement in the ESAP process: in each *kebele* we sought out people who had been members of the ESAP focus groups. (Other respondents were not selected with this criterion in mind and we asked about participation, enabling us to gain some sense of the reach of the initiative.)
- Complainant status: in each *kebele* we spoke to at least one person who was identified as having raised a complaint.
- PSNP eligibility status: we spoke separately with public works and direct support (DS) beneficiaries.
- Gender: where possible we separated focus groups into men's only and women's only groups, and we ensured a gender balance in our semi-structured interviews.

Recognising that people with disabilities (PwDs), older people and female-headed households with children might be under-represented in our focus group discussions due to mobility challenges, we prioritised these groups for **semi-structured interviews** that were often carried out in respondents' own homes.

Table 1 indicates the numbers of people in each group with whom we actually met in each location. The DAs in Ramadan were unfortunately unavailable for interview; and two complainants in Shebadino *woreda* withheld their consent to be interviewed, on the basis that they were fed up of raising their complaints to no avail. Our resource people were unable to identify a PSNP beneficiary with a baby in Fura *kebele* nor a person with a disability in Wuye Gose *kebele*. Other than this, our planned schedule was followed.

Table 1: Field Work Interviews

FGDs/ KIIs/SSIs	Kuyu Woreda		Shebadino woreda	
	Wuye Gose Kebele	Birriti Kebele	Fura Kebele	Ramadan Kebele
<b>Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>11</b>	
<b>Woreda</b>				
Woreda staff working on PSNP	2		2	
Social Accountability Implementing Partner (SAIP)	1		1	
Woreda Social Accountability Committee (SAC)	1		1	
<b>Kebele</b>				
Development Agents	1	1	1	0
Kebele SAC	1	1	1	1
KAC	1	1	1	1
One more key committee: KFSTF or Kebele Cabinet	1	1	1	1
<b>Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
DS beneficiary hholds (M/F)	1 (women)	1 (men)	1 (women)	0
PW beneficiaries	1 (women)	1 (men)	1 (men)	2 (men, women)
ESAP participants (mixed)	1 (women)	1 (mixed)	1 (mixed)	1 (mixed)
<b>Semi-structured Interviews (SSIs)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
PSNP beneficiary and:				
PwD	0	2 (women)	2 (men)	1 (man)
Mother with baby	1	1	0	1
Complainant	1 (man)	1 (woman)	1 (man)	0
<b>TOTAL interviews and focus groups</b>	<b>24</b>		<b>22</b>	

### Process Tracing

We expected that this method would enable us to track a sample of actual concerns raised by citizens through the system. The aim was to move beyond a theoretical description of what should happen, to explore what actually did happen in a sample of cases, and thereby develop a better understanding of the ways in which the social accountability process is facilitated and the points at which it is blocked. In each *kebele* we selected a

small number of concerns (that had been raised either individually or collectively); and we started to track the process by speaking first to citizens and asking how and with whom they had raised the concern. The idea was that we would trace the process through which these had (or had not) been addressed, by following up with the individual in the provider organiser to whom the concern had been raised to understand what they did (or did not) do and why, then following up with other key stakeholders named by this respondent, and so on until we reached the end of the process.

Unfortunately, our ability to do this was hampered by an almost complete lack of documentation as well as high staff turnover. We found no documentation of any of the individual complaints that we investigated, and very limited recall of specific cases by current staff. Similarly, with collective issues, we found no monitoring reports on whether issues in the ESAP Joint Action Plan had been addressed, how, by whom or when; and, in some cases, staff who appeared to have been key to the process had moved on. Thus, whilst we made some limited use of process tracing, in practice our main methods were case studies and institutional assessment.

We recorded and transcribed all key informant interviews, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions listed in Table 1. We coded them in line with the five dimensions of our conceptual framework – information/awareness, interface, civic mobilisation, citizen action, state action – and a sixth element, impacts. Within each dimension we had a specific code for issues related to marginalised groups and we also enabled other key themes to emerge from the transcripts (see Table 2).

*Table 2: Coding Structure*

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Key themes</b>				
<b>Information</b>	Key source of information on the programme	Awareness of PSNP entitlements	Whether transfer is perceived as a gift or an entitlement	Knowledge of where/how to raise any concern	Marginalised groups
<b>Civic mobilisation</b>	Value added of ESAP	Other civic mobilisation	Marginalised groups		
<b>Interfaces</b>	Existing interfaces and how they operate	Linkages to higher levels of the state	Marginalised groups		
<b>Citizen action</b>	Positive example of action	Reasons for inaction	Reprisals	Marginalised groups	
<b>State action</b>	State action	State inaction	Incentives for officials	Marginalised groups	
<b>Impacts</b>	Impacts on service delivery	Impacts on state-society relations			

## Chapter 3: Findings from Field Research

We structure this section of our report in line with the conceptual framework presented in Figure 1 in the introduction to this report. Thus, our five key sub-sections are: information, civic mobilisation, interface, citizen action and state action.

### 3.1 Information

In this sub-section, we investigate various dimensions of access to information and awareness of citizens and service providers. We start by considering citizens' information: their key sources of information; their level of awareness, both about PSNP standards and about what to do if they have a concern; and how this varies between different groups of citizens. We then look at the extent to which awareness translates into a sense of entitlement to PSNP transfers.

In all four *kebeles* the main source of information about PSNP entitlements for beneficiaries is *kebele* meetings, where *kebele* representatives and officials pass on information they have received from the *woreda*. In Shebadino (but not in Kuyu), posting of information on noticeboards was mentioned as an additional source of information. No one reported receiving information from the radio (those beneficiaries who were asked all stated that they had no radio).

*We heard about PSNP from kebele officials. The kebele officials told us that they know this programme through the woreda (ESAP FG participants, Birriti, Kuyu).*

*After they selected beneficiaries, they posted the list of names of the beneficiaries on the notice board (male PW beneficiaries, Ramada, Shebadino).*

For those who participated in ESAP training (both community members and *kebele* officials), this was sometimes cited as an important additional source of information about PSNP entitlements.

*Previously the training was given by the woreda, but we got much more information after we were trained by this NGO (Kebele Chair, Birriti, Kuyu).*

*Before ESAP training, there was no accountability. After the community got the training they got better information about the PSNP. They know how many hours they have to participate in public works per day (Kebele Cabinet, Fura, Shebadino).*

On the other hand, the most vulnerable beneficiaries, including people with disabilities (PWDs), direct support (DS) beneficiaries and mothers with babies on temporary DS mainly receive information from other community members.

*I get information [about payments] from one of the beneficiaries who is my friend (temporary DS beneficiary, Ramada, Shebadino).*

*No, no-one tells me about the meetings and such like ... I don't know why. The other beneficiaries share information with those who do not have information (PWD PW beneficiary Fura, Shebadino).*

*We got the information from the community. It was posted on the notice board at kebele level. Those who can read the notice disseminated the information for the whole community (PwD DS beneficiary, Ramada, Shebadino).*

We found the level of knowledge of PSNP amongst beneficiaries to be extremely variable. Many beneficiaries know the amount they are supposed to receive per month and per household member, and some are also aware of detailed provisions, for example around the switch to temporary direct support for pregnant women. Given the complexity of the PSNP programme, the level of knowledge of some beneficiaries was impressive.

*Women do not participate in public works when they get pregnant. Even they stay out of work for a year after giving birth (male PW participants, Ramada, Shebadino).*

On the other hand, the knowledge of some more vulnerable beneficiaries is very low.

*Interviewer: Do you know how much you receive on a monthly basis?*

*Respondent: I receive what they give me.*

*Interviewer: You do not know the amount of your monthly transfer?*

*Respondent: I do not know that*

*(DS beneficiary, FHH with baby, Birriti, Kuyu).*

*We simply go to collect the money when it is ready for payment. But I don't know about the institution that provides us the payment (PwD, DS beneficiary, Fura, Shebadino).*

*Interviewer: Did you not ever miss the payment due to lack of information?*

*Respondent: I missed many times (female PwD, Birriti Kuyu Woreda).*

When asked where they would complain, most beneficiaries were unaware of the existence of a *Kebele Appeals Committee (KAC)* in their *kebele*.

*Interviewer: Is there a Kebele Appeals Committee that receives concerns from people?*

*Respondent: I do not know that as I do not have detailed information (temporary DS beneficiary, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

*Interviewer: To whom do individuals appeal if they have any complaint about the safety net?*

*Respondent: They will appeal to the kebele, which means to the Kebele Chair.*

*Interviewer: Is there any appeal committee?*

*Respondent: Maybe there is a committee, but I do not know.*

*(Female complainant PW participant, Birriti, Kuyu).*

*I don't know where I have to go [to raise a complaint] (DS PwD, Fura, Shebadino).*

But there are some exceptions amongst well-informed beneficiaries:

*When we face any problem, we will go to the KAC. Then we can share our complaint with the DA. Lastly, we will go and escalate our complaints to the woreda office (PW beneficiary, Fura, Shebadino).*

The DS Beneficiaries we spoke to seemed less well-informed than public works beneficiaries. Whilst this is partly attributable to the mobility challenges that some face due to older age or disability, and hence lower participation in community meetings, it might also be related to the programme design that provides DS beneficiaries with more limited opportunities for interaction with local officials.

*Public works beneficiaries interact with us during the public works but the DS only meet people during the payment time (DA, Birriti, Kuyu).*

Furthermore, even amongst beneficiaries with a high awareness of programme design, this does not often translate into a sense of entitlement to PSNP transfers. DS beneficiaries and PWDs are particularly unlikely to see PSNP transfers as an entitlement or to think they have a right to complain if the transfers stop, but many public works ()beneficiaries see it in this way too.

*It is a special gift from God given to us by the Government (DS beneficiary, Fura, Shebadino)*

*It is a gift. Is it what they give you if they like and what they deny you if they want. It is a gift from the government to support us, so that we are not exposed to hunger and thirst, but there is no obligation on the government. (Male complainant, PW participant, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

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

There was no sense of having a right to access the programme, based on meeting the eligibility criteria. Some beneficiaries felt that once registered they had the right to receive transfers, but, even then, generally only if they were working in public works.

