

BETTER ASSISTANCE IN CRISES RESEARCH

Social Protection in Nigeria: Analysing Capacities

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BASIC Research

May 2024

Implemented by



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Summary

This report describes findings of an analysis of capacities to deliver social protection in Nigeria. It focuses specifically on generating findings that will be useful to situations of protracted crisis, such as displacement due to conflict or climate shocks. The report draws on a three-dimensional Capacity Cube that differentiates between levels of capacity (individual, organisational, institutional), phases of capacity strengthening (building, applying, maintaining) and types of capacity (competency, capability, performance). Analysis of government and international actors' statements about social protection and capacity strengthening suggest that the majority of investments in capacity are focused on building individual and organisational competencies. Other elements, such as maintaining capabilities and performance, are given far less attention. This leads to an imbalanced social protection system in which activities for building technical capacities are projectised while whole-of-government, cross-sectoral functional capabilities are neglected.

Overall, the paper demonstrates that using the Capacity Cube renders visible the imbalances and the gaps in investments in social protection in Nigeria. The analysis is only a first step towards changing the way that we think about capacity in situations of protracted crisis. Investigating these gaps and missing elements will require more detailed research into actual implementation that goes beyond looking at project documents. It will be important, going forward, to understand more about how these capacities shift and change – as conflicts bubble up and become protracted, and create new challenges for the staff who deliver social assistance. Understanding which capacities become increasingly important in situations of protracted crisis, and how these can be protected, could provide pathways to a more effective and efficient social protection system in Nigeria, and beyond.

About the author

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

ASP	Adaptive Social Protection
BASIC	Better Assistance in Crises
DRM	disaster risk management
FMHADMSD	Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development
GESI	gender and social inclusion
HUP-CCT	Household Uplifting Programme-Conditional Cash Transfers
MIS	management information system
NASSP-SU	National Social Safety Net Programme-Scale Up
NASSCO	National Social Safety Net Coordinating Office
NSPP	National Social Protection Policy
NSR	National Social Registry
PID	Project Information Document
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SRSP	Shock-Responsive Social Protection
SP	social protection

Contents

1. Introduction	5
2. Summary of social protection in Nigeria	8
Overview of government-led social protection programmes in Nigeria	8
3. BASIC Research’s Capacity Cube framework	13
4. Applying the Capacity Cube to Nigeria	16
5. Key messages and conclusions	23
References	25
Annexe A: Methods and evidence base	27
Methods	27
What does the evidence base look like?	28
Annexe B: Capacity Cube applied to Nigeria	29
Boxes	
Box 1.1: Defining protracted crises	6
Box 2.1: Social protection in Nigeria – At a glance	8
Figures	
Figure 1.1: BASIC Research Capacity Cube	7
Figure 2.1: Effective coverage by function of social protection (%)	8
Figure 2.2: Components of the National Social Investment Programme (simplified)	11
Figure 2.3: Programmes under the National Social Safety Net Project overseen by NASSCO	12
Figure 3.1: Beyond linear approaches to capacity	14
Figure 4.1: Relationships between and among levels and programmes	21
Tables	
Table 4.1: Initiatives to build, apply and maintain capacities in social protection	16
Table 4.2: Support and interventions mapping	18
Table A.1: Key words for literature searches	27
Table A.2: Summary of evidence that demonstrates initiatives that ‘build’ capacity in the Nigerian social protection sector	29
Table A.3: Summary of evidence that demonstrates initiatives where capacity development is focused on application within the Nigerian social protection sector	31
Table A.4: Summary of evidence that demonstrates initiatives that ‘sustain’ capacity in the Nigerian social protection sector	32

1. Introduction

This paper is a case study that looks at the capacities in the social protection system in Nigeria. It forms part of a wider thematic body of work that asks how existing programmes can be better sustained and more resilient in the context of crises. The main research question of the overarching study is:

- How can existing national social protection systems be sustained in conflict-affected situations and how can international agencies support them to be more resilient?

This is analysed through a range of sub-questions:

- What capacities are most important for enabling business continuity? How can capacity deficits be overcome? What are the gender dimensions of staff capacity?
- What coordination features and roles of external agencies support continuity?
- What are the political economy dimensions of programme continuity and the incentives to sustain delivery?
- Where, when and why are some instruments more resilient than others – for example, subsidies versus social transfers – and what are the financial, administrative and political dimensions of sustaining different programming types?

This report focuses on the first sub-question only. With the reorganisation of the BASIC Research portfolio, the scope of the research on capacities in Nigeria has been trimmed back. The paper contributes to the work that is being done at a global level under the systems resilience theme. For this reason, it primarily focuses on a global audience and on making recommendations aimed to add to the body of global evidence. Nevertheless, it is hoped that it can be useful for Nigeria-based and Nigeria-focused stakeholders.

