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PASGR Working Paper 002

The Political Economy of Social Protection Policy Uptake in Nigeria

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October, 2015

This report was produced in the context of a multi-country study on the 'Political Economy Analysis of Social Protection Policy Uptake in Africa', generously supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) through the Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR). The views herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those held by PASGR or DFID.

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Suggested citation:

Aiyede, E., Sha, P., Haruna, B., Olutayo, A., Ogunkola, E. and Best, E. (2015) *The Political Economy of Social Protection Policy Uptake in Nigeria.* Partnership for African Social and Governance Research Working Paper No. 002, Nairobi, Kenya

Nairobi, Kenya
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www.pasgr.org

ISBN 978-9966-087-01-0

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Abbreviations

AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
APC	All Progressives Congress
AU	African Union
AU-SPF	African Union Social Policy Framework
CBHIS	community-based health insurance scheme
CCT	conditional cash transfer
COPE	In Care of the People
DFID	Department for International Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ILO	International Labour Organization
LEEDS	Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
LGA	local government area
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
N	naira (unit of Nigerian currency)
NAPEP	National Poverty Eradication Programme
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NEEDS	National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
NLC	Nigeria Labour Congress
NPC	National Planning Commission
NSITF	Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OSSAP-MDGs	Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Millennium Development Goals
PDP	People's Democratic Party
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SEEDS	State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
SURE-P	Subsidy Re-investment Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USD	United States dollar
WHO	World Health Organization

Abstract
None of the recent efforts to study social protection in Nigeria have provided a detailed description of the political economy factors that enhance and prevent the uptake of social protection policies. This study used qualitative and quantitative strategies within a political economy framework to explore the emergence and trajectory of these policies. Primary data were derived from field interviews and a survey of beneficiaries in six states selected from the six geopolitical zones in the country.

There is no overarching policy on social protection in Nigeria currently. There are pilot programmes led by the federal government and other programmes implemented in an ad hoc manner at state level. Political differences and competition between the state and federal governments have partly accounted for the slow pace in adoption of social assistance programmes. An uptake in social protection may occur only if the political leadership is convinced that it is sustainable and would enhance their political fortune.

Social assistance needs to be carried out within the context of a larger social policy framework, and knowledge about social assistance programmes needs to be diffused across all sectors. The federal government and international organisations have to promote a policy network community and support meaningful evaluation of the existing programmes to make citizens and policy stakeholders appreciate social assistance as an effective instrument of poverty alleviation and social transformation.

Key words: Social protection, social assistance, poverty alleviation, political economy, cash transfers

1 Introduction to the Political Economy Context of Social Protection in Nigeria

1.1 Introduction: Research Problem

Recent efforts to study social protection in Nigeria have focused largely on the technical design of various aspects of social protection programmes, extent of their coverage, fiscal space and potentials, and their implementation challenges. They have also adopted the governance, gender and life cycle approach, transformative social protection framework, or the international labour framework of analysing social protection. The study by Niño-Zarazúa et al. (2010), which addressed political issues in social protection in Africa, did not cover Nigeria in any significant extent nor did it address Nigeria's preference for a growth-related social protection policy. None of the studies provided a systematic political economy analysis of the factors that enhance and prevent the likelihood of an uptake in social protection policy in Nigeria (Hagen-Zanker and Holmes, 2012; Holmes, 2012a).

No study focused on the social assistance programmes carried out at the state level to any significant detail. Yet given the decentralised character of Nigeria's social assistance programmes and the increasing interest of several state governments in partnership with the federal government and donors to execute cash transfers and other social assistance programmes, it is imperative that a meaningful study of Nigeria's experience engage the practices in a systematic and detailed manner across levels of government.

Given Nigeria's poverty level, which was at over 67 per cent in 2010, inequality level (Gini coefficient at 48.83), its consistent record of economic growth at 6–7 per cent over 2005–2012 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012), as well as Nigeria being part of the 2008 AU regional consensus on the importance of social protection schemes for development, it is curious that its adoption and implementation of social protection policies has been slow and sluggish, and far below the capacity of the government (Hagen-Zanker and Holmes, 2012). Yet evidence from some countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia shows that social protection schemes are playing positive roles in poverty reduction and social stability. However, empirical evidence on the impact of social protection policies on political cohesion and the State–citizen contract remain limited.

In the larger African context, efforts to study social protection have involved a review of the diverse research on issues that relate to social protection, especially since the Livingstone process conference of March 2006 where 13 African governments agreed to put together national social protection plans to support elderly and vulnerable groups. With few exceptions, these studies have been largely national studies focusing on national government social protection interventions (Niño-Zarazúa et al., 2010; Sultan and Schrofer, 2008). Nigeria did not feature prominently in these studies because it is a late entrant into social protection in the current revival of social assistance and cash transfer innovations.

In general, there has been limited focus on the politics of social protection even though politics has been implicated repeatedly on the character and reach of social protection policies in Africa. The analysis of political institutions and processes that transform ideas and concepts into budgets, programmes, and eventually social outcomes is crucial for understanding the potential and constraints associated with social protection in Nigeria. This research seeks to understand the drivers of social policy reform in relation to broader development in Nigeria. It analyses the political economy of social protection in Nigeria, exploring the origins and determinants of social protection policy choices, the stages and strategies of implementation, the impact, and likely social protection policy uptake. It focuses on three broad intervention areas of government social protection programmes. These include interventions that relate to children, to uplifting the conditions of the older persons and/or persons with disability, and to increasing employment. The focus is on both federal government and state government programmes. The research covers internal and external factors and actors including non-governmental actors influencing the feasibility and results of social protection policy processes. It identifies the actors and their strategies. It is also mindful of the contextual and institutional variables such as the economic, political and social systems and demographic trends, and conjectural variables such as external shocks and crises.

1.2 Background and Country Context

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, is socially and culturally diverse with over 250 ethnic groups and a nearly even share of adherents to the Muslim and Christian faiths. Nigeria is a three-tier federation consisting of the federal government, 36 state governments and 774 local government areas (LGAs) with varying size, population and resources. After several decades of military rule, Nigeria returned to democratic governance in 1999. The 1999 Constitution continued the presidential traditions first established by the 1979 Constitution, which was particularly designed to ensure a high degree of separation of powers, and checks and balances. In practice, the principle of checks and balances has been problematic, largely because of the over-developed powers of the executive and administration at all three tiers of government vis-à-vis the legislature and judiciary—a legacy of the long period of military rule. Treaties and conventions acceded to by the Nigerian Federal Government have to be domesticated before they have the force of law. In cases where the issues covered are on the concurrent list, laws domesticated by the federal government have to be adopted by a state government before they can be enforced in the state. This has implications for social protection policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria.

Given Nigeria's federal system, issues of revenue sharing among the various tiers of governments dominate intergovernmental relations. In March 2004, the federal government issued a modification of revenue sharing that increased states' share of the Federation Account to 26.7 per cent and reduced the federal government's share from 55 to 52.7 per cent, which currently serves as the threshold (Eboh et al., 2006). The federal government has statutory powers to control the sub-national governments for the purposes of macro stabilization. Apart from this, areas with direct implications for human development and poverty reduction such as education, healthcare services, rural roads and infrastructure, water and sanitation, and community services are assigned to both the national and sub-national tiers of government. In practice, conflicts, waste and inefficiencies attend policy implementation in these areas among the tiers of government. Thus, institutional coordination across the three tiers of government remains a major challenge (UNDP, 2008–2009).