*Once I get the client card it is my right to receive the transfer as long as I accomplish what is expected from me [in terms of public works] (PW participant, Birriti, Kuyu).*

*So, I do not think of it as a gift because we are not receiving the transfer unless we participate in these public works activities (female PW participant, Wuyu Gose, Kuyu).*

We met no DS beneficiary who felt they had an entitlement to PSNP transfers, and public works participants seemed to concur with this view of a lesser entitlement of those not engaged in public works.

*Those who have the capacity can ask to receive the transfer as they have the right to receive. Still there are old or incapable people who cannot ask to receive the transfer (female PW participant, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

Even amongst public works households, the poverty focus of the PSNP sometimes appeared to diminish their sense of entitlement, as compared to other wage work. Asked whether she felt she had a right to ask for the transfer if it was refused, one responded replied

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

As for service providers, *woreda* and *Kebele* officials vary in the extent to which they have received training and feel well-informed.

*When there are changes, then we are given training and we are called to a meeting at the Zonal or Regional level (woreda official, Shebadino).*

Some knowledge gaps were apparent. For example, in Fura, DAs stated that pregnant women worked on public works because no one had asked for time off, *“You may be aware of it, but here it is not something that we have been asked to do.”*

Several local officials commented that access to training had recently declined.

*This year the information we have is less because there is no that much training we received. So, formerly the information I had was adequate but now it is less. (Woreda official, Shebadino).*

*I can say I do not have adequate information ...Now, for instance, the transfer amount has increased but they did not tell us about how the payment is increased. (DA, Kuyu woreda).*

**In summary, regarding *information*, key findings are that:**

- **Levels of awareness amongst citizens are very variable: both regarding PSNP design and regarding what to do in the case of having any complaint or concern.**
- **Awareness is generally very much lower amongst DS beneficiaries and people with disabilities.**
- **Community meetings are the primary source of information for most citizens; but marginalised groups are more likely to receive information indirectly from other community members.**
- **There is no sense of an entitlement to PSNP as social protection: few beneficiaries feel they are entitled to PSNP transfers, and those that do relate this directly to their work input in public works.**
- **Levels of programme awareness amongst service providers are also variable and some report that training has recently declined.**

### 3.2 Civic Mobilisation

In this section we consider the added value of the ESAP process in mobilising citizens compared to any other similar training or awareness-raising that might have been available to them.

ESAP provided training on PSNP entitlements and on social accountability to selected community representatives. The representatives then went on to play lead roles in the community score care process, carrying out the initial scoring in focus groups, prior to the interface meeting between the whole community and service providers (see process

described in section 1.3.3). ESAP training is consistently cited by both citizens who benefited and service providers as having raised awareness about social accountability. Critically, the training provided by the SAIPs appears to be unique: none of our respondents had ever received similar awareness-raising from any other source.

*Social accountability means that those responsible bodies should respond to the concerns raised by people. However, we knew this after ESAP, since we were not aware of social accountability before, because there was no such type of discussion held in the community (ESAP FG participants, Birriti, Kuyu).*

*BICDO<sup>8</sup> gave us training on equality of human beings and the right we have to raise any complaint. They give training to citizens to develop better confidence (PwD DS beneficiary, Ramada).*

*People were really made aware about their rights and obligations and they will bring their complaints forward to us in a very clear manner. The training was encouraging people to bring the comments and ideas forward and this was a thing which had never happened before (Woreda official, Shebadino)*

On the other hand, that fact that training was limited to the citizen representatives and did not extend to all PSNP beneficiaries had implications for impacts. Whilst the ESAP project has well-established procedures for promoting inclusion of different groups amongst representatives, they only consist of a small proportion (not more than 10 per cent) of PSNP beneficiaries. For example, in Kuyu *woreda*, participants included only 36 citizens per *kebele*: 12 beneficiaries of PSNP; 12 male non-beneficiaries; and 12 female non-beneficiaries. Looking at the total beneficiary numbers, this suggests that only about 10 per cent of PSNP beneficiaries participated. In Shebadino, 42 citizens participated and only 7 of these were selected based on their participation in PSNP. Whilst it is likely that some of the 35 selected in other categories - PwDs, youth, people living with HIV, older people and women – were also PSNP beneficiaries, it is unlikely they all were. We estimate that between 1 per cent (if none of the other 35 participants were PSNP beneficiaries) to 10 per cent (if all were) of PSNP beneficiaries participated in ESAP focus group discussions and training in this *woreda*.

Most of the PSNP beneficiaries with a disability whom we met had not participated in the process (especially in Kuyu), and others also perceived the participation of w to have been limited:

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

The impact of ESAP training is supposed to extend beyond the selected representatives. However, whilst some SAC members told us that they had shared the information they

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<sup>8</sup> BICDO NGO, the Social Accountability Implementing Partner (SAIP) in this *woreda*.

received with others, we found very limited awareness of the process amongst those who did not directly participate.

Interviewer: *Don't you know the social accountability programme which encourages you to ask about your rights?*

Respondent: *No, there is no such programme here at all.*

Interviewer: *What about the members of ESAP? Don't you know about the SAC?*

Respondent: *No, there is no such committee here.*

(PwD DS beneficiary, Fura, Shebadino)

Interviewer: *Did you participate in the PSNP ESAP discussion that was led by HUNDEE?<sup>9</sup>*

Respondent: *No, I did not participate.*

Interviewer: *Were you not invited or you did not get information about that?*

Respondent: *No one told me about that*

(temporary DS beneficiary, Birriti, Kuyu)

Perhaps due to staff turnover, some local officials were also unaware of the initiative.

[in response to a question about the ESAP project] *What you are mentioning now is new for us. We have not received any training about this. What you are telling us is the only information that we have* (all DAs, Fura, Shebadino).

When we asked about the civic mobilisation of persons with disability we more often received responses that had to do with addressing their social welfare needs or speaking on their behalf.

*Before the discussion persons with disability were excluded and the community treated them as if they were not human...*

Interviewer: *How has their problem been solved? Does the community listen to their voices?*

Respondent: *People like me speak on behalf of them. We are saying that persons with disability were treated inhumanely, but now we should correct that and treat them well.* (SAC member Wuye Gose)

**In summary, regarding *civic mobilisation*, our key findings are that:**

- **The ESAP initiative has been unique in the *kebeles* we visited in providing training and awareness-raising on citizen rights and social accountability; and this has been appreciated highly by those who participated.**
- **However, only a small minority of PSNP beneficiaries, and few of the most marginalised, benefited from this training; and we found no evidence of spillover effects on the mobilisation of other citizens who did not directly participate.**

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<sup>9</sup> HUNDEE NGO, Social Accountability Implementing Partner (SAIP) in this woreda.

### 3.3 The Interface

In this section, we consider all the interfaces that exist for citizens to engage with service providers and raise issues about the PSNP, including but not limited to those established through ESAP.

In Kuyu, *Kebele* Appeals Committees were described as non-functional by *woreda* and *kebele* officials, as well as beneficiaries. In Shebadino, the KACs appear to exist, though there is no clear separation of membership between the *Kebele* Food Security Task Force (KFSTF) and the KAC, as there should be according to the Programme Implementation Manual. Furthermore, even here, the KAC seems to be active mainly around the time of targeting; many beneficiaries are unaware of the existence of a specific complaints committee and simply describe approaching the *Kebele* Chair or *Kebele* Manager with any complaints.

Whilst many beneficiaries belong to traditional organisations such as *iddirs* (burial associations) and *equibs* (savings associations), they explain that these do not engage at all in PSNP issues. No other citizen-state interfaces (such as the formal cross-sectoral GRMs described in Section 1 above) were mentioned in relation to engagement around PSNP.

Thus, from the perspective of beneficiaries three key interfaces exist to discuss issues with PSNP service providers. These are:

i) **the committee responsible for appeals during the targeting process** (this is described variously as the KFSTF or the KAC, depending on how active the KAC is in that *kebele*)

Interviewer: *Is the targeting committee also the one who receives concerns from people?*

Respondent: *Yes, before the selection process is completed those who have concerns bring their concern to the meeting (DA, Birriti, Kuyu).*

*After the targeting process is over, the name of the beneficiaries are posted on the notice board. Then anyone who has a complaint may appeal to the KAC. After KAC collects complaints, it may gather the community again to discuss the complaints and to improve if there is any mistake (PW beneficiary, Ramada, Shebadino).*

ii) **ad hoc meetings with the *Kebele* Chair or manager at other times**

*We appealed to the Kebele Manager. I do not know any other body. (Complainant, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

*It is through the Kebele Chair; since he is the chair of the kebele the problem is solved through him (ESAP participants, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

This interface has limitations, as most of those who raise concerns in this way receive little feedback. Generally, complainants receive a specific response only in the (rare) case when their complaint is upheld. Otherwise, complainants appear to receive only vague assurances that their complaint will be addressed, but no specific feedback, even when their concerns have been outstanding for many months.

*To tell us either you will be included or you would not be included is a response, but there is no such prompt response that they gave. They simply say they will solve the concerns (ESAP FG participants, Birriti, Kuyu).*

and iii) **the ESAP community score card interface meeting**

This ESAP interface is perceived by PSNP beneficiaries who participated to have given them a unique opportunity to collectively raise concerns with local officials. They were seen as unlike other community meetings, which seem to serve a primarily top-down information-sharing role. Sometimes the issues raised through the ESAP were already known to communities and officials, but the interface provided the first opportunity to discuss them.

*Though the problem is known to exist, people in the community did not raise such problems/concerns before. It was after the ESAP meeting that people became aware of their right to raise any concern (KII with Woreda SAC).*

There seems to have been at times a remarkable degree of openness in these discussions (although, as we shall see later, the lack of response following some of these frank exchanges raises some questions about the nature of the social accountability dynamic). According to the PSNP ESAP pilot report<sup>10</sup>, in one of our case study *kebeles* a DA admitted during the interface meeting,

*In Ethiopian year 2005, Woreda Food Security sent us a letter saying that five people need to be graduated. We sent them a letter stating that there is no one who fulfils the graduation criteria. Then they emphatically wrote back to us telling us to pick five people disregarding the criteria. We then selected those individuals who are perceived to be 'dida' (meaning those who challenge service providers)<sup>11</sup>*

For most citizens, direct engagement with service providers occurs only at *kebele* level. However, many of the issues raised by citizens require action at *woreda* level. Some citizens, who are aware of this and who are able to travel, visit the *woreda* office, and they perceive this as a more effective way to raise their concern.