Over the past decade, there has been an increased focus on using social protection systems to deliver cash and voucher assistance in emergencies to reduce the exposure of poor and vulnerable households to shocks and to support them when disasters occur. The Shock-Responsive Social Protection (SRSP) and Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) agendas are providing a growing evidence base on how social protection architecture and programmes can flex and adapt their operations at the time of a shock.

Numerous country governments and their development partners are strengthening the capacity of social protection with a view to respond to emergencies and shocks. The underlying idea is that with time the response phase develops into recovery and, as the recipient population recovers and becomes more resilient, the social protection programme morphs back into its normal, pre-crisis state. This transition back to the 'norm' is a concept. In fact, it is very rare that there is a discernible normative state: contexts are ever-changing with intersecting and compounding shocks of a protracted nature; political, social and environmental shocks can lead to a permanent change. Since 2020, for example, multiple countries and regions across Africa were dealing with not only the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, but plagues of locusts, protracted droughts, economic instability resulting from market inflation and currency depreciations, not to mention the climate and conflict events that have peppered countries and affected social protection landscapes. Africa will not go back to how it was before the Covid-19 pandemic. In this situation, it makes little sense to assume that a shock-responsive or humanitarian approach will recede and social protection revert to its original form.

In such complex and dynamic environments, it is pertinent to explore and know how existing national social protection systems can be sustained through protracted periods of crises (Box 1.1), and how international agencies can support them to be more resilient. This can be done by looking at not only the capacities of the existing systems and programmes, but also the capacity gaps and deficits and what is needed to plug these gaps.

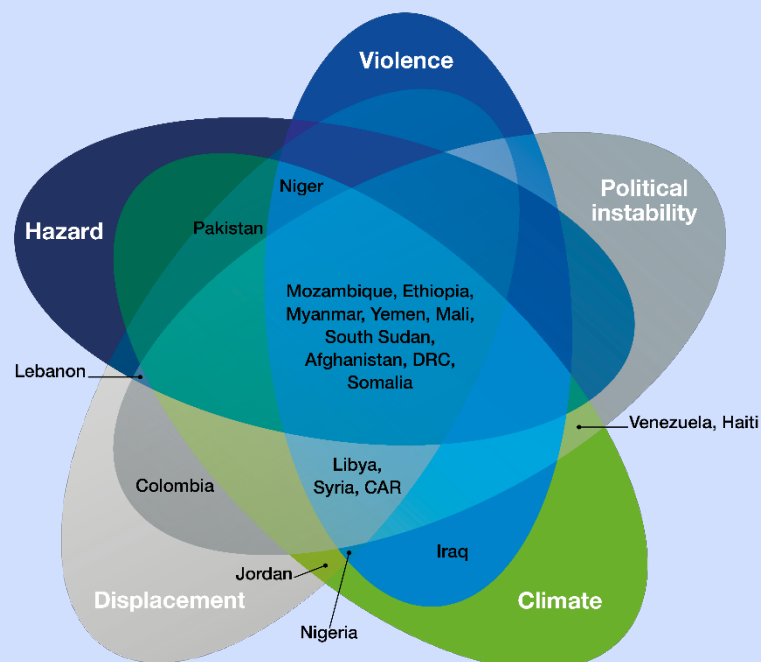
Box 1.1: Defining protracted crises

BASIC Research describes the term ‘protracted crises’ as referring to ‘places where authority is often contested, war is ongoing, governments are parties to conflicts and may not have effective control over their territory, and/or non-state armed groups are present’ and including situations ‘resulting from, or intensified by, recurrent climate shocks and stresses’ (Sabates-Wheeler et al. 2022: 15). BASIC Research is therefore focused on a range of political, pandemic, environmental and climate-related shocks but is explicitly preoccupied with those where violent conflict is a key driver and outcome of the landscape. Economic shocks are important, in so much as they result in hazards, displacement and impoverishment.

Examples include:

- The ongoing coup d’état in Niger, coupled with climate shocks and underlying political and economic instability.
- The economic crisis in Lebanon, compounded by the absorption of some 1.5 million Syrian refugees.
- Compounding climate, political and economic shocks in Somalia including the presence of Al-Shabaab and their control of swathes of territory.