Nigeria has been governed by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) since 1999. However, opposition parties have won elections in several states in different parts of the country. Nigerian politics has been characterised by patron–client relations structured by ethnic identity within a multi-party system (Joseph, 1987). Patrons provide material benefits to their clients while enriching themselves from the public purse; sometimes combining this with violence to whip their supporters into line, as seen in the rise of godfathers who become kingmakers and investors in godsons to win elections. In return, they demand cuts from their godsons who hold political office, with negative consequences for economic production and corruption. Politics has become one of the chief means of getting rich and politicians demonstrate little or no commitment to public interest (Ayoade, 2008). Vote buying is common (Ojo, 2008). The direct provision of material benefits to citizens by individual politicians on a relatively large scale to woo voters has been described as 'stomach infrastructure' in an environment where poverty is rife. Ill-prepared individuals are nominated purely because they provide benefits in return. Under the patron–client framework, a patron selects a set of clients that they nurture—'take care of'—and when the party has nominations, those people that have been catered for vote for the candidate or the candidate's preferred choice against the opponent. This informal network is straddled by amoral relations that render formal institutions weak. It is so pervasive that efforts to fight corruption are often undermined by the utility of these exchanges for democratic politics (Aiyede, 2013).

Nigeria has experienced high levels of economic growth since 2005. Between 2005 and 2006, Nigeria repaid USD 12 billion of its debt to the Paris Club to achieve debt cancellation of USD 18 billion. The dependence of the economy on the oil sector cannot be overemphasized. Oil revenue accounted for 75.3 per cent of federally collected revenue in 2012 (CBN, 2012) and about 14.8 per cent of the GDP. Agriculture experienced a decline from 64.1 per cent in 2007 to 33.7 per cent in 2012; and industry from 23.4 per cent in 2007 to 11.4 per cent in 2012. The wholesale and retail sector recorded an increase from 13.9 per cent in 1981 to 23.75 per cent in 2012. The services sector, which houses the advancing telecommunications sector, trends an increasing proportion of 9.8 per cent in 1981 to 16.4 per cent in 2012. The transformation in the telecommunications service sub-sector has created massive employment within the country. The rebasing of the GDP in 2013 rendered Nigeria the largest economy in Africa with a GDP of USD 510 billion.

This shows an economy that has experienced growth over the last decade. However, resource allocation across tiers of government has been a source of recurring debate and a major issue of controversy in the National Conference given the exacerbating poverty level in the country.

Poverty Profile

Poverty includes the lack of assets to realize basic necessities: food, housing, clothing and acceptable levels of health and education; the sense of marginalization in societal institutions; and susceptibility to shocks and inability to manage them. Poverty and vulnerability in Nigeria are highly influenced by geography, ethnicity, age and gender, religious norms, prevalence of conflict and instability, prevalence of HIV and AIDS, and a volatile oil-dependent economy.

Nigeria's Human Development Index is low at 0.471, lower than the sub-Sahara African average of 0.475 (UNDP, 2013). *The World Development Report* (World Bank, 2013) shows a considerable level of income inequality with the Gini coefficient at 48.83 as at 2010. The income share held by the highest 20 per cent was about 54 per cent of the national income in 2010. Income share held by the lowest 20 per cent was 4 per cent. The poverty headcount ratio at USD 2 a day was 84 per cent of the population in 2010.

There has been considerable promise in access to health with the reported fall in the maternal mortality ratio per 100,000 live births from 970 in 2000 to 630 in 2010. The infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births reduced from 112.4 in 2000 to 77.8 in 2012. Life expectancy was 51.7 years in 2011. However, infant and maternal mortality rates for the poorest are among the highest in the world. Problems of child trafficking, prostitution and abuse worsen the issues of poverty, vulnerability and risk.

Nigeria's diversity is marked by significant regional disparity of the indicators on poverty, hunger, health and education. For instance, from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) report (2012), Sokoto State recorded the highest rate of poverty at 85 per cent while Niger recorded the lowest at 33.8 per cent (Table 1).

Table 1: Five states with the highest and lowest poverty rates in Nigeria

State	Highest poverty rate (%)	State	Lowest poverty rate(%)
Sokoto	85.0	Niger	33.8
Katsina	74.5	Osun	37.9
Adamawa	74.2	Ondo	45.7
Gombe	74.2	Bayelsa	47.0
Jigawa	74.1	Lagos	48.6

Source: National Bureau of Statistics 2012

The highest average poverty rate is in the Northwest geopolitical zone at 71.4 per cent (Table 2). Over half of all children in the northern part of the country are stunted. While 41 per cent of all children under five are classified as stunted, 23 per cent are severely stunted. The human impact of this is devastating.

Table 2: Geographical distribution of poverty in Nigeria

Region	Poverty rate (%)
Northwest	71.4
Northeast	69.1
North central	60.7
Southeast	59.5
South-south	55.5
Southwest	49.8

Source: National Bureau of Statistics 2012

One of the major challenges confronting Nigeria is how to provide jobs for the well over 60 per cent of Nigeria's youth population. The number of unemployed members of the labour force continued to grow from 12.3 per cent in 2006 to 23.9 per cent in 2011. Thus, despite its growing economy, the proportion of Nigerians living in poverty is increasing.

Policy Context

Successive governments have produced several developmental policies and vision documents. The four national development plans over the 1962–1985 periods, whose success was largely affected by fluctuations in oil prices, were notable in this regard. These were followed by structural adjustment programme (SAP) in 1986, and the three-year rolling plan era (1990–1998) that was considered flexible enough to enable a revision of reform policies in light of internal and external volatile forces.

The National Economic Direction (1999–2003) was a medium-term framework whose objectives could not be successfully attained due to widespread corruption in the new democratic dispensation (Marcellus, 2009). This was replaced, for 2003–2007, with the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) with state and local government counterparts as SEEDS and LEEDS respectively. The NEEDS strategies were summarized into wealth creation, employment generation, poverty reduction and value orientation, with the vision to eradicate poverty and make Nigeria a 'promised land' (Marcellus, 2009).

Vision 20:2020 (NPC, 2009) sought to position Nigeria as one of the top 20 economies by 2020 by dividing its policies into a three-phased medium-term approach with three pillars that include guaranteeing the productivity and well-being of the people, optimizing key sources of economic growth, and fostering sustainable economic and social development.

The first official social protection legislation in Nigeria was the 1942 Workmen's Compensation Act. After several amendments, the federal government enacted the Pension Decree No. 102 of 1979 for federal civil servants and the Armed Forces Pension Decree No. 103 of 1979 for the military leading to the establishment of the non-contributory defined benefit pension schemes based on final salary. A private sector benefit pension and gratuity scheme for employees was initiated in 1954 by the Nigerian Breweries. In 1961, the National Provident Fund was inaugurated and later replaced by the Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) in 1993.

On 25 June 2004, the Pension Reform Act 2004 was enacted to establish a standardized defined contribution pension plan for both public and private sectors. The new pension scheme is based on individual accounts that are privately managed by pension fund administrators where employees contribute a minimum of 7.5 per cent of their salary while employers contribute 7.5 per cent. Decree 35 of 1999 introduced the National Health Insurance Scheme as a social security system that guarantees the provision of health services to persons on the payment of token contributions at regular intervals. These programmes cover the formal sectors of the economy and as such do not necessarily cover other vulnerable persons.

In the 1990s, public uprising in challenging biting neoliberal policies heralded the series of social programmes instituted to alleviate poverty. At first the government responded with palliatives. Smallholding farmers, small-scale enterprises and several women's cooperatives were promoted to access soft loans from the People's Bank or under the Better Life for Rural Women Programme that was later replaced by the Family Advancement Programme. In 2001 the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) was established under President Obasanjo to monitor all government poverty eradication programmes and provide technical expertise and limited financial support to states and local governments in the implementation of social assistance programmes. The established National Health Insurance Scheme was followed by the Community-Based Health Insurance Scheme (CBHIS) to protect the informal sector and marginalized groups. A variety of cash transfer programmes constitute the latest in the government's effort to address poverty (Umukoro, 2013).