*However, if we appealed here [to the kebele], it was them who selected, who integrated, who graduated, etc. Thus, who would resolve our problem here? Since they are the ones who did everything about which we appealed, it was impossible to appeal here. So we discussed the issue in the meeting at the woreda. Following our points, they solved the problem (SAC committee member, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

However, of course, not all are able to make this journey, even from *kebeles* close to the *woreda*.

*As those who appealed or PSNP beneficiaries are poor people, they do not have money for transportation to go to the woreda to appeal to higher bodies. Due to this, they did not appeal to the woreda (ESAP FG participants, Birriti, Kuyu).*

Interviewer: *Did you go at least once?* [to the *woreda* to appeal]

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<sup>10</sup> PSNP Social Development Task Force, 2015, Pilot: Strengthening the Effectiveness of Social Accountability in PSNP and PBS Overlapping Woredas: Final Report.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, page 50.

Respondent: *No, because I am the mother of children and I even gave birth at that time. Furthermore, they do not receive appeals from illiterate people (temporary DS beneficiary, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

Thus, many are reliant on representatives to interface with *woreda* officials on their behalf. The ESAP project includes *woreda*-level interface meetings, and *kebele* officials and representatives engage directly with *woreda* staff in their day-to-day work. However, both *kebele* officials and the SAIPs report some challenges in engaging *woreda* officials around the issues raised by citizens.

*It would be good if they gave priority to our programme. When interface meetings are scheduled at *woreda* level they purposely overlap them with other things and are reluctant to attend, telling us that there is an urgent political party meeting or something etc. As a result, we end up not having meetings as per our schedule. (SAIP)*

Interviewer: *When people raise concerns ...how do you tell these complaints to the *woreda* officials, is this through formal letter or...?*

Respondent: *As a DA, if I complain a lot they may re-assign me to another area (Kebele DA)*

Sometimes zonal and even regional officials are present at the ESAP *woreda* interface meeting, but their presence is not consistent – it depends on the travel distances involved. In any case, there are no examples from our case studies of zonal or regional authorities taking action at their levels in response to concerns raised by citizens: ESAP is viewed very much as an initiative to exact local accountability.

**In summary then, regarding *interfaces*, our key findings are that:**

- **For most citizens, the key interfaces with service providers for social accountability are at *kebele* level and consist of: community meetings around targeting appeals at the time of targeting; *ad hoc* meetings with the *Kebele* Chair or manager; and (for those who participated) the ESAP interface meeting.**
- **For those who participated, the ESAP *kebele* interface was unique in giving an opportunity to provide feedback to service providers, and there was, at times, a remarkable degree of openness in discussions.**
- **Many decisions are taken at *woreda* level; so, those citizens who can, try to make direct contact with *woreda* officials.**
- **On the other hand, many PSNP beneficiaries are unable to interface directly with the *woreda*, and so are reliant on intermediaries to communicate their concerns, but these intermediaries themselves often face challenges in channelling citizen voices upwards.**

### 3.4 Citizen Action

Many citizens have actively raised concerns and complaints about the PSNP programme with *kebele* officials or representatives and/or through the ESAP process. Before going on to look at the drivers and constraints of citizen action, it seems useful in sub-section 3.4.1

to briefly review the nature of the issues raised. Then in sub-section 3.4.2 we investigate constraints to citizen action and how the propensity to raise concerns varies between different groups of citizens.

### 3.4.1 Key Issues Raised by Citizens

In both *woredas*, the issues that our respondents were most likely to have raised as concerns (often in an *ad hoc* way with *kebele* officials) were: targeting exclusion error; lack of full-family targeting; and (especially in Kuyu) forced graduation.

**Targeting exclusion error:** Whilst, for the most part, beneficiaries believe PSNP beneficiaries to be amongst the poorest and most deserving in their communities, we found a widespread perception amongst both beneficiaries and *kebele* officials/representatives that the *kebele* quotas are insufficient to cover all those who meet the eligibility criteria and are in need of support. (This is also in line with a finding of the baseline report of the new phase of the PSNP<sup>12</sup>.)

**Lack of full-family targeting:** We received consistent reports from beneficiaries, as well as *kebele* and *woreda* service providers that many households receive transfers for only two, three or four household members, despite having five or more members. With quotas set in terms of individuals covered, there is a trade-off between coverage of all eligible households and full-family targeting. Local officials in the *kebeles* we visited generally decide not to target all the eligible members of a household in order to cover a greater proportion of households in need. In Kuyu this seems to be driven by the *kebeles* (with tacit acceptance by the *woreda*), whereas in Shebadino it is described as an instruction from the *woreda*. In both *woredas* this problem appears to be worsening: a recent decline is reported in the extent to which all eligible household members (up to the cap of five members) are covered.

**Timeliness of payments:** Payments reportedly often arrive late, and timeliness appears to have recently worsened for all PSNP clients in Kuyu and for DS beneficiaries in Shebadino. In Kuyu this was linked to the recent e-payments pilot, and in Shebadino seems to be linked to late and lumpy transfers from the regional office.

**Premature graduation:** In both *woredas*, some households raised concerns about previous graduation that did not align with the rules in force at the time: in Kuyu this concern was prevalent and a top priority for citizens; though in Shebadino it emerged only occasionally in discussion.

The issues that emerged as priorities during the 2014-15 ESAP discussion in both *woredas* are well documented in the PSNP Social Development Task Force, 2015. They include the four issues mentioned above and a range of others, some of which have subsequently been resolved. By way of example, Table 3 below shows the issues raised by service users during the ESAP focus group meetings in one of our case study *kebeles* in Kuyu *woreda*, and Table 4 sets out the key issues debated and agreed between service users and

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<sup>12</sup> Berhane et al, 2106, op cit, page 139.

providers in one of the Shebadino *woredas*. These include scoring of each aspect of service provision (on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very poor, 2 poor, 3 fair, 4 good and 5 very good).

Table 3: PSNP Service User Assessment in Wuye Gose Kebele, Kuyu Woreda

Issue	Score	Evidence
Targeting	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In the early days of PSNP, targeting was worse, but later when community targeting started it improved a lot.</li> <li>- No Full-Family Targeting. Many newly targeted households do not receive a transfer equal to their family size.</li> <li>- Insufficient attention is given to women and Female Headed Households.</li> <li>- Quota system is not useful and affects the fairness of targeting.</li> <li>- The weak and sick are not sufficiently targeted.</li> </ul>
Transparency & Accountability	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Budgets, client lists, transfer schedules, etc. are not posted (or if posted are destroyed by rain, etc.) or clearly communicated.</li> <li>- Sometimes those who have mobile phones know the transfer date.</li> <li>- There are people who missed the transfer date and have to wait for more than 2 months without being paid.</li> <li>- Client Cards are distributed but when lost, replacement often takes a long time. For example “in our <i>kebele</i> individuals such as [names removed] have lost their card but did not get replacement and have not yet [been] paid (despite the fact that they continue to regularly work on PWs)”.</li> </ul>
Transfer	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Because transfers were not timely, we were obliged to go for a loan, which depletes our assets.</li> <li>- The amount of transfer that we were told we would receive was not paid.</li> <li>- There is discrepancy between what we were told orally and what is being paid. We were told that this year payment is going to be Birr 21 but now we are paid the rate of last year (Birr 18).</li> <li>- When payment comes it always overlaps with the next payment, but even then we are not paid for both months.</li> <li>- When we receive the transfer, service providers force us to buy fertilizer, even if we tell them that we do not have any plot of land. Then we pay it and go empty hand to our home. We are then obliged to sell the fertilizer on our way home since we need food in exchange. On the day of transfer the rich people who have land sit on the road, and buy from us at a very cheap price. We cannot say ‘no’ since we are threatened with eviction from the PSNP. We know a person whose Client Card was destroyed when he refused to pay for fertilizer. During times of fertilizer distribution, they purposely delay the payment so that it overlaps with the time when fertilizer is sold.</li> <li>- On the holy day they promised us to pay the transfer but they did not, and we passed the holy day without eating. We were very sad that day, while it was a feast day for others.</li> </ul>
Graduation	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is no transparency in the process of graduation.</li> <li>- No graduation criterion is respected. It is totally forced graduation.</li> <li>- Quota system is unfair.</li> </ul>
Functioning of Committees	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We do not know any existing committees except individuals such as the DAs and <i>Kebele</i> cabinet.</li> <li>- We have no idea who sits in the KAC.</li> <li>- <i>Kebele</i> leaders themselves are not aware of PSNP working rules; no one ever made any appeal to KAC or to <i>woreda</i> from our <i>kebele</i> since we do not know them.</li> <li>- We fear to appeal since we can be a victim of forced graduation.</li> </ul>
Public Works	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The sick, people living with HIV/AIDS, elderly, pregnant women, and children are exempted from PWs.</li> <li>- The amount of transfer and the workload we perform is incompatible. We work more than the value of the transfer we get.</li> <li>- We travel long distance; many of us walk as far as 3 hours per day.</li> <li>- Women are obliged to work equal to men, which is very hard for the women.</li> <li>- The PW has an element of unfairness. We are obliged to work hard, works which other members of the community are not willing to do. The people and</li> </ul>

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Issue	Score	Evidence
		- the administration argue that 'the PSNP clients should do it because they are the ones who are paid'.
Gender Equity	2	- Both women and men are given the same piece rate of work, which is sometimes very hard for women. In this case finishing the work may take more days or more labour than the men may perform, which is unfair. - Women's participation in decision-making is minimal. - No special consideration for women or Female Headed Households.