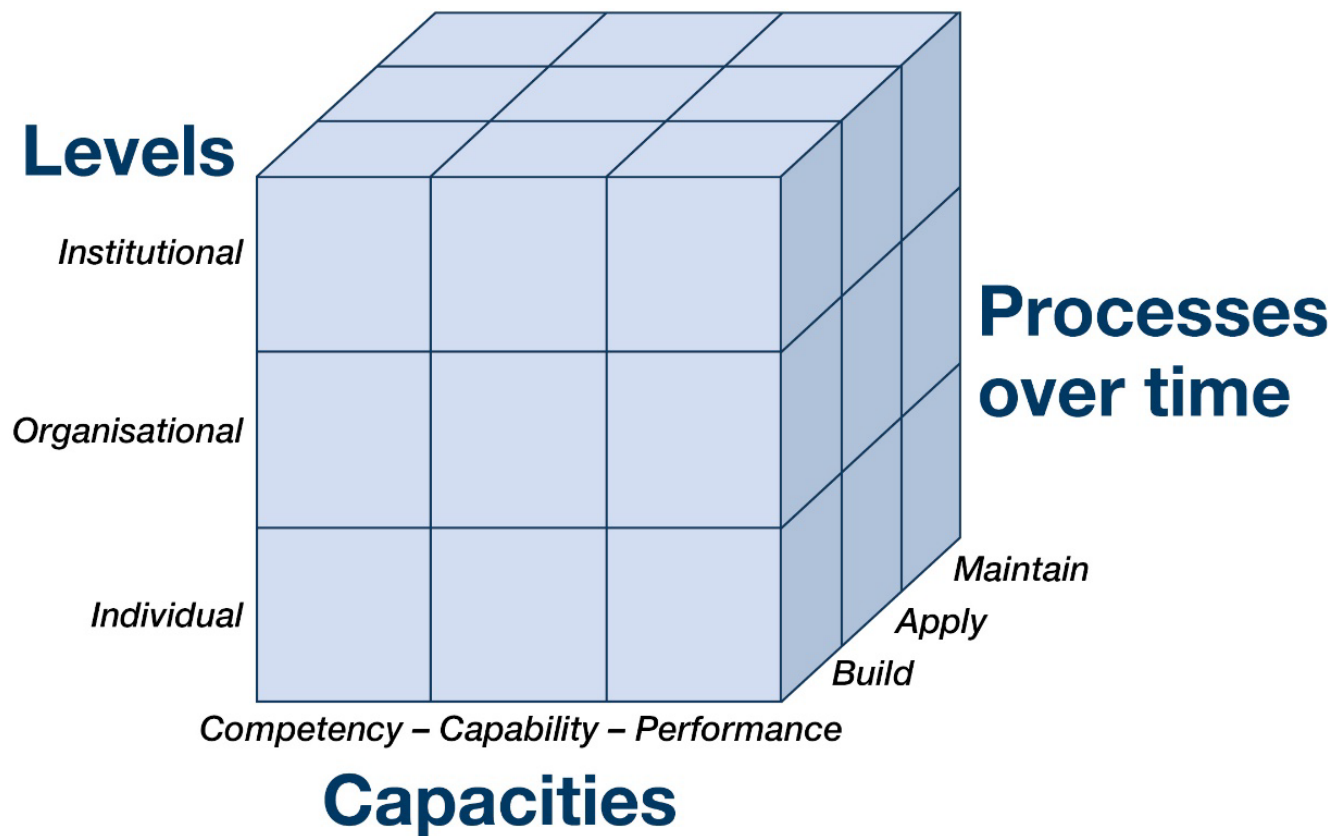
Source: Sabates-Wheeler et al. (2022). CC-BY.



Understanding capacities is in itself a challenge. The term ‘capacity’ appears straightforward, and yet it is frequently applied in vague and inscrutable ways. It is a term that is used a lot but tends to say very little that is detailed or useful. There is a need to unpack how ‘capacity’ and ‘capacity strengthening’ are understood, and what they look like in the social protection sector in Nigeria. This paper aims to understand better what approaches are taken to address capacity strengthening of social protection systems and architecture in a complex context, using Nigeria as a case study country. The work will be used alongside deeper analysis involving primary data collection in Syria and Iraq, to make recommendations to governments and international actors that will help to revise and recalibrate capacity-strengthening investments to improve social protection and social assistance in particular.

The paper will explore how capacity strengthening in Nigeria is understood and applied by using the BASIC Research Capacity Cube framework (see Figure 1.1 and Slater 2024) which offers a systematic and structured way to explore capacity and the capacity deficits in a more granular way than is normally the case. The Capacity Cube offers a three-dimensional approach to investigating capacity to deliver social protection that is specifically designed to capture the particular requirements to deliver programmes in protracted crises. It does this in a holistic way, focusing right across national and local policy and programming landscapes rather than just on specific parts of the social protection architecture or on specific programmes only. The approach also goes beyond the social protection sector and seeks to capture the capacity of cross-sectoral architecture and systems that are less visible but underpin social protection operations. By using this broader framework, it is hoped that a more holistic assessment of capacities will enable better support to governments that are seeking to sustain social protection in times of crises.

Figure 1.1: BASIC Research Capacity Cube



Source: Slater (2024). CC-BY.

2. Summary of social protection in Nigeria

Social protection in Nigeria is an emerging sector that is growing rapidly, with many donor and implementing agencies supporting the Government of Nigeria to strengthen and deliver its mandate on social protection. Provision of social protection mandates exists in the national social protection policy at federal level, and at state levels. Coordination and the institutional architecture are held at federal level with implementation at state level. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 offer a snapshot of social protection in Nigeria.