Since 2004 when the first draft National Social Protection Strategy document was produced, social protection has featured as an issue of concern at both the national and state levels (Hagen-Zanker and Holmes, 2012). The document organised social protection around four main themes: social assistance, social insurance, child protection, and the labour market. However, the government has not demonstrated significant commitment to social protection judging by the level of implementation. Nigeria is among countries that have focused more on growth in the hope that growth would eventually trickle down and translate into improved conditions for the poor (Hickey, 2008).

The conditional cash transfer programme was first implemented under NAPEP in 2007. During that first experiment, paymasters were used to pay beneficiaries, with attendant corruption and inconsistencies. There were cases of none or short payment and delays in payment. The programme implementation strategy was reviewed in 2009 and the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Millennium Development Goals (OSSAP-MDGs) began the implementation of the scheme under its Conditional Grants Scheme (Gbeneol, 2014). It has however continued to carry out several poverty alleviation programmes since the 1980s including micro-credits, public works programmes and apprenticeship schemes (Umukoro, 2013).

In recent years, the federal government has evolved three small-scale programmes related to social protection: the COPE–CCT programme (In Care of the People–Conditional Cash Transfer), subsidised maternal and child health care provision, and a community-based health insurance scheme (CBHIS). At the sub-national level, a series of social assistance programmes are implemented in an ad hoc manner by state governments. Donors, international non-governmental organisations and civil society have also implemented social protection programmes such as CCTs for girls' education in three states and other programmes that include social protection sub-components. Labour market intervention programmes include youth and women skills, employment intervention programmes, and agricultural subsidies and inputs (see Hagen-Zanker and Holmes, 2012).

1.3 Research Questions and Objectives

Research questions

- Why have governments in Nigeria been slow and sluggish in adopting social protection polices in spite of a consistent record of high economic growth?
- What types of social protection policies are on offer and what are the sources of ideas for the development of social protection policies in Nigeria?
- What has been the impact of social protection policies on beneficiaries' perception of the State–citizen contract?
- How have intergovernmental relations and the general character of politics in Nigeria's federal system affected uptake in social protection policies?
- Within what institutional context can social protection policies gain traction in Nigeria?
- What role can key stakeholders in the Nigerian economy and society play in advancing social protection policies?

Research objectives
The goal of this study is to analyse government social protection policies currently ongoing in Nigeria through the application of the concept of political economy. Specifically, the study will:

- Generate insights into the political economy of conditions under which major actors, institutions and ideas interact to shape social protection policy processes, choices and implementation
- Explore issues associated with the adoption and implementation of social protection policies in the federation
- Analyse the perception of beneficiaries on the impact of social assistance policies on the State-citizen contract, and
- Analyse the perception among key actors involved in prosecuting social assistance policies with regard to the likelihood of such policies gaining traction, and the likely emergence of a universal uptake in social protection policies in Nigeria.

1.4 Research Approach

The study design involved a review of existing literature complemented by the use of qualitative and quantitative strategies within a political economy framework to explore the emergence and trajectory of social protection policies in Nigeria. Primary data were derived from field interviews and a survey of beneficiaries. The interviews were conducted among government officials at both state and federal government levels, political party officials, community leaders, civil society organizations, donor agencies, and beneficiaries. The survey was conducted among beneficiaries in six states—Jigawa, Gombe, Plateau, Ekiti, Anambra and Delta States—selected from the six geopolitical zones in the country. It covers beneficiaries of the social assistance programmes involving cash transfers in the six states, including income support for children, social cash transfer for the poor/unemployed, and income support for older persons or persons with disability.

2 Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of Social Protection

A variety of definitions are on offer for social protection. In general, social protection has been viewed from three perspectives: as a tool of social risk management, a human right, and an expression of minimum basic need for citizens in our civilised world (Munro, 2008).

The objectives of social protection are aimed at reducing the vulnerability of low income households with regard to consumption and access to basic services. The essence of social risk management is the need to protect human capital. Soderstrom (2008) argues that the form of social protection that advocates insurance against risk or vulnerabilities is largely designed for middle class people for whom these vulnerabilities pose a reduction in lifestyle. This approach is premised on the fact that efforts to reduce the likelihood of hazards or to ameliorate their effects are essential to economic growth and development (Barrientos and Hulme, 2009).

The second perspective is the rights-based approach, which is traced to the International Labour Organization (ILO). In 1948 the international community acknowledged social protection as a basic human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In 2001, the ILO General Assembly affirmed social security as a basic human right (Sepulveda and Nyst, 2012). Later on the ILO reformulated its mission statement as involving efforts to "secure decent work for women and men everywhere" moving social protection from a policy option to an obligation for states and international governance structures (ILO, 2013).

The third perspective is closely related to the second. It places emphasis on social protection as a basic need. It is often traced to the United Nations reference to:

> "a set of public and private policies and programmes undertaken... in response to various contingencies to provide assistance to families with children as well as provide people with basic health care and housing" (United Nations, 2004:4, cited in Barrientos and Hulme, 2009).

In general, there is debate about whether social protection is an end in itself in terms of poverty reduction or an instrument in achieving sustainable development and growth. The first interlocutors are the instrumentalists who argue that for effective development to be achieved, societies have to put in place risk management mechanisms until such a time when poverty reduction and market deepening allow private insurance to play a greater role (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004:1). On the other side are activists who argue that the persistence of poverty speaks to problems of social injustice and social inequality. They campaign for social protection as an inviolable right of citizenship where entitlement to a universal social minimum is based on citizenship and not on philanthropy (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, ibid).

The African Union evolved its own notion of social protection deriving from its Social Policy Framework (SPF). According to the AU-SPF, interventions falling under a social protection framework reflect the ILO’s minimum guarantee that all in need have access to essential healthcare and to basic income security. The AU (2008) states that a minimum package of social protection should cover essential health care and benefits for children, informal workers, the unemployed, older persons and persons with disabilities. Thus, like the ILO’s recommendations, the AU-SPF embeds social protection in a wider context of general social, economic and human welfare.

Nigeria is in the process of developing its national social protection policy. A draft document, which was first presented for validation at a workshop on 18 February 2014, draws on the Constitution and the Vision 20:2020 document as well as Nigeria's commitment to various international conventions including the AU-SPF for inspiration. It conceives social protection as imperative to the reduction of poverty and protection of vulnerable groups from shocks that may arise from social insecurity and vulnerabilities caused by disabilities, accidents and disasters (Nigeria, 2013). But there is yet to emerge a clear concept of a socially acceptable minimum package below which no one should fall.

For this study, we adopt Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux's (2008:70) definition of social protection as all initiatives that transfer income or assets to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalised. This definition incorporates the three perspectives on social protection (risk management, human rights and basic needs) and covers both social protection and social insurance. Although this definition is broad, this study deals with the social assistance aspects of social protection especially conditional and non-conditional cash transfer measures carried out by the various governments in Nigeria.

2.2 Types of Social Assistance Interventions

Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux (2010) categorise the purposes of social protection in terms of four instruments: provision measures designed to provide relief from deprivation; preventive measures that seek to prevent deprivation; promotive measures designed to enhance income capabilities; and transformative measures that address social justice and exclusion.

There have been attempts to classify social assistance programmes from existing practices across the developing world. Barrientos (2011) provides a typology of social assistance programmes worldwide (Table 3).

At the heart of these divergent measures is the level of commitment demonstrated by the State towards the poor through the institution of measures to improve quality of life and enhance opportunities for a better future.

This study is focused on social assistance programmes that include income transfer as a primary or secondary instrument because they can be implemented and scaled up relatively quickly, have an immediate impact on consumption and are capable of reaching the very poor. Secondly, they can be used for several objectives such as "protecting household consumption, promoting asset accumulation, strengthening productive capacity and inclusion, and reducing poverty, vulnerability and inequality" (Barrientos, 2011:244).