*Table 4: Consolidated Score (Service User and Service Provider), Ramadan Kebele, Shebadino Woreda*

Issue	Score	Evidence (Agreed on by Service Users and Service Providers)
Targeting	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The two targeting sessions were very unfair, but later on improved.</li> <li>• Community participation in those targeting sessions did not happen.</li> <li>• The last targeting session improved due to improved community participation. Yet there are 7 people that are inappropriately included as clients.</li> <li>• Disabled, HIV-affected people, the weak, elders and female-headed households need to be given priority. There are many people that are excluded.</li> </ul>
Transfers	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amount of transfer is very low compared with the market value of food crops. For example, 1kg of grain flour is Birr 7-10, which does not suffice for a family's breakfast.</li> <li>• Transfer is delayed more than 2-3 months, and people get the payment after they are trapped into arata.</li> <li>• When wheat is given out, it is taken by the rich (who had already lent money through arata).</li> <li>• However, this year it is improved.</li> </ul>
HABP [Household Asset Building Programme]	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients do not have access or information about their saving.</li> <li>• Those who took loan do not know how much they paid back.</li> <li>• 'All categories i.e. those who took a loan of 3,000 or 1,600 still pay it back, and no one knows when that ends or what amount of money still in loan'.</li> <li>• People do not know about their savings and loan payments (for HABP appropriate receipts are not given for the loan repayments)</li> <li>• 'From our <i>kebele</i> 7 people were not given loan repayment book but only given on white paper.'</li> </ul>
Graduation	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduation is decided largely by the higher officials and the <i>kebele</i> officials and the clients do not participate in deciding who should graduate.</li> <li>• Those who graduated are not self-sufficient, and they are all depleting their assets after graduation.</li> <li>• The poor graduated while the rich remained.</li> <li>• In 2007 EC we are told that everyone needs to graduate. But we can confirm that no one among the clients fulfils the criteria for graduation.</li> </ul>
Transparency and Accountability	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few people know the working modalities of the PSNP. All community members in the <i>kebele</i> should know the working modalities of the PSNP, not only clients.</li> </ul>
Working of Committees-		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KAC is almost non-existent, no one heard about its works.</li> <li>• The members are unknown. No work done so far. No record of activities etc.</li> <li>• No awareness raising and training is given to the committees.</li> <li>• Very few people know the existence, functioning and roles of the KFSTF [<i>Kebele</i> Food Security Task Force]</li> <li>• Connection between KFSTF and WFSTF [<i>Woreda</i> Food Security Task Force].</li> </ul>

### 3.4.2 Key Constraints to Citizen Action

We were struck by the extent to which some citizens expressed that they were willing to raise concerns. The propensity to raise concerns varies and the citizens most likely to raise concerns were characterised as follows:

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

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

Many citizens identified constraints to raising concerns, or explained that they had stopped raising an issue, even though it was still a priority for them. Key reasons given were that:

- they felt they had no right to complain;
- they feared reprisals; or
- they had low expectations regarding the outcome of the complaint.

**No right to complain:** Even when well aware of a divergence between service delivery and programme provisions, some beneficiaries never raise their concerns, because they feel they have no right to complain – they feel grateful. This is linked to the sense of PSNP being a gift, rather than an entitlement. As discussed in section 3.1 above, this sense is particularly prevalent amongst DS beneficiaries, but is also common amongst public works beneficiaries.

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

Interviewer: *Did you complain as to why only three members of your HH were targeted? [has six household members]*

Respondent: *I did not complain about that, even I am thankful that they reintegrated me in the programme (PW beneficiary, ESAP focus group participants, Birriti, Kuyu).*

**Fear of reprisals:** Another very common reason for not complaining, or for dropping a complaint after a certain time despite a lack of response, is fear of reprisals from service providers, particularly of being dropped from the programme. At the local level, in areas where very many people are perceived to be food insecure, the PSNP eligibility criteria can appear highly subjective and open to manipulation.

*We are afraid to speak out for fear of the negative impact resulting from our criticism (male PW beneficiary, Birriti, Kuyu).*

*We fear they would cancel our name from the beneficiary list if we complained too much (male beneficiary, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

*I fear being harmed by them [the kebele officials] in every aspect. They are more accepted people among the higher officials than me, so they can accuse me with*

*different things distorting my appeal letter as I am illiterate (female beneficiary, Birriti, Kuyu).*

*The DA may get irritated if we ask them such questions. We also fear that they may cancel us from the programme if we raise such complaints (PW beneficiary, Fura, Shebadino).*

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

It is important to note that citizens fearing reprisals from local officials is not the same as saying that such reprisals have or would be enacted. In Kuyu, officials did admit that in the past, under pressure to fulfil graduation quotas, they graduated people who complained too much (see section 3.3 above), and this was confirmed in our discussion with one of the Kebele Managers. However, we found no actual cases of reprisals in Shebadino. In fact, when asked, some of the most active citizens said that nothing would actually happen to them if they complained.

*There is no one who is punished for filing complaints against services provided by the safety net programme (ESAP FG participants, Ramada, Shebadino).*

Interviewer: *What will happen if you appeal complaints?*

Respondent: *Nothing at all...I continue raising complaints, so why do they not take measures against me right now? (PwD PW beneficiary Fura, Shebadino).*

**Low expectations:** Others do not complain because, after observing the outcome of the complaints raised by others, they do not expect complaining to achieve anything:

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

Marginalised groups face additional constraints to complaining, both practical constraints in terms of travelling to the kebele office, and ones related to social status.

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

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

There were also a few reports of people being asked to pay bribes to resolve complaints, but such reports were not widespread.

*My husband raised in the kebele meeting that he gave the DA money to target his fourth household member. After he took my money and bought drink, the DA said there is no full-family targeting (temporary DS beneficiary).*

In a few cases, citizens reported that they felt moral pressure not to demand full-family targeting, in order to allow a higher number of other households to benefit.

*I gave up when they told me that they decreased my family size in order to share with others....They said other individuals are also your brothers and sisters, so let's share and pass this time helping each other. That is why we reduce your family and distribute for others. Then we said OK and gave up. (complainant, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

**In summary, our key findings on citizen action are the following:**

- **The key issues about which citizens have recently raised concerns include: targeting exclusion error; lack of full-family targeting; late payments; and premature graduation. A wide range of other issues were raised and discussed during the ESAP process in 2014-15.**
- **There is a fairly active citizenry in both *woredas*, but the propensity to raise concerns varies, with those citizens who are more educated, aware and confident more likely to raise concerns.**
- **Marginalised citizens, including the poorest and those with disabilities, face both practical and social constraints to voicing their concerns (for example inability to travel to the *kebele* office and lack of confidence in speaking out in front of those who are better-off).**
- **Many do not raise their concerns, or stop before their issue is resolved. The main reasons are: feeling no right to complain, because the transfer is a gift; fear of reprisals from service providers; and expecting no positive response.**

### 3.5 State Response

In this section, we consider whether and how the state has responded to the different issues raised, and why. We start, in sub-section 3.5.1, with an overview of issues raised and resolved/not resolved. In section 3.5.2, we take a closer look at the type of issues that have been resolved and the factors that have facilitated their resolution. Then in sub-section 3.5.3, we examine those that have not been resolved and the constraints to addressing them. Finally, in sub-section 3.5.4, we look at the incentive structure that local officials face and how that influences the extent to which they resolve different issues.

#### 3.5.1 Overview of Issues Resolved/Not Resolved

There are numerous examples of improvements in the service delivered by PSNP and of the resolution of individual concerns. However, as explained in the methodology section above, due to a lack of documentation and high staff turnover, it was often difficult to trace the processes through which these issues had been addressed and to assess the extent to which improvements could be attributed to social accountability processes. This lack of documentation is not only a problem for assessing impact, but also highlights a weakness in the process itself. Due to the fact that the second phase of ESAP ended quite shortly after the PSNP pilot, follow up by the CSO partners of the implementation of the Action Plan was quite weak. Whereas the project offered active support to the

information, civic mobilisation, interface and citizen action elements of the social accountability process, there was only limited follow through regarding state response.

Table 5 represents our best assessment of the issues that have and have not been resolved in each *woreda* and whether or not this resolution can be attributed to social accountability processes.

### 3.5.2 Issues Fully or Partially Resolved

We find that issues that meet the following three criteria have tended to be successfully resolved through social accountability processes.

- i) no budgetary implications
- ii) no competing imperatives
- iii) within local (*kebele* or *woreda*) control

Such issues fall into three main categories: targeting appeals at the time of targeting; abuse by local officials; and other local implementation weaknesses.

Table 5: State Response to Citizen Voice in Kuyu and Shebadino

SA a key driver? Resolved?	Yes	No
<b>Resolved/Partially resolved</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nepotism and local corruption (several specific cases resolved in both Kuyu and Shebadino)</li> <li>• Inappropriate demands on PW participants for additional work (Kuyu)</li> <li>• Response to targeting appeals at the time of targeting</li> <li>• Involvement of pregnant and lactating women in PW, hours of PW, and gender differentials (Kuyu). <i>But only partially attributable to SA: has also seen progressive improvement across the country.</i></li> <li>• Timeliness of PW payments (Shebadino)</li> <li>• Location of payments (Shebadino)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transfer level</li> </ul>
<b>Unresolved</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-family targeting</li> <li>• Targeting exclusion error</li> <li>• Premature graduation (Kuyu)</li> <li>• Timeliness of DS payments</li> <li>• Timeliness of PW payments (Kuyu)</li> <li>• Delays/errors in client cards</li> <li>• Allocation of households without labour capacity to PW</li> <li>• Functionality of KACs</li> </ul>	

### Targeting and Graduation Appeals at the Time of Targeting

Targeting appeals at the time of targeting can result in a readjustment of the targeting list: households that successfully appeal their exclusion are included at the expense of other households identified as being less food insecure. There are no implications for the quota or budget. In both *woredas*, targeting appeals at the time of targeting have resulted in the integration of some households deemed eligible. For example, in Fura *kebele* in Shebadino, seven households were integrated in this way, and four households in Wuye Gose. Similarly, the only time that wrongly graduated households have been re-integrated is during the successive targeting exercise.