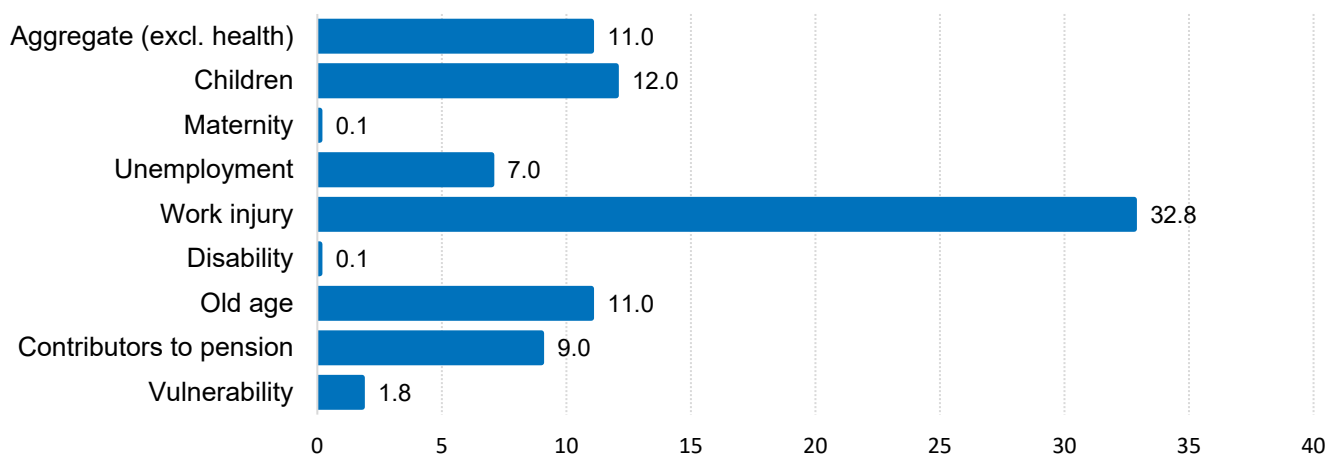
Box 2.1: Social protection in Nigeria – At a glance

The following figures offer an overview of coverage figures for social protection in Nigeria.

- 11%** of the Nigerian population is covered by at least one social protection benefit.
- 5%** of the population is affiliated to a social health protection scheme.
- 1.2%** of GDP is spent on social protection: 0.5% on health-care insurance; 0.7% on other sectors.

Source: Author's own. Created using data from ILO (2020).

Figure 2.1: Effective coverage by function of social protection (%)



Source: Author's own. Created using data from ILO (2020).

Overview of government-led social protection programmes in Nigeria

Nigeria has a range of federal-led government social protection programmes. The major programmes are described below.

Household Uplifting Programme

The National Cash Transfer Office operates throughout the country in states that have been able to establish a state-level cash transfer office. Households are selected from the National Social Register (NRS) based on specific characteristics selected by the state, such as being HIV-positive. Households receive either unconditional or conditional cash transfers. The Household Uplifting Programme provides a fixed payment of 10,000N (\$13) every two months, and an additional 5,000N (\$6.6) a month to those who meet state-specific conditions, e.g. 80 per cent school attendance of children and participation in vaccination programmes. The programme involves complementary activities: 'capacity building' in life skills, and savings group mobilisation and micro-business development. Beneficiaries are expected to graduate after two years, but if they stay on the National Social Register, they will remain on the programme (Umezurike and Adam 2020).

The scheme has paid much attention to developing a functioning grievance redress mechanism, in order to increase trust. The scheme aimed for electronic payments but uses mobile money operators for transferring cash in the last transaction in the chain ('last mile') because network coverage is too weak for fully electronic operation in many operational areas.

Youth Employment and Social Support Operation

The Youth Employment and Social Support Operation runs cash-for-work programmes (under its components 1 and 4) and also provides cash transfers to internally displaced people. States have to contribute 10 per cent, so it is not operational everywhere. The Youth Employment and Social Support Operation runs a 'North East Humanitarian Hub' in Adamawa state, where the programme beneficiaries are supposed to develop technology-related humanitarian innovations. This is a collaboration between the state government and the International Committee of the Red Cross (NSIO 2018).

Home Grown School Feeding Programme

Under the national Home Grown School Feeding Programme, 100,000 public primary school children receive a meal a day, provided by local farmers and cooked by local cooks. The aim is to nourish children, but also to attract them to school, and to provide jobs for cooks and markets for agricultural produce (NSIO 2018). The programme was modified during the coronavirus pandemic to provide food items to poor families of children who would have been attending school (PM News Nigeria 2020).