2.3 The Evolution and Diffusion of the Idea of Social Protection

The idea of social protection arises from the very nature of human beings as susceptible to diminishing capability to work or to complete inability to work. The recurrent crisis of the capitalist model has ensured that the issue of social protection for the vulnerable and poor remains a permanent social policy issue. Europe provides a rich source of experience in this regard with its welfare states that came to a golden era in the post-World War II period.

To appreciate the evolution of the welfare regime and how it relates to current developments, Gray (2004) traces the emergence of the welfare state to the Poor Law Guardians in the Village of Berkshire where cash allowances were used to guarantee a basic subsistence allowance to the poor whether or not they were working: a practice that quickly became unsustainable and was abandoned in 1834.

Bismarck introduced health insurance in the 1880s to pre-empt the growth of working class organisations in the face of the fear of revolution. In France and Belgium, mutual aid schemes developed by workers' organisations in the late 19th century provided the springboard for the development of social security. In other countries, labour movements demanded and won the establishment of a social insurance scheme as in Denmark in 1980 or by the Social Democratic Party in Sweden.

Table 3: Social assistance in developing countries: programmes and objectives

Instruments	Examples of programmes	Objectives
Pure income transfers		
Income transfers target to poorest	Kalomo Pilot Social Transfer Scheme, Zambia; Mchinji Pilot Social Transfer, Malawi	Reduce poverty and vulnerability among the poorest households without economic capacity and with children
Categorical income transfer: social pension and child support	Social pensions in Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Bolivia, Brazil, Bangladesh, India, Nepal	Reduce poverty and vulnerability among older people and their households
	Child Support Grant, South Africa	Reduce household poverty, facilitate investment in schooling, and help break poverty persistence across generations
Income transfer conditional on work: public works, cash-for-work, employment guarantees	Employment Guarantee Scheme, India; Productive Safety Net Programme, Ethiopia	In rural areas, smooth seasonal income fluctuations; in urban areas reduce poverty caused by unemployment and underemployment
Income transfer conditional on human capital investment, human development targeted conditional transfer	BolsaFamilia, Brazil; Opportundades, Mexico	Supplement income for the poorest households to ensure improvements in consumption; facilitate investment in nutrition, healthcare and schooling; and ensure availability and utilisation of basic services aiming to reduce inter-generational persistence of poverty
Integrated poverty reduction/eradication programmes targeting the extreme poor	Challenging frontiers of poverty reduction targeting the ultra poor, Bangladesh	Stabilise consumption of poorest households and improve their human and productive asset base to the point where conventional micro-finance programmes could help asset accumulation
	Chile Solidario, Chile	Eradicate extreme poverty caused by social exclusion by supporting the poorest households in achieving minimum thresholds across main dimensions of wellbeing: income, employment, housing, health, education, registration and household dynamics

Source: Barrientos 2011

Skocpol (1987) provides systematic analyses of the history of social provisioning in the United States (where state structures and organisation set limits on policy innovation) as distinct from the experience of the welfare state in Europe. It explains why social insurance was not comprehensive in the United States—it never included health insurance. Thus, the federal structure, growth policies and the prevailing poverty alleviation policies had some influence on the nature of policy uptake in Nigeria.

In developing countries, welfare provisioning was less developed before the crisis of the 1980s and 1990s that provoked the rolling back of the state with the implementation of SAPs. Under this crisis, emphasis in Africa shifted from social security to notions of safety nets designed to protect vulnerable citizens who faced higher risks associated with liberalized markets in the attempt to grapple with increasing poverty.

A lot of innovations emerged within the process of addressing poverty globally. Scholars have celebrated cash transfers, within and outside Africa, as effective instruments of poverty reduction and development (Barrientos and Hulme, 2009; Hanlon et al., 2010). For instance, Ray Boshara in his preface to *Just give the money to the poor: The development revolution from the Global South* (Hanlon et al., 2010), identified three major innovative ideas arising from the current practice of social protection: i) the poor need access to savings to be leveraged for assets; ii) CCTs reward the poor with cash payments if and only if they do the kinds of things that the they are expected to do, like keeping their children in school, and so on; iii) simply giving money to the poor without conditions may not just help in reducing poverty, but may be good for long-term development as well.

According to de Haan (2014), the 1997 East Asian crisis brought home the message that growth alone was not enough. This coupled with the rise of democratic pro-market populism in Latin America, especially the successes of *BolsaFamilia* under President Lula that was diffused around the world, helped in promoting social protection policies. A number of donors have focused on social protection programmes in Africa while the AU made social protection a central part of its 2008 Social Policy Framework.

Since then, African governments have committed to expanding social protection programmes of the cash transfer type as a response to poverty, vulnerability and as a means to ensure sustainable development. Niño-Zarazúa et al. (2010) identify two models of social protection practices emerging in Africa. The first is the southern African (South Africa, Mauritius, Seychelles, Namibia, Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe) model driven by the politics of the need to redress historical inequality. It has evolved around categorical grants for older persons, and more recently to children, largely delivered by public agencies and enshrined in legislation.

The second model, identified with ‘middle’ Africa, is varied across countries like Ethiopia, Uganda, Zambia, Kenya and Ghana. It aims to integrate service provision and utilisation, combining transfers with conditions on health and schooling characterised by a shorter time horizon and a strong donor influence in the formulation, finance and delivery of the social protection programmes. Nigeria seems to belong to this category although it is yet to develop an overarching national social protection policy. The Nigerian Federal Government has worked with donor agencies such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Department of Foreign and International Development (DfID) to carry out pilot programmes in social protection. Slowly, but increasingly, several state governments have joined in implementing social protection programmes in their states.

Hanlon et al. (2010) argued that simply giving money to the poor without any strings attached may be the most promising approach not just for avoiding hardship and reducing poverty, but for long-term development as well. How realistic are these claims? What is the experience from Nigeria? Besides, studies by McCord (2012), Adesina (2011), Hickey et al. (2008), Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004) point to the overly optimistic claims about the value of social protection, especially the focus on cash transfer and the need to revisit its competing conceptions, drivers and values for addressing issues of poverty, inequality and inclusive growth. Adesina (2011) argues that the focus on chronic poverty has often involved a subtle neglect of the issues of inequality, and that it runs contrary to the demands of building an inclusive society. This study hopes to contribute to this debate from the standpoint of Nigeria's experience.

2.4 Politics and the Economics of Social Protection

Hanlon et al. (2010) described the remarkable progress of social protection programmes in developing countries as a quiet revolution. However, there are sharp variations in the forms of social protection favoured by countries as well as the reach of programmes. In India for instance, social protection emerged as a popular policy mobilised around constitutional rights holding the democratic government to account for the delivery of those rights. On the other hand, in Zambia social protection programmes were introduced as small-scale pilot projects financed out of donor grants. For this reason, Devereux and McGregor (2014:304) argue that “unless African governments take over the design, administration and financing of these projects and scale them up to national programmes and systems… there must be serious concerns about the sustainability of such protection schemes and policies”.

The assistance programmes face challenges such as targeting and administration costs. Some evaluations of CCTs (conditional cash transfers) have focused on cost benefit analysis to determine whether the programmes were worthy of being sustained or extended. However, a number of cross-sectional studies and random experiments of programmes implemented around the globe have demonstrated that CCTs have a strong effect in many countries.

In terms of sustainability, the issue has been whether CCTs should take on income-generating activities or there should be a separate income-generating programme. Those who insist that income generation should be part of the CCT programmes worry that social protection may create a culture of hand-outs and generate welfare dependency among undeserving poor. Similarly, it is argued from a transformative point of view that social transfers may alleviate poverty but cannot solve it under conditions of structural inequality and institutionalised injustice. They can only be meaningful in the long run when there are measures to promote social inclusion and empowerment.