*Then after [the targeting] the committee from each sub-kebele came together and saw the status of the targeted people, whether they are poor or not, by naming the targeted people in the community meeting. If there were poor people who are poorer than those already targeted in the meeting, these people were assessed. Those who are the poorest of the poor were selected by excluding those who are a bit better off than them. So, there is an appeal committee that reconsidered the status of the targeted people and confirmed those eligible people and sent it to the responsible body (FGD FHH PW beneficiaries, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

*All together 115 people graduated from the programme and among them 10 beneficiaries were retargeted (FGD FHH PW beneficiaries, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

### Abuse by Kebele Officials

Respondents reported several cases where abuse by *kebele* officials had been identified and addressed. These abuses had come to light through collective mechanisms, such as the ESAP process, apparently due to a greater comfort of citizens in raising such issues in a group setting.

For example, in one of our case study *kebeles* in Shebadino, two households were receiving PSNP public works payments without working. These cases were brought to the attention of the *kebele* and *woreda* food security task forces and the households excluded.

In Kuyu, one previous DA was apparently pocketing the transfers of six households who were listed as beneficiaries, but had never received payments, as well as taking bribes in order not to graduate households. This was discovered through the ESAP process, and the DA was re-located to another *woreda* (though there is no report of any other sanction). Also in Kuyu, public works participants were previously made to do additional unpaid work outside of PSNP public works (such as harvesting of crops for militia and other high-status individuals), as a condition for receiving their public works wages. Hours of work have now been regularised. However, according to some respondents, the *woreda* still demands that PSNP participants do certain non-PSNP work, it is just that now the *kebele* officials respond by reducing people's participation in PSNP works, in order to keep working hours in line with norms.

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

#### Other Local Implementation Weaknesses

Despite the isolated cases of abuse discussed above, for the most part, previous implementation weaknesses seem to have been due to a lack of awareness of programme design, rather than any wrongdoing. The ESAP interface has provided an excellent opportunity for collective discussion of generalised implementation weaknesses and appears to have contributed to the resolution of several issues.

For example, there have reportedly been recent improvement in both *woredas* in the respect of gender-related public works provisions: the switch of pregnant and lactating women to temporary DS, and shorter public works working hours for women. It can be seen from detailed reports of the ESAP process in Kuyu that these issues were discussed during the ESAP interface meetings and included in the joint action plan, though they are not mentioned in the documentation of the Shebadino ESAP process. However, ESAP can better be seen as having contributed to progressive improvement, rather than having brought about dramatic change: though numerous respondents reported improvements following ESAP, some reported that the provisions were already implemented prior to ESAP, and yet others that they are still now not being fully implemented.

*She [a pregnant woman] was made to work before, but it was discussed [during ESAP process] that she should never work from the time her pregnancy becomes visible, as she will be harmed when she holds stones and engages in making soil and water conservation structures (complainant, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

*Yes, but in the past also pregnant women were free from involvement in public works until they gave birth. Since I became a beneficiary I did not see pregnant women involved in public works (temporary DS beneficiary, Birriti, Kuyu).*

*Both males and females participate on public work equally... The time is the same for males and females. We start and finish at the same time together (PWD PW participant Fura).*

There are also some reported improvements in the timeliness of payments for public works beneficiaries in Shebadino, as a response to concerns raised through ESAP, though not for direct support beneficiaries in Shebadino, nor for either DS or public works beneficiaries in Kuyu. Furthermore, in Shebadino *woreda* some new PSNP payment sites have been established, in response to the issue raised by citizens that sites were too distant from certain homes.

On the other hand, we did find that several programme improvements thought by local stakeholders to have been a result of the ESAP process (probably because they took place

just after it) are probably not attributable to ESAP. Most notably, the increase in the public works wage rate was a key improvement cited by respondents and attributed by many to ESAP. But this was a federal decision, based on a wage-rate study, and we found no evidence that ESAP played a role in this. This suggests that there would be value in improving the monitoring of the implementation of the joint action plan, tracking who does what exactly and with what result, in order to build a stronger evidence base for impacts.

### Unresolved Issues

As set out in Table 5 above, whilst the appeals process during targeting and the ESAP pilot do appear to have contributed to improvements in service delivery, many issues remain unresolved. These can be characterised as the direct converse of those that were resolved in that they are issues:

- i) with budgetary implications; or
- ii) with competing imperatives; or
- iii) outside local control.

### Issues with Budgetary Implications

Quotas dominated discussions about why certain priority concerns of citizens had not been addressed. Each *kebele* has an allocated quota of individuals that can be supported through PSNP. Upholding targeting appeals outside of the targeting period or complaints about premature graduation both imply adding households into the programme (or back into the programme in the case of graduated households). Unless others are simultaneously removed, upholding complaints on either of these issues will result in the *kebele* surpassing its allocated quota (and budget).

This was the primary reason given to us by *woreda* and *kebele* officials, as well as beneficiaries, as to why most of these concerns remain unresolved.

*Interviewer: Did other graduates keep quiet? Didn't they raise a complaint?*

*Respondent: Yes, they appealed to get a chance to be retargeted, but the committee told them that there was no **quota** (PW beneficiary, Fura, Shebadino).*

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

*Of course, non-beneficiaries repeatedly ask us to join the safety net programme, comparing some of the beneficiaries who have better assets than them. I respond*

*to them to wait until more **quota** is given for the kebele (Kebele Cabinet, Ramada, Shebadino).*

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

Whilst, according to the Programme Implementation Manual, one of the three sanctioned uses of the *woreda* five per cent contingency budget is to fund successful targeting appeals<sup>13</sup>, in none of the visited *kebeles* is it currently being used in this way. Indeed, no-one we spoke to, except the Technical Assistant in Kuyu *woreda*, was aware that the contingency budget could be so used (it was understood as being only for disaster response); at *kebele* level no-one was even aware of the existence of a contingency budget and *woreda* officials confirmed that *kebeles* were not informed about it.

*We do not know about the availability of a contingency budget for this. What we know about contingency budget is for food aid in case of emergency/risk but we don't know whether we can use this budget for PSNP cash transfers (DA, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

This means that, in practice, targeting exclusion and full-family targeting appeals are addressed to only a very limited extent, contingent on space opening up within the quota when individuals die or households move away from the area.

*In Fura we re-targeted five people replacing dead people and those who left the village (Woreda Agricultural Office official, Shebadino).*

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

And, even when an appeal is upheld as being in line with programme rules, the implementation of that decision is understood as being contingent on there being space within the quota, rather than as an entitlement.

*Respondent: A woman raised an appeal about the targeting procedure to the KAC and woreda office. Finally, the woreda office sent the complaint back to the KAC. Then the kebele office discussed in detail about the targeting committee and told them not to make such kinds of mistakes in future while targeting people. Poor people should get priority during targeting time.*

*Interviewer: Did the committee integrate her?*

*Respondent: No, they promised to target her when the quota is given for the kebele (ESAP FG participants, Ramada, Shebadino).*

*In order to uphold more complaints there is no more quotas for our kebele people. We keep all complaints with us and uphold when we get more access to target people. He is not the only complainant; there are many people who have appealed*

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<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Productive Safety Net Programme Phase 4 Programme Implementation Manual, June 2016, Chapter 11.

*complaints and are waiting for the next targeting process. (KAC members Fura, Shebadino)*

Faced with this situation, some beneficiaries understand that to get to the front of the queue they need to actively lobby at woreda level, or even in a few cases to bribe local officials.

*As to my household we tried lots of time, we were complaining so many times. Even once I gave him 100 birr and he said he will target one more of my household members but he did nothing. He used this 100 birr for drink (beneficiary, Kuyu woreda).*

The role of the *kebele* committees is limited to prioritising which households will be added or more fully covered when such space opens up. However, even here their authority is limited, with *woreda* authorities sometimes intervening to make recommendations. For example, in Ramada Kebele, Shebadino only two targeting appeals had been upheld (outside of the targeting process) and these were both households that had appealed directly to the *woreda* for inclusion. The *woreda* wrote to the *kebele* requesting them to investigate the cases.

In addition to quotas determining whether or not those people whose appeals are upheld are integrated in the programme, occasionally beneficiaries are incorrectly allocated to DS or public works, reportedly because of quotas. In one case, a very elderly man had been allocated to public works and went along every day to watch others working, even though he was incapable or working himself - because the DS quota was full. In another case, *woreda* officials allocated households to DS with this explanation.

*We will do re-targeting and here they may be moved to public works, but at the time there was only a quota for extra people in the Direct Support, and therefore they were added to that list. So for next year...they will be moved to public works, but for the time being they are on direct support. (Woreda official, Shebadino).*

### Issues with Competing Imperatives

In the context of a fixed quota of individuals who can be covered by the PSNP, local authorities face a choice as to whether to implement full-family targeting for a smaller number of households, or to spread resources more thinly, by covering only a proportion of household members of a larger number of households. In the *kebeles* we visited, perceiving that there were far more food insecure households than could be fully covered by the quota, they all chose to do the latter.

*Yes, in this new phase, people complain as their full family members are not integrated. People with three family members are included with two; those who have four family members are benefited only with husband and one child (ESAP FG participants, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

*I have eight family members but I benefit for three family members...they are all living with me (Complainant Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

*In the first round, we followed the guidelines and did only four or five from each family, but then we were told to add families to the programme... There were two rounds of selection in the programme... it was due to this that the support in some families went from full-family targeting to only supporting one or two of the members. (kebele official, Fura, Shebadino).*

*For example, I have nine family members, but only three of them are targeted... We appealed to the kebele office and DA. They answered that it was a decision made by the woreda office, so they can't do anything about it. Then we stopped raising this issue again (male PW beneficiary, Ramada, Shebadino).*

Again, the main reason given for not implementing full-family targeting or addressing beneficiary complaints about it is the quota.