N-Power cash-for-work schemes

Unemployed people aged 18 to 25 can apply online to become a volunteer and receive a 30,000N (\$24.1) monthly stipend. There are different programmes for those with different skills and qualifications, including graduates and non-graduates. The length of the programmes varies according to the sector. Graduates from the programme gain access to a specific job-finding website.

Basic Healthcare provision fund

The 1999 National Health Insurance scheme only covered employees, so had limited impact on the poor (Aiyede et al. 2015). Some minimal health services are provided for free under this fund (News Agency of Nigeria 2019). It was implemented first in 15 states in 2018 (Abdullahi et al. 2020).

The UK Aid-funded 2017–2021 Maternal and Child Health Care programme waives fees for some pregnant women and children under five in some areas of six states (MNCH2 Nigeria n.d.).

The community-based health insurance scheme was redesigned in 2011. This requires communities to establish a community-level fund pool (National Health Insurance Scheme Nigeria 2021).

Covid-19 'Rapid Response Registration' Cash Transfer Project

Aiming to alleviate the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting lockdowns, the government began providing a 5,000N (\$6.6) transfer to 1 million additional urban households who were added to the national social register in January 2020 (Vanguard News Nigeria 2021). This is the Rapid Response Register.

State-led programmes

Beyond the federally led programmes, states have autonomy and responsibility to develop state-level social protection and assistance, but not always the funds to do so. Many development partners choose to work with state governments rather than through the federal level, meaning that there are some states which are relatively well served compared to others.

In addition to the Household Uplifting Programme, there are sets of schemes in each state which are state-run and donor-funded; state-funded; and entirely donor-funded and managed. Drawing a strict distinction between state and donor programmes and, in some cases, between humanitarian assistance and social protection and social assistance {Footnote 1: See Box 1.1 in Seferis et al. (2024).} is somewhat tricky due to blurred lines of nexus working. Below are some examples of schemes which show a range of social protecting initiatives. Captured here is a geographical focus on the North East and North West. This is because the BASIC Research programme is particularly focused on crisis contexts which the North East and

North West of Nigeria exhibit. There is a large-scale humanitarian presence in the North East with 237 live projects, implemented by 108 partners spanning 13 different sectors, requiring \$1.31 billion (OCHA 2023).

North East

Borno

- A state-run social protection initiative targeting those disadvantaged by the Covid-19 pandemic. It provided selected individuals with disabilities with 30,000N (\$24.1) a month for two months in 2020, as well as grants to businesses and IDPs (The Conclave NG 2020).
- The EU-funded Support to Response, Recovery and Resilience in Borno State scheme includes a food assistance component, alongside others (EU Commission 2017).

Adamawa

- The EU/UNICEF-funded and state-delivered Maternal Newborn and Child Health Social Protection Scheme provides pregnant women with birth kits and up to 5,000N (\$4) for transport to antenatal appointments (Mohammed 2016).

Yobe

- The UK Aid-funded Scaling Up Nutrition in Yobe programme (2019–2022) which is delivered by Action Against Hunger sees itself as filling a gap left by the state and federal governments' weak support to social assistance.

Across the three BAY states, there are more than 35 agencies supplying cash and food transfers, which could be conceptualised as humanitarian or social assistance.

North West

Jigawa

- The state has a social protection policy which launched in 2019 (Ahmad 2019).

There are multiple state- and donor-funded programmes here.

- The Child Development Grant Programme funded by DFID/ FCDO and implemented by Action Against Hunger (Adamu, Gallagher and Xavier 2016) gives a cash transfer and runs a campaign to improve health and nutrition practices, partly by providing information.
- The Jigawa State Government provides Income Support for Persons with Disabilities (Aiyede et al. 2015)
- A state-funded Social Security programme for persons with disabilities since 2007 has provided 7,000N (\$5.5) monthly to individuals in 50,000 households.
- The women in Agriculture programme, funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, provides women with fertilisers and seedling subsidies.
- A federal government 'grant for rural women' comprises a one-off unconditional cash transfer.
- A state-run women's empowerment initiative gives widows three goats, and female food vendors receive 10,000N (\$8).

Kano

- An EU–Japan funded programme offers grants to businesses affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, and includes a cash-for-work component for work to do with Covid-19 mitigation such as hospital cleaning (Newsdiary Online 2021).
- A federal government 'grant for rural women' involves a one-off unconditional cash transfer.

Katsina

- A state grant through the National Social Insurance Programme provides a cash transfer to women, including those with disabilities, as part of relief for the Covid-19 pandemic (Sardauna 2021).

Zamfara

- The Child Development Grant Programme was funded by DFID/ FCDO and implemented by Action Against Hunger.