Other political and economic issues associated with CCTs in Africa include geographical inaccessibility to services, a paucity of trained health professionals and teachers particularly in rural areas, inadequate supplies, and a limited capacity for management, financing, and expansion of health and education services. Others are the political will and choice of design.

To address some of these issues in Africa, Ellis et al. (2009:124–125) offer suggestions as principles that social protection practice in Africa should aim towards such as protecting recipients from hunger but not relegating them socially to ‘victim’ status, increasing empowerment, strengthening community cohesion, avoiding exclusion and inclusion errors, ensuring cost efficiency and continuity, supporting local markets, conducting proper evaluations, and establishing rights to certain types of social transfer that are inviolable in law. These principles address salient issues in social protection including the roles social protection can play in transforming the condition of the poor, promoting stability and strengthening the State–citizen relationship.

3 An Analysis of Social Assistance Programmes in Nigeria

3.1 Legal Framework of Social Assistance

Presently, there is no overarching policy on social protection that provides details of social assistance in Nigeria. The National Planning Commission (NPC) led the development of the first social protection strategy in 2004, which was largely never implemented. The document nonetheless provides inspiration for current practice of social assistance. The Social Protection Advisory Group made up of representatives of NAPEP, NPC and the World Bank developed the document. The NPC is also currently leading the development of the first national policy on social protection. A validation workshop for the draft national policy on social protection was held on 18 February 2014 in Abuja. The essence of the draft is to provide a framework for dealing with the challenges of sustainability, coordination and performance measurement. This is because social protection programmes have remained fragmented with each state carrying out its own initiative independently. The social protection strategy follows a risk management approach "involving policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability" (NPC, 2004:2).

However, there is no broad or integrated social protection law that clearly defines a national programme of social assistance in Nigeria. Neither NEEDS (NPC, 2004) nor the Vision 20:2020 documents provide directly for social assistance programmes. Nonetheless, the 1999 Constitution and other international covenants and conventions to which Nigeria is a signatory, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, recognise the need for social protection.

The amended Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Nigeria, 1999) under the 'Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy' provides the fundamentals for social protection in the country. It states that the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a State based on the principles of democracy and social justice. The security and welfare of the people shall be the purpose of government. Section 17 3(f) provides that the State shall ensure that "children, young persons and the aged are protected against any exploitation whatsoever, against moral and material neglect," while (g) requires the state to ensure that "provision is made for public assistance in deserving cases or other conditions of need." Other social objectives of the State that relate to social protection according to the constitution include:

- Provide suitable and adequate shelter and food, reasonable national minimum living wage, old-age care and pensions, unemployment or sick benefits, and welfare of the disabled.
- Ensure that conditions of work are just and humane, adequate medical and health facilities for all persons, equal pay for equal work, and the promotion of family life (see section 16 and 17 of the 1999 Constitution).

These provisions are consistent with AU's Social Protection Framework. They are however not justiciable. That is, no one can take the State to court for failing to provide these services or to demand for such services as of right. Successive governments have argued that funds are not sufficient to enforce them.

Nonetheless, there are both horizontal and vertical dimensions of social protection programme coverage in Nigeria. There are three varieties led by the federal government: the COPE-CCT targeted at households with specific social categories; the health fee waiver for pregnant women and children under five; and the Community-Based Health Insurance Scheme that was redesigned in 2011 because the previous scheme had design challenges. Several states handle social protection issues through their social welfare ministries: COPE-CCT, Subsidy Reinvestment Programme (SURE-P), various programmes for older persons, and employment programmes, among others. Other social assistance programmes are implemented in an ad hoc manner by government ministries, departments and agencies at state level, and some are partly funded by international donors.

3.2 Social Assistance Programmes

This subsection examines social protection programmes at both national and state levels. Our sample features mainly those that are carried out by the states.

Income support for children/ basic income guarantee (In Care of the People–COPE)

The COPE scheme is the major income-support programme for children in Nigeria. It is a joint programme involving the federal government in collaboration with state governments. Under the scheme, benefitting households ensure that their children of school-going age attend schools regularly, pregnant women attend regular antenatal clinics, and children under five years are immunized and taken to welfare clinics regularly. Beneficiaries of the scheme must be extremely poor households led by women, must have children of school-going age, and a trainable adult to be trained in a life-sustaining venture, among others. Majority of those selected are widowed women or single parent women. Many of them have no jobs. The main objective of the scheme is to leverage on conditional cash transfer mechanisms as incentives for extremely poor families to use available education and health services for children and pregnant women while increasing household consumption. It is aimed at stimulating economic self-reliance and growth and to eradicate poverty among beneficiaries.

Under the COPE scheme, the federal government provides funds and technical support, and leverages the contributions from development partners. The states' planning commissions, departments for local governments and local government service commissions provide policies, guidelines and human resources to make the initiative work smoothly. The local governments work with communities to assess needs and source local counterpart funding, and are responsible for drawing up plans that align with achieving the MDGs, and state and national development strategies.

A review of the implementation strategy of CCTs led to the abolishment of the use of paymasters to dispense cash to beneficiaries. All payments are now done through e-mobile banking services modelled after the successful e-transfer system CCT programmes in Brazil, Mexico, Kenya and South Africa. A suite of financial services is provided to beneficiaries including a savings account automatically opened at no cost for each recipient. Beneficiaries are given SIM (subscriber identity modules) cards and mobile phones after undergoing e-registration and consequently issued identity cards with which to withdraw money from the system. Each selected household is registered electronically to ensure that adequate baseline data of each household is kept for subsequent evaluation.

In 2012, the scheme was scaled up to 24 states with the federal government contributing N5 billion, which the benefitting states matched up with their counterpart funding of N5 billion. A total of 56,000 households benefitted from the 2012 CCT round. Each of the households received a monthly grant of N5,000 and N100,000 in lump sum at the end of the one year cycle to start a trade. This CCT scheme that entails the provision of grants to targeted poor households consists of two main components: the Basic Income Guarantee and the Poverty Reduction Accelerator Investment launched in 2013. Table 4 represents the situation in the six sampled states for this study.

Table 4: CCT–COPE programmes in states studied

	Coverage[†]	
State	Local governments	Households
Ekiti	5	2, 250
Anambra	5	2, 500
Gombe	11	1, 500
Delta	5	2, 250
Plateau	5	2, 248

[†] The duration was for 12 months in each state

Efforts are being made to reach 113,000 households in 2014. The MDG office carried out poverty mapping, needs assessment and baseline studies to tackle the problem of lack of statistics. The baseline studies, which provided information on the spread of poverty in each state in Nigeria down to local governments and communities, was used to determine beneficiary LGAs. The programme currently covers 113 LGAs. Important criteria, apart from the slow progress towards MDG targets, were the willingness of chairpersons and communities to fully back local efforts to achieve the MDGs, the ability to properly account for funds, and the likelihood that grants would make a significant difference in speeding progress. Although the scheme will cover only 113 LGAs in 2014, the plan is to reach all 774 LGAs in 2015.

Income support for older people and persons with disabilities

Income Support for Older People. The federal government has no income support for older people. A bill for social assistance for older people has passed the second reading in the National Assembly. However, a few states have introduced social assistance for older persons including two states in the study sample—Ekiti and Anambra. The scheme for older persons in Ekiti State is known as Social Security Scheme for Senior Citizens run by a committee. Ekiti State aims at taking care of men and women of 65 years and above particularly those who do not have children who can fend for them to enable them live more comfortable lives and have a sense of belonging in the society. The scheme formally took off in Ise-Ekiti, the headquarters of Ise/Orun LGA on 25 October 2011. Donor agencies do not support the programme.

The selection process began with the enumeration of elderly people in the 16 local government areas of the state. The enumerators were trained and deployed in each of the 177 wards to capture the estimated 120,000 elderly people based on the 2006 population census projection. A thorough screening of potential beneficiaries was carried out. The 20,000 beneficiaries currently on the programme receive monthly payments. The elders have recently been provided with identity cards to ease the exercise.