*The kebele said we can correct it if they [the woreda] order it to be corrected. But [the woreda official] again said the **quota** is full now and your list was also approved from Oromia and returned to us, thus, hereafter it is impossible. Thus I get approval with three family members and paid for them (Complainant with eight family members, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

*They file their complaints to the chairperson and the committee of the kebele. But, the committee cannot uphold their grievances because the **quota** given for targeting people is fixed. It is not possible even to add one beneficiary to the **quota** given for a kebele (ESAP FG participants, Ramada, Shebadino)*

An additional reason given to DS households in one *kebele* for the lack of full-family targeting is that they do not work for their transfers; and some longstanding beneficiaries have also faced the argument that it is not fair for their transfers to continue at such a high level for so long.

*The office argued not to target more than two from a DS family household because DS beneficiaries get payment directly without participating in work (PWD DS beneficiary, Ramada, Shebadino).*

*We requested the woreda office about large family size of direct support beneficiaries. Their response was, these direct supports don't participate in public works. They simply ordered us to target two household members for direct support beneficiary households. Since we don't have more power we did what they told us to do (Kebele Cabinet, Ramada, Shebadino).*

*When I asked them repeatedly [why all my family members were not targeted] they answered me as I get the support for a long time without being excluded from it. That is why they don't want to target more beneficiaries from my household (DS beneficiary, Ramada, Shebadino).*

In Kuyu, *Kebele* officials report instigating reduced levels of transfers, feeling under pressure from communities to target more households in the context of quotas inadequate to cover all the needy. *Woreda* officials give tacit approval to this. On the other hand, in Shebadino, it is reportedly the *woreda* office that ordered the *kebele* to reduce transfer levels.

*This results in complaints from the community because of the presence of too many people who are in need of support which causes too many appeals...Thus, this results in conflict between us and individuals.... While you are working, you will be forced to select between two similar individual things, like that of two fingers. You take one finger and you let down the other one.... this newly given quota created conflict between us and the people. It is because if there are one hundred needy individuals and you select only ten among them, they hate you (Kebele Chair, Birriti, Kuyu).*

*Who targeted these three family members per household is the kebele task force in coordination with the community. For example, if a household has 10 members they target few of the household members, about three, so as to include more beneficiaries since there are lots of poor people. So, to include more beneficiaries they reduced the number of members targeted per household. We tried to interfere but what the Kebele Task Force wants is to include more beneficiaries, rather than targeting more members per household.... We did not take any action. This is because, once the kebele has already done the targeting all selected people are participating in the public works and the payment is prepared. We cannot change...So, as we do not have a budget, we did nothing for those who appealed (Woreda officials, Kuyu)*

*Respondent: For the second round targeting, only three family members were targeted even if they have more family members. What I mean is that only three family members were targeted for the family who do have eight or ten family members.*

*Interviewer: Why did you do that?*

*Respondent: It is the direction given us by the agriculture office of our woreda. (Kebele Cabinet, Fura, Shebadino).*

## Other Issues Outside of Local Control

There are a range of other concerns of beneficiaries that are beyond the capacity of local officials to resolve. These concern timeliness of payments, the (re)issuing of client cards and graduation.

### *Timeliness of Payments*

Despite claims from ESAP participants and SAC committees that ESAP has led to improvements in the timeliness of payments, we found this to be the case only for public works participants in Shebadino. In both *woredas*, the timeliness of DS payments seems to have actually deteriorated.

*No, we don't get the payment every month. We have many problems. We can't farm our land and so on. The officials pay us once every four months. Things are getting bad for us from time to time. Since last year, we have collected the payment twice. It is paid only three times per year (PWD, DS beneficiary, Ramada, Shebadino).*

*We are not happy. We don't want to collect the payment every four months, but every month (PwD, DS beneficiary, Ramada, Shebadino).*

*They used to pay us every month when I joined the programme, but now they are paying us the instalment once every four months (PwD DS beneficiary, Fura, Shebadino).*

*According to our agreement at woreda, the payment should be paid monthly, but now they are paid a lump sum for four months (Kebele Chair, Birriti, Kuyu).*

*This year they said it is monthly payment and we received only 615 birr twice and we did not receive any other payment. Even people asked them why last year the payment was given properly and this year why it is delayed (temporary DS beneficiary, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

This is not due to a deterioration in the work of local officials, but to factors beyond their control and determined at regional or federal levels. In Kuyu, some beneficiaries attribute the worsening of payment timeliness to the e-payments pilot.

*Basically, Oromia credit and saving association is engaged in the provision of credit for profit. Thus no one is concerned about our payment... Previously, we received our payment from woreda finance without any problem, but now we get our payment with difficulty from the association. So is this improvement? They introduced the payment secret card and promised us our payment will be paid immediately without any problem, but we do not see the use of this card...Last time the payment was delayed and we got it after we already had received too much credit from individuals. Thus we used the money to pay our debt (male complainant, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

However, this pilot is not running in Shebadino. There, *kebele* officials seem unclear why they have started to receive lumpy transfers, some understanding this to be a newly agreed payment schedule for DS clients and arguing that it is unproblematic; though *woreda* officials explain that it is because they receive the money from the region only every four months, so simply pay it out in lump sums.

*Let me tell you why this has made them [DS clients] happy... Since they collect every three months, they have enough money to live (DA, Fura, Shebadino).*

*Well as you may know, the money is only transferred to us from the Region every four months...So, when we only received the funds every four months, then that is how we have also been paying the support (Woreda official, Shebadino).*

#### *Client Cards*

There is a challenge with respect to timely provision of client cards in Kuyu *woreda*, due to either spelling errors in names on cards, new households being added, or clients losing their cards. These issues are outside local control, as the cards are printed and sent from the region. Representations made upwards to these levels appear to have had little influence on the speed of response to citizen complaints.

*We report to the zone to request the card and then it is the zone that sends us this card. In this regard the challenge is that we did not receive the cards we requested*

*rapidly... We requested on January 1<sup>st</sup>, but still we did not receive (woreda official, Kuyu).*

#### *Graduation*

There is a consensus in both *woredas* that many people were inappropriately graduated from the PSNP, despite not meeting the criteria. Addressing these concerns is beyond the control of *kebele* and *woreda* officials for several reasons.

Firstly, the same quota issue that prevents them from acting on legitimate complaints about exclusion errors or lack of full-family targeting also constrains their response to complaints about premature graduation. Any re-integration risks surpassing the quota, unless done as part of periodic re-targeting. But, due to the overall pressures on the quota, only small numbers of households were re-integrated in the subsequent targeting round. For example, in Ramada *kebele* in Shebadino, 10 of the previously 115 graduated household were re-integrated, and in Birriti *kebele* in Kuyu only 1 household was re-targeted in this way.

*Those who graduated before appealed to us... Yes, they appealed to us and said that 'we have not changed, we have no chicken, we have nothing and our life is hand-to-mouth, why you remain silent about us?'... But we aren't given enough quota to solve their problem. So we said to them what shall we do as we are not given enough quota to solve your complaint (Kebele Chair, Birriti, Kuyu).*

Secondly, apart from the overall budget quota, there were additional pressures on local officials to graduate households. Local officials understood that they had to meet a graduation quota, whether or not they had enough households meeting the criteria. One *kebele* was told that they should graduate 85 per cent of beneficiaries. *Kebele* officials protested that there were not sufficient households that met the criteria. However, this argument was rejected and punitive measures taken against officials who did not follow the instructions,

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

Thirdly, under this pressure, some *kebele* officials responded by graduating households that were seen to complain too much.

Interviewer: *Who is deciding about graduation?*

Respondent: *The Woreda is deciding, they tell us to graduate the people, but there are also people who are graduating based on Kebele leaders' decisions. And it is also a question about the quota. Meaning that the Woreda tell us to graduate this many people from the program. We here at the Kebele level chose the people who fulfil the criteria and then also those who are less cooperative. (kebele official)*

*The community says that if they are not good... they are made to graduate. They relate their right of speaking to graduation (SAIP).*

That those who complained too much were graduated was admitted in the ESAP interface meeting in Kuyu *woreda*, as discussed in section 3.5 above. However, whilst the report of the ESAP PSNP pilot presented this openness in an entirely positive light, based on the

understanding that the specific household mentioned as graduated in this way was subsequently re-integrated, our enquiries found that the household was not after all re-integrated. Neither were any sanctions applied to officials involved in the case. This puts the admission that households were forced to graduate because they complained too much in a rather different light: it could be understood by other households as a warning to keep quiet.

### 3.5.4 State Incentives

Some rather interesting issues emerge about the constraints and incentives facing local officials in responding to citizen voice. Firstly, it seems that the kinds of things that managers are prioritising in assessing job performance are punctuality and achievement against the pre-determined plan. Responsiveness to citizen voice does not yet seem to figure within the performance assessment framework.

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

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

*In 2015, one DA made one PSNP beneficiary show a house with a floor made from cement and a modern milking cow of other people so as to show as if his living condition has improved. I know this beneficiary. The house and the cow he showed belong to someone else... In another area also one beneficiary pretended he bought many sheep... the sheep belonged to someone else and the person took the sheep to care for and to share the new born with the owner, what is locally known as ribbii. It was the DA who made such beneficiaries to say so for his own advantage, so as to be promoted as if he did good work to improve the living condition of PSNP beneficiaries. (ESAP FG participants, Kuyu).*

Secondly, some *kebele* officials mentioned specific disincentives to raising citizen concerns up the state hierarchy. The starkest example was that given above where salaries were suspended until graduation quotas were met. This withholding of salary took place in a context where *kebele* officials were trying to feed citizen concerns upwards, as demonstrated in the quote below.

*Interviewer: Did you agree with the idea of graduating 85 per cent of beneficiaries?*

*Respondent: I did not agree with that idea.*

*Interviewer: Did you appeal to the woreda by arguing this is not correct?*

*Respondent: I appealed to the woreda vice administrator...(kebele official)*

More generally, raising citizens upwards does not seem to be positively viewed, according to this comment from a different *kebele* official.