Sokoto

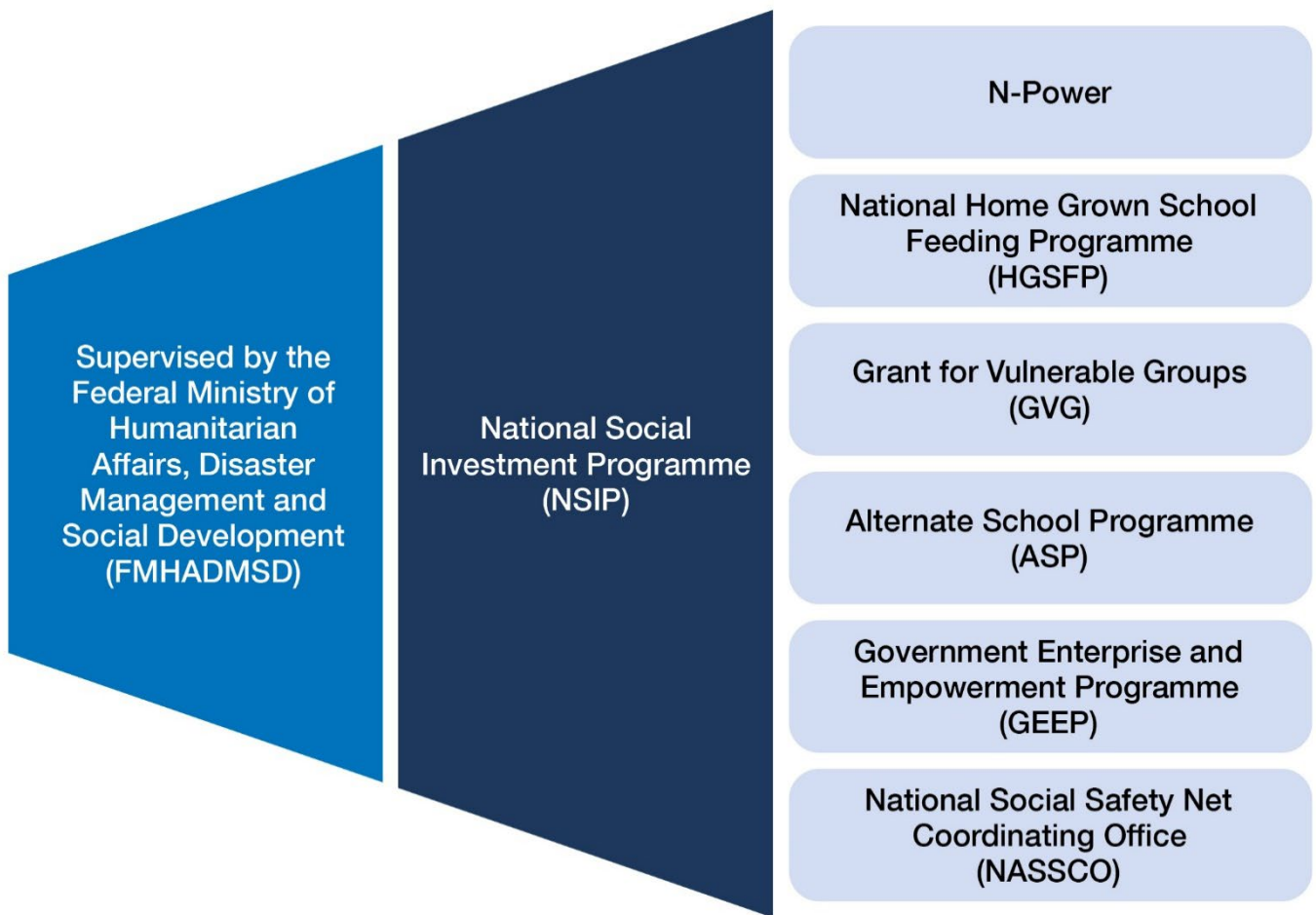
- The Joint SDG Fund’s Joint programme for Integrated Social Protection was piloted in Sokoto. It is trying to design a social protection bill at the state level and pilot a cash transfer (Joint SDG Fund 2020).
- The state delivers annual fertiliser subsidies.
- UNICEF carried out the Girls’ Empowerment Programme between 2014 and 2016, aiming to keep girls in school through unconditional cash transfers.

In terms of governance arrangements, at the Federal level the National Social Safety Net Coordinating Office (NASSCO) was established by the Government of Nigeria in 2016, under what is now the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development (FMHADMSD). NASSCO sits within the National Social Investment Programme which is a portfolio of national social protection programmes (Figure 2.1).

NASSCO houses the National Social Safety Net Project which oversees the delivery of three flagship programmes, one of which is led by the National Cash Transfer Office – Household Uplifting Programme-Conditional Cash Transfers (HUP-CCT) (Figure 2.2).

Despite accelerated policy provision at both federal and state level, implementation at state level remains weak. Coordination between federal and state levels is fragmented and susceptible to political influences. States have autonomy and responsibility to develop state-level social protection and assistance, but not always the funds to do so. A balancing act is required between having resources and the motivation to deliver programmes that federal government has instituted, and between resources and control or ownership. However, as programmes have become normalised and funded, more momentum is growing in favour of social protection.