In Anambra State, the welfare scheme began in 2012 for poor older persons aged above 75 years who are not pensionable. Each beneficiary is entitled to a payment of N5,000 monthly. The government has committed to paying this welfare benefit till December 2015.

Income Support for Persons with Disabilities. The Jigawa State Government runs the only existing social assistance programme for persons with disabilities in Nigeria. The driving force for the introduction of this social protection policy is the personal concern of the governor to uplift the standard of living of persons living with disability, given the high incidence of poverty in the state. The scheme was signed into law on 20 August 2007 by the state governor. 150 persons with disability from each of the 27 local governments receive N7,000 each monthly. From the record of the agency vested with the responsibility, so far N28,539,000 has been paid to the beneficiaries. The programme is fully owned by the state government without any donor or civil society input. Selection is largely based on patron–client relationship and luck as there are no criteria developed for the selection process.

Social assistance to the unemployed

There are no social assistance programmes for the unemployed, but there are a variety of apprenticeship programmes involving some form of cash transfer. Several of these programmes are carried out at the national and state levels independently.

The OSSAP-MDGs works with the Ministry of Agriculture in training youth and women in agricultural practices. 5,000 youths in 10 different value chains have been trained, and start-up packages provided for 6,000 youths under the Growth Enhancement Scheme (GES) of the Ministry of Agriculture to increase fertilizer provision, among other avenues of input support. 2,500 women have been trained in poultry, bull fattening, sheep and goat production, bee keeping, crop value chains and extension. Youths are also trained to start agricultural enterprises such as aquaculture, livestock rearing, fabrication, repair and maintenance of agro-equipment and crop value chains.

President Goodluck Jonathan launched the Youth Enterprise with Innovation Programme (YouWiN!) in October 2011 as an annual business plan competition that seeks to create jobs by encouraging creativity and entrepreneurship among the youth. Nigerian youth are eligible to enter if they already own an existing business or have an innovative and bankable concept for a start-up business. The programme has run for three years with 1,200 promising entrepreneurs emerging each year. The government finances the businesses of selected young entrepreneurs by a grant award, which is disbursed in four tranches subject to performance. Winners receive assistance with their business registration processes from the Corporate Affairs Commission, training in small business management at a school for start-ups, and mentoring from well-established entrepreneurs.

In the states, a variety of programmes are on offer. There are three major employment schemes in Ekiti State. The Youth in Commercial Agriculture and Development Programme aims to create employment for 20,000 young school leavers. More than 1,500 school leavers have been employed and empowered with grants, seedlings and parcels of land. About 5,000 youth have been trained to function in different sectors of the economy through the Young Entrepreneur Scheme (YES); under which young entrepreneurs are given financial grants and assisted to set up and successfully run their businesses. The state government also employed 4,643 graduates under the Youth Volunteer Scheme. In Anambra State, the Youth Reorientation and Empowerment Programme is the major programme for youth employment.

3.3 General Challenges

Most of the programmes examined are still in the pilot stages as seen from the coverage and level of funding. Funding is identified as a major issue for scaling up and expanding the reach of programmes. According to OSSAP-MDGs, funding has not been enough to make an impact across the country. Funds have been a major challenge because of lack of trust. Due to previous failed promises, citizens tend to be sceptical about the genuine intention of government interventions, hence ownership and buy-in are hampered. However, over time, people have come to support the programmes (Gbeneol, 2014).

Another challenge is the poor response from the states. Both the federal and state governments provide funds for the programmes. This holds the potential of fast tracking implementation to achieve the MDGs. However, delays in release of counterpart funds have slowed implementation. Many state governments were not interested in the projects until recently because they wanted to have a say in the design and implementation of the project and not just be agents of the federal government (Gbeneol, 2014).

In conflict areas in Delta State, harassment by community youths over financial gratifications before projects can be sited in the communities and peculiar challenges of the riverine terrain create entry challenges. Poor commitment by the beneficiaries to acquiring skills and sustainability of the trade engaged remain other challenges (Gbeneol, 2014).

The programmes within Nigeria’s federal context have political implications, especially in states controlled by opposition parties. Those states would not want the federal government to gain popularity at their expense by taking credit for such programmes. Hence, the federal government had to change tactic to work with the states as partners and cultivate the interest of state governors. This change of strategy has resulted in greater states' buy-in, increase in funds through the payment of matching grants by the states and enhanced prospects for sustainability and sustenance of the scheme. It has also led to greater, result-oriented flexibility as states now have the opportunity to modify conditionalities according to the particular goals of the MDGs they want to advance within the scheme (Gbeneol, 2014).

3.4 Beneficiaries' Assessment of Impact

The beneficiary survey was conducted in the sampled states. An attempt was made to cover beneficiaries in all categories of the programmes. The responses discussed are therefore broad perceptions of the variety of programmes.

The survey shows that 56 per cent of the beneficiaries believe that social assistance programmes have helped improve their economic and social conditions and that of dependants a lot; 32 per cent say that they have had a little bit of improvement; and 49 per cent indicated 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that the programmes have raised the tempo of economic activities in their communities.

Similarly, about 50 per cent of the respondents indicated 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that the programmes contributed to poverty reduction in their communities (Table 5).

Table 5: Perceived impact of programmes on human capital development and poverty reduction

Responses	The social assistance programme has helped to improve the economic and social conditions of myself and dependants	Responses	Programme has raised the tempo of economic activities in my community	Programme has contributed to poverty reduction in my community
A lot	55.7 (214)	Strongly agree	21.9 (84)	22.7 (87)
A little bit	32.0 (123)	Agree	27.1 (104)	26.8 (103)
Somewhat	3.9 (15)	Disagree	7.6 (29)	6.5 (25)
Not at all	8.3 (32)	Strongly disagree	7.3 (28)	7.6 (29)
No response	Nil	No response	36.2 (139)	36.5 (140)
Total	100 (384)	Total	100.0 (384)	100.0 (384)

Source: Field returns (2014)

State–citizen relations seem to have improved a lot as a result of the programmes with 88 per cent of the respondents changing their views about how the State treats its poor and vulnerable citizens. Over 70 per cent of the respondents declared that they would reconsider paying taxes to the State if they got a decent job, regular income or moved out of poverty. An even higher percentage (74 per cent) declared they would tell their children/ household to be loyal to the State because when you are poor the State will come to your aid.

It is important to note, however, that many respondents complained that the monthly sum of money is too small. Less than half the number of respondents (38.8 per cent) affirmed that the programme had enabled them to acquire new assets. While only 16.9 per cent disagreed with the view that the procedure for receiving the grant is easy, 88.8 per cent confirmed that there is a place to make a complaint when they have problems about the programme. In-depth interviews show that there are a few cases of money going to the wrong persons, and cases of moneys not being paid regularly.

This study therefore confirms that the programmes have a positive effect on perception of State–citizen relations. Beneficiaries believe the State now cares for its poor and vulnerable citizens and are therefore willing to pay taxes and be loyal to the State. It also shows that social assistance can contribute to poverty alleviation. To determine the usefulness of capacity building, training and skills development, there will be a need to observe a gestation period to review how those who have exited the programme are faring.

4 Political Economy Analysis of Social Assistance Programmes

4.1 Government Expenditure on Social Assistance

The combined federal and state governments' expenditure increased from N7.86 trillion (USD 491 million) in 2009 to N11.30 trillion (USD 706 million) in 2013. The federally collected revenue on the other hand rose from N4.845 trillion (USD 303 million) in 2009 to N7.9 trillion (USD 493 million) in 2013. While public expenditure on social services and assistance programmes has grown, it has remained inadequate. The Federal Government's social spending rose from USD 3.5 in 2009 to USD 6.3 in 2012. Current spending on social protection is estimated at 0.01 per cent of GDP.