*Interviewer: When people raise concerns about the things you were mentioning, such as delay of payment, why they have to do other work etc., how do you tell these complaints to the woreda officials? Is this through a formal letter or...?*

Respondent: *As a DA if I complain a lot they may assign me to another area.*

**So, in summary, in relation to *state response*, our key findings are the following:**

- **Issues that have been successfully resolved through social accountability mechanisms have tended to be those without budgetary implications or competing imperatives and that are within local (*kebele* or *woreda*) control. These have included: targeting errors at the time of targeting; abuses of power at the *kebele* level; and operational gaps due to lack of detailed knowledge of programme design (such as lack of implementation of the gendered public works provisions).**
- **Conversely, the problem of full-family targeting appears to have worsened recently. In the context of a limited quota and community pressures, local officials are choosing to spread resources more thinly, in order to cover a larger number of households.**
- **More generally, issues that have implications for the budget/quota or that require action at higher levels of the state (zone/regional/federal) have not been resolved. These include exclusion error (outside of the targeting process), timeliness of payments, issuing of client cards, and premature graduation.**
- **These issues do not reach higher levels of the state directly from citizens, as social accountability mechanisms do not establish interfaces above *kebele* level; and *kebele* officials face disincentives against channelling citizen concerns up the hierarchy.**

## Chapter 4: Research Questions

In this section we relate our case study findings back to three of our global research questions.

### 4.1 Research Question 1

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

In Ethiopia, the stated objectives of the various social accountability mechanisms in place in the PSNP are as follows. Firstly, regarding the ESAP2 pilot,

*the overall objective of the Ethiopia Social Accountability Program (ESAP2) is to strengthen the capacities of citizen groups and government to work together in order to enhance the quality of basic public services delivered to citizens (ESAP2 website<sup>14</sup>).*

This suggests strengthening of citizen and Government capacities to be an intermediate objective necessary to achieve the intended service delivery impacts. In our key informant interview, Government officials of MoFEC (the lead Ministry for social accountability) reiterated this dual focus, though with a more even balance between the focus on service delivery impacts and shifts in state-citizen relationships.

The PSNP grievance mechanism, the KAC, similarly has a mix of service delivery and citizen empowerment objectives,

*The KACs aim to ensure effective appeal handling, grievance hearing and timely decision-making. This is believed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme, ensures the democratic rights of the beneficiaries and to control any potential mal-practice that might arise during the selection of clients and implementation of the programme<sup>15</sup>.*

In terms of the level at which these service delivery improvements and shift in relations are intended to occur, the primary focus is clearly on the local level (*kebele* and to some extent *woreda*). Social accountability mechanisms, in the context of limited resources for top-down monitoring of frontline workers, provide a useful tool to ensure that these workers are implementing programmes in line with agreed standards and are not abusing their local power. No stakeholders suggested that social accountability mechanisms were intended to address policy or delivery gaps at federal or regional levels of Government; even though, as we saw in the last section, some of the primary concerns of citizens about the PSNP do relate to decisions and actions taken at these levels.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://esap2.org.et/about-us/objectives/>

<sup>15</sup> A Manual for PSNP IV Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) *Kebele* Appeal Committee (KAC), January 2016, draft 5.

## 4.2 Research Question 2

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

#### Impacts on State-Citizen Relations

Citizens in both Kuyu and Shebadino *woredas* who participated in the ESAP process both cited impacts on state-citizen relations. This appears to have played out slightly differently in each *woreda*.

In Kuyu, a *woreda* with a recent history of violent clashes between citizens and state, improvements were expressed almost entirely in terms of citizens knowing their rights and being more confident and assertive in making demands on the state.

*The main outcome is that community members have started asking for their rights (SAIP, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

*After the discussion of social accountability, the relationship between people and government is strongly improved. Previously, we didn't go to government office to ask for our rights, but now we visit them to get our problems solved (SAC member, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

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

*Before we had this training [ESAP] we did not speak in front of men in the meeting but after the training with HUNDEE we speak confidently...after the discussion we had with HUNDEE, we clearly understand that we have to speak. (ESAP FG participants, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

A few respondents identify positive changes in the attitude of service providers.

*Since the Kebele Chair got training about social accountability, when we ask him why he did not do something, he accepts his mistake and says sorry and promises to improve it (ESAP FG participants, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

*As local officials also got lessons from ESAP they are aware that they are responsible for their actions. So, for the concerns raised if he/she can, he/she responds. Otherwise, if it is above their capacity, they will report to responsible higher bodies (FGD with FHH PW participants, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

However, there is also mention of resistance of providers to the more active citizenry.

*The officials make a meeting secretly in order to avoid people who criticise them and struggle for their rights. They only communicate the meeting date for their*

*contacts and screen people out. We are informed after everything is completed (ESAP FG participants, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

*...as she said they do not give us a chance to speak when we raise our hands in the meeting. They communicate in their eyes and do not give a chance to that person who criticises. Even those who came from the woreda do the same. But it is somehow improving (ESAP FG participants, Wuye Gose, Kuyu).*

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

In Shebadino, with no recent experience of violent clashes, citizens and local officials also describe changes in the confidence of citizens.

*Currently all beneficiaries have confidence to raise complaints to the Kebele Manager, as well as to the Kebele Cabinet. They got this confidence after attending training given by ESAP (Kebele Cabinet, Fura, Shebadino).*

*Well, it is mainly a change of attitude and understanding. The people who used to be afraid, who did not know their rights or were unaware of the obligation to evaluate services, all these things they now know and are aware of. Like I said earlier regarding the farmers, they now know how to approach the Agricultural Professionals/officials and get help as they need it. (SAC Chairman Shebadino Woreda).*

*So, it has helped us a lot that people now know their rights (FSCP owner woreda).*

But here there is more talk of positive changes in the behaviour of service providers towards citizens.

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

*The Development Office workers used to just come to the Kebele centre and meet there with the beneficiaries, but after we together with the farmers raised the issues of this not being good enough, the Development workers are now visiting and giving advice on the spot. They have even come to the point of giving their phone numbers to the beneficiaries, so that communication has become even easier. The same with the vets. If cattle fell sick during the night there was no means for the farmers to get the help they needed. But now the farmers have their phones number too and can call them any time they are in need of assistance (SAC Woreda Chairman, Shebadino Woreda).*

#### 4.2.2 Impacts on Service Delivery

Impacts on service delivery were covered in section 3.5 above. In summary, social accountability processes, including targeting appeals at the time of targeting and the ESAP pilot, appear to have had some positive effects in terms of aligning local service delivery with established procedures and standards and curbing abuses by local officials. As such they have: contributed to implementation of gendered public works provisions; curbed demands for additional unpaid work from beneficiaries; enabled integration of a small number of excluded or prematurely graduated households at the time of targeting; and in a few cases improved the payment experience. They have achieved this largely through raising awareness of all stakeholders of PSNP standards and by providing unique local interfaces for engagement between citizens and service providers.

On the other hand, impacts on service delivery have been limited to issues: i) that have no implications for the budget; ii) against which there are no competing imperatives; and iii) that are firmly within local control.

Key outstanding issues include: exclusion error in targeting, related to under-coverage (a quota and budgetary issue); lack of full-family targeting (partly a quota issue, but also one of competing local imperatives and pressures to spread resources between a greater number of households); timeliness of payments; slow delivery of client cards; and previous premature graduation. These have not been impacted to date by social accountability processes; and, given that in most cases their resolution requires action at higher levels of the state, seem unlikely to be so in future, as long as social accountability processes remain bounded at the local level.

#### 4.2.3 Marginalised Groups

Some of the PSNP service delivery changes to which the ESAP process contributed were collective improvements – such as the curbing of abuses by local officials and increased respect of gendered provisions of public works. These can be expected to have benefited large groups beneficiaries in the locality, including the most marginalised.

On the other hand, PSNP transfers are essentially an individualised service, benefiting specific households. In the context of a limited quota for a *kebele*, households are in competition with each other for access to limited resources. In relation to issues of household selection and full-family targeting, in the absence of any use of the *woreda* contingency budget or of any advocacy up the hierarchy to increase the quota, citizens are in a zero-sum game: inclusion or full-family targeting for one household means exclusion or lack of full-family targeting for another.

In this context, it cannot be assumed that strengthening the capacities of a limited number of citizen representatives to engage with service providers around PSNP will necessarily benefit the poorest and most marginalised. The citizens who receive training might use their newly-found skills to advocate in the interests of their marginalized neighbours, but they might equally use them in their own interests, especially if many are themselves poor.

Indeed, many of the ESAP focus group participants with whom we spoke had themselves raised appeals and complaints regarding the inclusion in PSNP of their own household. Given this, the huge disparities between beneficiaries in access to information and awareness of PSNP provisions and of how and where to complain are of concern, and particularly worrying are the often very low awareness of DS beneficiaries and of people with disabilities.

The effects of ESAP on these disparities are unclear. On the one hand, the ESAP included some training around disability rights, which according to participants increased their awareness of these issues; and ESAP focus group participants were selected according to categorical criteria, which, in Shebadino, included disability status. We spoke to one very vocal person with a disability who participated in the ESAP focus group discussions. On the other hand, estimates suggest that at most 10 per cent of PSNP beneficiaries participated in ESAP focus groups and the associated training on the PSNP service charter; these participants were chosen by communities on the basis of their capacity to represent them, meaning that they were unlikely to have been amongst the least well-informed and least confident to begin with. We found no evidence of spillover effects in terms of information about the programme or awareness of entitlements to citizens who did not directly participate.

In a context where there is competition amongst local citizens over access to a limited PSNP quota, there would seem to be limitations in the extent to which an approach that relies on training and empowering a small number of citizen representatives can be expected to benefit the most marginalised citizens.

### 4.3 Research Question 3

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

We can identify some of the programmatic and contextual features that have both supported and constrained the operation of social accountability in social protection in the localities we studied. In sub-section 4.3.1 we look at PSNP design; and in sub-section 4.3.2 at the political economy context.

#### 4.3.1 PSNP Design and Social Accountability

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

Two key characteristics of PSNP design – complexity and a high degree of decentralisation in delivery – create some challenges for social accountability, even if they bring other benefits. The quota system means that citizens are in competition with each other over

access to the programme, entailing risks for any approach relying on citizen representatives.