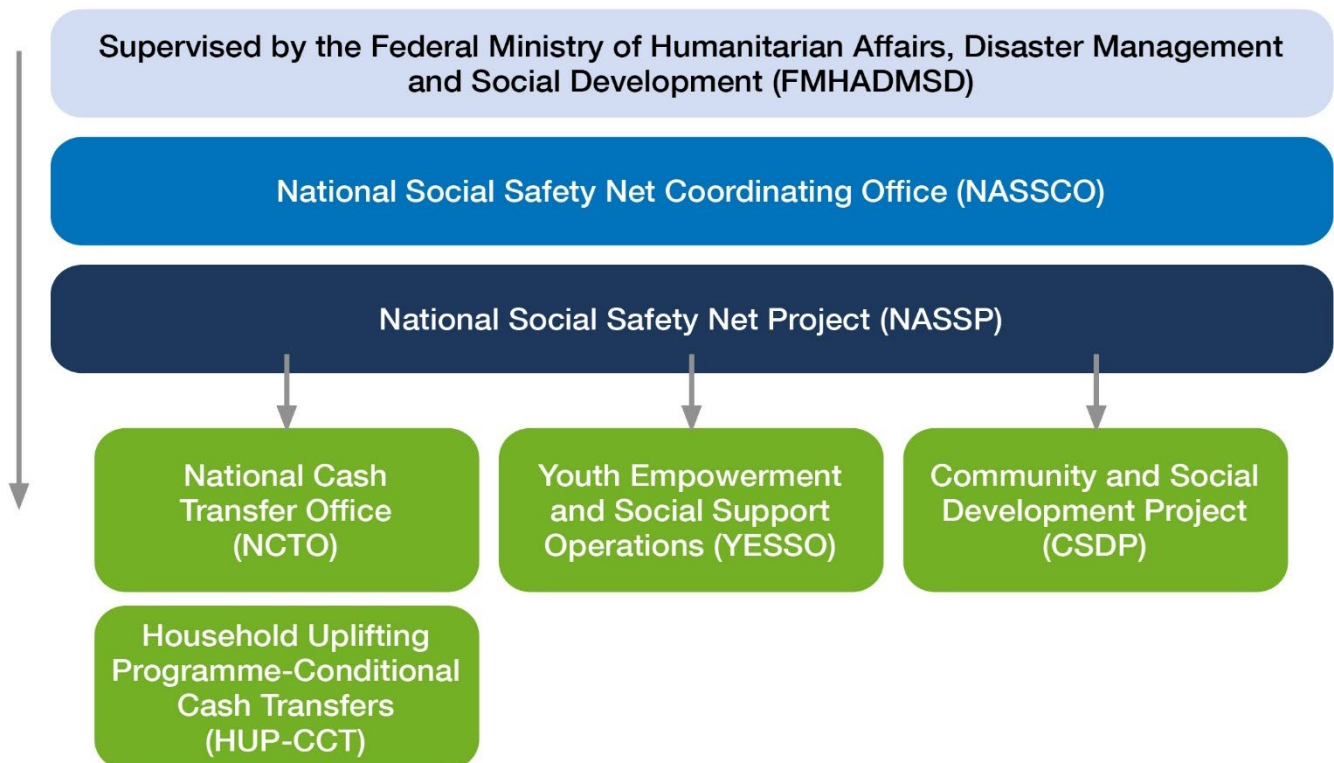
Figure 2.2: Components of the National Social Investment Programme (simplified)



Source: Author’s own.

Note: There are also important interlinkages with other ministries, for example, CTC is delivered by the FMHADMSD but has strong links to the Ministry of Budgeting and Ministry of Finance. NASSCO’s focus is the National Social Register and provides the mechanism but the transfer programme itself is encapsulated in the Government of Nigeria National Social Safety Net Project (NASSP).

Figure 2.3: Programmes under the National Social Safety Net Project overseen by NASSCO



Source: Author's own.

Note: NASSCO and NCTO are organisations providing functions in the delivery of social protection. However, they are implemented in a projectised manner (rather like project management units). The organogram here is meant to show the organisations' arrangements, rather than imply a funding hierarchy.

It is clear that many development partners (and humanitarian actors doing similar programming such as cash transfers extending into the medium term) choose to work with state governments rather than through the federal structure. Some states are therefore relatively well served in terms of financial resources as well as human resources and initiatives compared to others. The considerable disparity of capacities between the states contributes to the challenging nature of working across states and with federal structures.

In recent years with the emergence of increasingly severe and more frequent climate disasters, covariate events such as the Covid-19 pandemic, and protracted conflict, a growing range of shocks are shaping Nigeria's social protection landscape and the approaches that Nigeria takes to overcome these challenging contexts.