There is, however, no data on the contribution of donor agencies (such as the World Bank and DFID) to social protection in Nigeria even though their activities are felt in such areas as capacity building, co-financing and advisory services.

Economic analysis of the national coverage and breakdown of beneficiaries is limited by the unavailability of data and inherent gaps. Holmes et al. (2012a) did the closest analysis. For example, in 2012 COPE covered 22,000 households, which is less than 0.001% of poor households nationally, and in 2010 the maternal and child healthcare programme covered 851,198 women and girls in two phases, which is less than 0.01% of the poor.

In general, the coverage of these programmes has been limited and many are still in the pilot stage. Nigeria spends less on social protection than many African countries, and two thirds of spending on social protection is allocated to civil servants' pension and benefits schemes (Hagen-Zanker and Holmes, 2012).

4.2 Party Politics and Intergovernmental Relations

Recent publications by the NBS (2012) and other donor agencies show that the consistent growth recorded by the country has been accompanied by deepening poverty, and unemployment has ensured that the State's social programmes have remained a subject of discussion in the media. Two incidents, in 2012 and 2014, furthered popular pressure on the government. The first was the upward review on 1 January 2012 of the pump price of fuel from N65 to N140 with the removal of subsidy. It triggered public protest and demonstrations across the country. After negotiations, the government reduced the pump price to N97 with a promise to invest the gains from the reduction in subsidy in infrastructure and poverty alleviation programmes. The Subsidy Reinvestment Programme (SURE-P) has cash transfer components at both state and federal levels, although many of the programmes are just getting beyond the drawing board (Aziken, 2013).

The second incident was in March 2014 when several youthful job seekers, including a pregnant one, lost their lives in stampedes that occurred in nearly all of the recruitment centres, and several others sustained varying degrees of injuries. The Nigerian Immigration Service recruitment exercise was reportedly aimed at recruiting not more than 4,500 persons nationwide (Komolafe et al., 2014). The government came under severe criticism from the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC). Since then, the government has been challenged to deal with the problem of gross unemployment and demonstrate its claim that its employment programmes such as SURE-P, YouWin!, etc., are effective (Ibrahim et al., 2014).

APC launched its manifesto and code of ethics at its National Summit on 5th March 2014 in Abuja. The dominance of PDP has been challenged by the merger of several opposition parties to form APC that now constitutes a meaningful opposition and signals the emergence of a two-party system in Nigeria. In its 10-Point Road Map in 2015, APC promised to create 20,000 jobs per state immediately for those with a minimum qualification of secondary school leaving certificate and who participate in technology and vocational training. It promised to provide direct conditional monthly cash transfers of N5,000 to the 25 million poorest and most vulnerable citizens upon demonstration of children's enrolment in school and immunisation to help promote job empowerment (APC, 2014). The party also promised to provide allowances to discharged but unemployed Youth Corps members for 12 months while they seek jobs or acquire training and skills for job placement or entrepreneurship. Thus, with the APC's manifesto, cash transfers entered the partisan competition arena; although APC needs to go further and explain to Nigerians how it hopes to raise these funds.

State governments' partnership with the federal government in the COPE programme and other independent poverty alleviation programmes by the states is becoming a means of demonstrating concern for citizens and the electorate's welfare in Nigeria. At the state level, governors have begun to advertise the implementation of such polices as a mark of their commitment to the poor. The governor of Ekiti for instance, Dr. Kayode Fayemi, celebrated his 48th birthday with beneficiaries of the non-conditional cash transfer for older people in the state, although he lost the 2014 gubernatorial election to the PDP candidate Ayo Fayose, who was known to have provided support to the poor through his patron–client networks and personal linkages with ordinary folks especially the 'okada' (commercial motorcycle) riders. The people voted for stomach infrastructure versus Fayemi's focus on developing physical infrastructure.

All the same, with the increasing collaboration of many state governments with the federal government in executing the CCT programmes, competition is beginning to emerge around the delivery of the programme. More states joined the programme between 2012 and 2013. As long as the federal government continues to provide grants for the programme, more states will join to access the funds.

The possibility of expanding social assistance programmes across ruling governments has been limited by the lack of knowledge about the cost and benefits of social protection policies, and capacity gaps in information on how to design and implement a variety of social assistance programmes. Hence, Holmes et al. (2012b) recommend that Nigeria should promote knowledge-sharing and awareness of different types of social protection and cash transfer programmes; prioritise cash transfer design features beyond a focus on conditionality; scale up existing cash transfer coverage by increasing fiscal space, strengthening institutional capacity and increasing political commitment; improve institutional coordination to deliver a social protection package; and strengthen accountable and transparent mechanisms.

From the experience of the OSSAP-MDGs programmes in partnership with the states, political differences and competition for dominance have partly accounted for the slow pace in adoption of social assistance programmes. The federal character of the country has meant that policies from the federal government have to be negotiated with the states, while the states can introduce their own programmes regardless of what the federal government is doing. The politics and management of intergovernmental relations are therefore a critical aspect of the dynamics of policy adoption and diffusion.

In Nigeria, vote-buying and investment in political campaigns including elite settlements characterize the political process. These often translate into electoral malpractice and violence. The tradition of free and fair elections is only beginning to take root. This will be followed by a show of improvement in the welfare of ordinary citizens as a basis for canvassing for votes.

As Nigeria moves towards another general election, not only have more states joined the COPE programme, but a few others have initiated programmes of their own. Among these are those whose gubernatorial elections were to occur late 2013 (Anambra) or mid-2014 (Ekiti and Osun). Politicians are beginning to appreciate the value of social assistance programmes for electoral votes. Social programmes may come to replace the prevalent and illegal vote buying that characterises politics in Nigeria. The APC has made CCT and other social assistance programmes a major plank of its manifesto. The PDP-controlled federal government has led the COPE exercise and is currently developing a national social protection policy. These suggest that Nigeria is reaching a positive consensus on the desirability of social assistance policies, especially cash transfers.

Citizens emphasise the need to create jobs as against giving hand-outs. Perhaps the emerging popularity of social assistance may begin to affect this view. Even so, graduate unemployment is often voiced in the media and public discourse more than the plight of chronic poverty.

4.3 The Role of Civil Society

It seems knowledge of the value and use of social assistance has not permeated civil society organisations in Nigeria. Where they have, many do not believe in the capacity of government to effectively deploy them. Interviews with civil society representatives show that they believe that some of the programmes are riddled with corruption. For instance, in Delta State, some have argued that media reports on the CCT-COPE are exaggerated.

Labour unions have focused on former sector employees and have not been active in the area of social assistance for the poorest. A meeting to engage labour unions from West Africa (including Nigeria) on the ILO social protection floor was organised in Cotonou in 2012 by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. After several days of deliberation, the unions committed to take ownership of the ILO's recommendations and fight for implementation by their countries, encourage countries to ratify the ILO Convention No. 102, and submit to the ILO periodic status reports on social protection (Friedrich Ebert, 2014). However, in Nigeria, labour unions have continued to focus on social security issues and less on social protection. In his May Day address, the president of the NLC declared, "The effective implementation of social protection floors as agreed by State parties of the International Labour Organization is one of the effective ways to tackle hunger, want and hardship." (Omar, 2014). At no point did he and his colleagues engage the issue of social assistance as currently practiced in Nigeria.

4.4 Donors

The initial venture into CCTs was largely influenced by the donor community's interest in social assistance. However, the dynamics of politics and the results of pilot programmes may generate internal pressures for the adoption of social assistance programmes in the short to medium term.