### *Targeting*

As discussed above, citizens do not feel that if they meet the eligibility criteria they have an entitlement to PSNP transfers. Rather, access to transfers is perceived as contingent on the quota or good luck; or, in the words of many beneficiaries, transfers are 'a gift from God'.

The combination of geographical and community-based poverty targeting results in the Ethiopian highlands in very pro-poor targeting outcomes. But it does not produce clear and simple rules of eligibility: selection into the programme is a highly complex process and citizens perceive it to be highly discretionary. Whilst there are other arguments in favour of the PSNP's targeting approach, it does seem to militate against a sense of entitlement to transfers. Given that the lack of entitlement is cited by many beneficiaries as the main reason that they would not raise a complaint, this presents challenges to the promotion of social accountability.

Targeting design also has implications for which types of social accountability approach are most likely to work. Relating back to a key distinction highlighted in our literature review<sup>16</sup>, PSNP targeting is clearly an example of a 'thick' (complex) activity. Accountability for 'thick' activities, it is argued, are not amenable to simple rules-based solutions, but require the development of norms and incentives that enable creative solutions to be found. Indeed, this kind of flexible approach seems to work well at the time of targeting, when community conversations enable adjustment of the targeting list to respond to immediate appeals. At this time, the KAC seems to operate more like a collective mechanism than a classic rules-based GRM. After the opportunity for community conversation has passed, the rules-based KAC set-up seems poorly adapted to respond to the thick accountability challenge of targeting.

### *Level of Transfers*

Similarly to targeting, the calculation of the level of transfer is more complex in the PSNP than in many social protection programmes in low-income countries. Not only direct support, but also public works transfer levels vary by household size. To add to the complexity, a cap of five members has recently been placed on the payment level. Some of our respondents did not perceive a difference between a seven-member household receiving transfers for five members (in line with programme rules), and a five-member household receiving transfers for three members (in contradiction to programme rules).

The complexity of the rules around transfer levels seem to contribute to a perception on the part of some beneficiaries that transfer levels are discretionary: that local officials can vary them as they see fit. Again, these perceptions seem to create challenges for social accountability. Arguably, local officials are finding the kind of 'creative solutions' required for 'thick accountability' – by reducing the level of transfers below the full-family targeting level they enable more households to be included in the programme. However, this is probably at the expense of social protection impacts, given that the adequacy of transfers

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<sup>16</sup> Ayliffe, T., Aslam, G. and Schjoedt R., 2017, *Social Accountability in the Delivery of Social Protection, Development Pathways*.

is important to impact. In other words, the incentive structures that local officials face and that guide their creative decision-making are producing sub-optimal outcomes.

#### *Quotas*

As argued above, fixed quotas in a context of widespread food insecurity mean that households are essentially in competition with each other for access to the scarce resources of the PSNP. In this context, there might be risks in approaches that rely heavily on community representatives/intermediaries to demand accountability on behalf of others, as the representatives cannot be assumed to be disinterested parties. A slightly different type of collective approach that relies less on representatives and puts more emphasis on empowering all the marginalised might perhaps be better adapted to the PSNP programme design.

#### *Contingency Budget*

It should be noted that the provision of a contingency budget at *woreda* level to respond to successful appeals is in this context critical for social accountability processes to have any real effect on addressing exclusion error or lack of full-family targeting. Its existence should have mitigated some of the challenges set out above. The heavy demands on this budget in the current year due to the drought may partially explain why it had not yet been used for this purpose in the *woredas* visited. However, if it is to be used to respond to successful appeals in future, there will be a need for awareness-raising of local officials that this is one of its permitted uses.

### 4.3.2 Political Economy Context

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

As highlighted in section 1 above, there is a strong focus in Ethiopia on reaching service delivery targets, and a challenge of monitoring local service delivery in a highly decentralised and resource constrained context. Our case study suggests that this dimension of the political economy context both promotes and constrains social accountability. It promotes social accountability, in that *woreda* (and to some extent higher level) officials are very interested in feedback from citizens on the performance of local officials and, in particular, in any examples of abuse of power, and are motivated to address them. We have highlighted many examples of action being taken to address identified delivery gaps and abuse.

On the other hand, it also limits the influence of citizen voice when this contradicts centrally driven targets. For example, in relation to graduation, social accountability processes were unable to push back against centrally defined quotas, even when these were out of line with *kebele* officials' perceptions of living conditions in their localities. *Kebele* officials simply had their salaries suspended when they tried to elevate citizen voices to the *woreda* level.

Whilst premature graduation is a historic issue, there are many current issues that also require resolution at regional or federal levels; existing social accountability mechanisms, remaining locally bounded, are having no influence on the resolution of these. Social accountability interfaces are very active at *kebele* level, moderately so at the *woreda*, but almost non-existent at higher levels; and current incentive structures facing local officials mean that they expect to be punished, rather than rewarded, for being too vocal in raising citizen concerns internally up the state hierarchy.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

We conclude that in the two localities studied, **social accountability processes around the PSNP have contributed to some improvements in both service delivery and state-citizen relations**. The main mechanisms through which they have done this are by: raising citizen awareness and confidence; promoting direct dialogue between citizens and *kebele* officials (the lowest level of the administrative structure); and enabling citizens to bring local implementation issues to the attention of *woreda* officials<sup>17</sup>. This last mechanism has been effective because of the political economy context in Ethiopia, with its strong focus on service delivery: *woreda* officials are highly motivated to ensure that *kebele* officials address any identified implementation gaps.

The service delivery issues that have been successfully addressed in this way include: implementation weaknesses linked to a lack of local knowledge of programme rules (such as inadequate implementation of gendered public works provisions); local abuses of power (request for bribes, demanding public works participants to carry out additional unpaid work on private land, and theft of transfers); and exclusion errors in targeting (but only those that become apparent whilst the selection process is still ongoing). The ESAP2 programme has been important in addressing the first two sets of issues. Local PSNP committees, including the *Kebele* Appeals Committees (KACs) where functional, have been key to addressing targeting exclusion error.

On the other hand, we identified several limitations to these impacts. Firstly, **processes and impacts are 'locally-bounded'**; secondly, **they appear to have benefited the most marginalised PSNP beneficiaries less than others**; and thirdly, **certain design feature of the PSNP programme itself create challenges for social accountability**.

Both the ESAP and targeting appeals processes are examples of 'locally-bounded voice' (Fox 2007). Their main influence has been on the behaviour of *kebele* level service providers, rather than officials at any higher levels within the state machinery. This is due to both the design of the social accountability mechanisms and to the political economy context. ESAP does not (and was not set up to) impact on higher levels of the state machinery where many of the key decisions are made; ESAP establishes active service user/service provider interfaces at *kebele* and to a lesser extent *woreda* levels, but not at higher levels. As for the influence of the political economy context, local officials face strong disincentives against articulating citizen concerns up within the state hierarchy. As a

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<sup>17</sup> *Woreda* is the level above the *kebele*. There are five levels of the Ethiopia state: federal, regional, zone, *woreda* and *kebele*.

result of the locally-bounded nature of the current social accountability processes, these have not succeeded in addressing issues that have budgetary implications or that require action at a higher level. These unresolved issues include some that are of key concern to citizens such as: lack of full-family targeting; timeliness of payments; slow delivery of client cards; premature graduation; and targeting exclusion error (outside the targeting process).

Addressing these through social accountability would require a more strategic multi-level approach, which might involve: active state-citizen engagement at multiple levels within the state hierarchy; or shifting the incentive structure, such that local officials are rewarded for channelling citizen voice internally up the state hierarchy and higher level officials for responding; or, at least, and perhaps more realistically in the Ethiopian context, more active linkages between social accountability mechanisms at the local level and the existing top-down monitoring and accountability mechanisms within the PSNP.

As for impacts on the most marginalised citizens, whilst some citizens are remarkably well informed about the PSNP, partly due to ESAP, there are glaring disparities in information, awareness, sense of entitlement and propensity to voice concerns between different PSNP beneficiary households. People with disabilities and direct support beneficiaries are generally much less aware of programme provisions and of their rights than others and report lower levels of citizen action. We noted that involvement in some key stages of the ESAP process, at which citizens learn about entitlements and debate and prioritise their concerns, are limited to small groups of selected representatives. Despite efforts to ensure inclusivity of this group of representatives and to encourage them to share their learning with others, our research suggests that, in the localities studied, the approach had done little to overcome the disparities between PSNP beneficiaries, in terms of awareness and engagement. This is potentially problematic, because in a context of perceived fluidity of targeting criteria, quotas and widespread poverty, citizens at local level are essentially in competition with each other for access to the programme, in a zero-sum game. Citizens' representatives trained and mobilised under ESAP might act in the interests of the most marginalised citizens, but they might equally act in the interests of their own families: some of the representatives we met had themselves raised appeals around their inclusion in the PSNP.

This suggests that, in future, social accountability implementing partners might want to be more cautious about a heavy reliance on intermediaries; and give more focused attention to building awareness of the most marginalised and supporting them to voice their priorities. This might mean directly organising training sessions with these groups; and/or monitoring the extent to which representatives share their learning and skills with the most marginalised and holding them to account for this.

We also noted that certain aspects of PSNP design create challenges for social accountability, because they militate against a clear sense of entitlement to PSNP transfers on the part of citizens. Quotas dominate the discourse at local level and, in a context where need is seen as outstripping the quota, access to the programme is perceived not as an entitlement, but as 'a gift from God'. Furthermore, pressures on *kebele* representatives and officials mean that they often reduce transfer levels below those specified in the programme rules (non-implementation of full-family targeting), in order to include more

households in the PSNP. As a result, not only access to the programme, but also how much one receives if one is lucky enough to access it, are both perceived as highly discretionary: local officials are perceived as having the power to remove people from the programme and to increase/reduce their transfer levels at will. This has profound implications for social accountability, because the lack of a sense of entitlement and fear of being removed from the programme are reported as the top two constraints to citizen action. At this stage in such a mature programme, we are clearly not recommending radical redesign, but the extent to which programme design features will be easily comprehensible to beneficiaries might usefully be taken into consideration whenever modifications to programme design are proposed in future.

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