The donor community has been central to the initial pilot programmes in the states. DFID, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, the World Bank, and USAID were the drivers of the conditional cash transfer programmes in the northern part of the country, which have provided the test case for COPE. NAPEP, OSSAP-MDGs and State representatives designed COPE with support from the World Bank and technical assistance from DFID and UNICEF. The CCT in Kano, Bauchi and Katsina states began in 2011 for three years to reduce the number of girls dropping out of school as a result of early marriage. UNFPA's potential interest in social protection includes a strong focus on gender and health. UNICEF and WHO provide technical support to social protection mechanisms that facilitate access to health services. The World Bank assisted in the development of the draft Social Protection Strategy and continues to support the NPC to put a social protection strategy in place.

Studies of the initial programmes show that they yielded positive results. However, funds for the projects have been limited and the coverage too low for the size and resources available to Nigeria. The studies also noted, especially in the non-centralised policy-making process in Nigeria, that the existence of political will and capacity within the states will determine geographical coverage (Holmes et al., 2012a, 2012b).

In spite of donor support, a major factor that has affected the delivery of cash transfers in Nigeria is the limited institutional capacity at the federal and state levels to develop policy, provide guidance, and implement effective monitoring and evaluation systems to support state-specific CCTs; and poor inter-sectoral institutional coordination (Holmes et al., 2012b).

5 Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Social protection with emphasis on social assistance entered the Nigeria policy agenda in 2004, but governments have been slow to adopt social assistance as a major redistributive programme in spite of the deepening poverty profile. Programmes have been extremely narrow and ad hoc (Holmes et al., 2012a). Nigeria's investment in social assistance has been quite meagre at 0.001 percent of the GDP. Cash transfer programmes have remained largely at the pilot stage.

Constitutional provisions and Nigeria's commitment to international covenants and conventions on social policy issues have not translated into enthusiasm in adopting social assistance measures. This is partly because the dominant view in public policy is that poverty is caused by lack of growth. Secondly, the national vision of the economy sees the private sector as the engine of growth. Thus, entrepreneurship development has permeated every effort of poverty alleviation.

Constraints on government funds led to attempts to remove subsidy in oil in January 2012. This triggered the implementation of programmes to cushion the effects of the reduction in subsidy leading to the further incorporation of social assistance programmes. These programmes, however, have not been quite successful as a result of poor monitoring and corruption.

A constraint to the constitutional provisions that explicitly require government to carry out social assistance programmes is the fact that the provisions are non-justiciable in Nigeria. There has not been any significant movement whether in government or civil society mobilising for their justiciability as has happened in India.

Donors have been key promoters of social assistance in Nigeria especially providing technical assistance to the federal government in policy and programme development. They have also collaborated with state governments in mounting pilot CCT programmes in child health and education.

Cash transfers represent the legal, open and legitimate alternative to patron–client exchanges that can be targeted to the poor of the poorest. They have, however, not been popular because politicians do not think they can help command the kind of loyalty associated with patron–client relations. The selection of clients is based on personal ties but the cash transfer method is usually based on objective conditions of poverty and devoid of personal affiliation to the party or the political official. It is however promising as a means of strengthening the social contract and making elections meaningful because of its capacity to empower poverty-stricken citizens if effectively and efficiently deployed.

Current practices, which are largely at the pilot stages in the states, provide very limited evidence that CCTs are efficacious in poverty reduction and human capital development. Besides, it is doubtful if the current practices are large enough to shore up the political will to advance social assistance among the political elite. The governor of Ekiti State who was most popular for his cash transfer programme lost the gubernatorial election in 2014 to an opponent who was reputed for building loyalty by providing ‘stomach infrastructure’ to the poor through patron–client processes in the state. The perceived instrumentality of social assistance as political good in some states has thrown it into the partisan policy arena but an uptake can only happen if one or two states are able to experiment with larger transfer programmes and demonstrate their relevance for election purposes and for poverty alleviation.

Cash transfers have also not been attractive to government officials because they think they are unsustainable. The APC has not provided information on how it will generate the funds to put 25 million Nigerians on the cash transfer programme. It is indeed due to the fear of dependence and unsustainability of the programme that the one-year graduation plan was adopted. Yet as Hagen-Zanker and Tavakoli (2012) have noted, Nigeria has great scope for expanding the fiscal space for pro-poor social assistance if it mobilises domestic resources, improves financial management of public expenditure and draws on official development assistance for targeted social protection policies. The government can expand the fiscal space by intensifying the tax drive, improving efficiency in financial management and plugging waste. Political leadership lacks the will to explore sources of additional revenue to fund social assistance programmes. Besides, they seem more inclined to develop entrepreneurs to provide jobs for the poor.

The federal character of the country has meant that policies from the federal government have to be negotiated with the states, while the states can introduce their own programmes regardless of what the federal government is doing. The politics and management of intergovernmental relations are therefore a critical aspect of the dynamics of policy adoption and diffusion in Nigeria.

Civil society and labour unions have not advanced social assistance as an instrument of social justice. Evidence from reports on the various forums on social protection and interviews shows that government officials and civil society actors largely lack information about the types, uses, design and implementation strategies of social assistance programmes. Thus, knowledge about social assistance programmes needs to be diffused across all sectors including the generality of citizens in order to achieve the popularity, commitment and enthusiasm required to achieve traction.

5.2 Governance and Policy Recommendations

Given the deep-seated poverty situation in the country and the large informal sector not covered by social insurance schemes, social assistance in the form of conditional cash transfers would help if done within the context of a larger social policy framework. The federal government should expedite action to complete the production of the ongoing National Social Protection Policy document and seek the buy-in of state governments.

The policy document should provide a justification for social protection and be explicit on its urgency. The document should move from viewing poverty alleviation as an economic growth issue and see it in its transformative character. The growth of the economy for about a decade without a corresponding reduction in poverty under PDP shows that the attribution of poverty to lack of growth may not be completely correct. The government should experiment with large-scale social assistance to reduce poverty and advance human capital development, and take its commitment to the AU-SPF and the ILO social protection floor seriously.

Social protection is indeed a redistributive and welfare issue with implications for State–citizen impact and social stability. The implementation of the pilot schemes should be evaluated and the process fine-tuned to make them more result-oriented. It is important for the government to provide post-graduation support to beneficiaries to achieve results.

International donors and organisations have acted as catalysts for social assistance programmes in Nigeria. However, the country is a vast territory of over 36 states and 774 local governments in a federal system. For them to advance social assistance programmes in Nigeria, they would have to promote a policy network community around social protection and engage all levels of government, civil society and other non-governmental actors with information on types, uses, design and implementation strategies. Donors should help accelerate the process of developing the national social protection policy, and support meaningful and consistent evaluation of the existing programmes to make citizens and policy stakeholders appreciate social assistance as an effective instrument of poverty alleviation and social transformation.

Civil society should push for the justiciability of the social objectives in the Constitution. This would go a long way in advancing commitment to social assistance. They can learn from the experience of India. When this happens, social assistance can be enforced as a right.

The government should put money into social protection programmes and build capacity. The government should mobilise resources through higher real GDP growth for a given tax system and structure, and an increase in tax yields. This may involve the creation of new taxes, higher tax rates and improved administration or the broadening of the tax base. A second avenue for increasing fiscal space is through reallocating spending to priority sectors, which may be difficult as shown in the fuel subsidy incident. Nigeria can generate funds for social assistance by improving efficiency and reducing wastage.

Corruption, off-budget government spending, lack of consolidated and actual expenditure data, weak oversight and reporting on the performance of parastatals, and the unpredictability of government funding at both national and sub-national levels if addressed can free money for social assistance programmes.

An uptake in social protection may occur only if the political leadership are convinced that it is sustainable and would enhance their political fortune during elections. There is yet insufficient information about the types, uses, design and implementation strategies of social assistance to make politicians, civil society movements and the general public see social assistance as a desirable policy area to improve growth and welfare.

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ISBN 978-9966-087-01-0

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