The most recent articulation of Nigeria's social protection policy – the revised Draft National Social Protection Policy (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2021) – includes mention, for the first time, of Shock Responsive Social Protection (SRSP). Development partners in turn are focusing on how they can contribute to advance SRSP as a stream of social protection investment favoured by both governments and donors. Adaptations to social protection approaches are also evident at programme or project level. Within the HUP-CCT programme, which delivers regular and reliable cash transfers to targeted poor and vulnerable households, SRSP is also used in response to crises, including assistance during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Fundamental to the SRSP agenda, Nigeria and its development partners have identified a suite of integral system features to make the social protection system shock-responsive. Subsequently a range of large internationally funded projects to develop these features have been funded. The key features are the National Social Registry, Digitisation of payments and the Management Information System (MIS).

The social protection landscape is made much more complex by the characteristics and variables of each state. Geographically the states can be highly variable with risks inter-relating and configured in different ways. Exposure to different types of shocks, varied climatic and natural resource environments, and different political groupings and political settlements shape varied patterns of economic development and livelihoods opportunities. These factors all influence the types of needs and vulnerabilities observed within the different geographic regions.

3. BASIC Research's Capacity Cube framework

Under the Crisis Resilient Social Protection branch of the BASIC Research portfolio, Slater (2024) has developed a Capacity Cube framework for understanding what capacities are needed to deliver social protection in situations of protracted crisis. Understanding what makes up the term 'capacity' and what it means in the social protection sector requires a granular approach. The cube framework is intended to help researchers with a broad overarching question: whether and how existing social protection programmes are sustained during crises (Figure 1.1). To do this, it is necessary to build a better understanding of capacity and coordination in the space where national, government-led social protection programmes, humanitarian assistance and development partners' initiatives overlap.

The Capacity Cube offers one way to break down capacity elements into three dimensions so that capacity can be understood and pinpointed to specific areas of the social protection architecture. These three dimensions are: levels, processes over time, and types of capacities.

The first dimension breaks down the all-encompassing term 'capacity' and offers three distinct types of capacity which can help when attempting to understand the complexity of protracted crisis settings:

- competency – what a person can do in a standardised, controlled environment;
- capability – what a person can do in their daily environment;
- performance – what a person actually does in their daily environment.

To give a working example, in June 2022 many states across Nigeria experienced flooding. In the months that pre-dated the floods, government staff at state levels had varying levels of skills and technical knowledge (competencies) to carry out their mandated roles which would result in the identified vulnerable populations receiving social assistance. Flooding caused widespread devastation and increased the proportion of vulnerable populations. In some cases, it also affected access to government offices and access to physical assistance delivery points. The staff whose job it is to deliver assistance were not able to reach flood-affected areas in these specific circumstances. The distinction between a standardised and a shock-affected environment has implications for delivery: capabilities – to adapt, to reassess, to change plans – become important in shock-affected situations. The final element to consider is what happens to performance during stressful situations. Dealing with floods for the best part of three months put the architecture and workforce and social protection service users under significant stress. It is worth investigating whether staff were able to function, or whether they experienced burnout and began to perform less well, which could have a strong bearing on whether programmes are sustained in crisis situations.

The second dimension is the orthodox distinction between individual, organisational and institutional levels. The individual level is about people, specifically staff, in organisations and their capacity as individuals to deliver their roles. The organisational level is focused on processes and systems, including elements of system architecture and assets – in Nigeria's case, the National Social Registry or MIS, or payment systems, or the existence of an algorithm to support targeting using the NSR. The institutional system switches the focus to the values and norms that underpin what organisations and individuals do. The Draft 2021 NSPP is an example of what Nigeria has available at its institutional level; the national policy articulates the mandates and obligations of each entity that makes up the social protection sector.

The third dimension is temporal and differentiates between building capacity, applying it, and maintaining it. This dimension allows a distinction to be made between the creation of capacity, whether it is implemented or used for the intended purpose, and whether attention is given to keeping systems or programmes updated, appropriate and relevant, enabling them to stand the test of time. For example, the NSR has a range of activities aimed at producing a comprehensive database of citizens. Significant efforts are made to develop this. The Covid-19 pandemic offered an opportunistic window to advance this, though it is clearly still in a 'build' phase. Roll-out of social assistance programmes using the enhanced NSR has begun, so elements of the NSR are being put into practice – or 'applied'. Project documentation regarding the NSR stipulate that there should be means to revise, adapt and update the NSR, so some reference exists to the importance of 'maintain'. It will be some time before it is clear whether the social protection architecture has the capacity to maintain the NSR.

The Capacity Cube framework is not particularly complex but it does suggest a comprehensive set of 27 different individual combinations. Each of the three dimensions can be plotted on an axis and each dimension has three components, forming the cube (Figure 1.1).

Originally, the framework was developed to focus only on what is called the ‘maintain’ element. The assumption was that this would capture the ways in which social protection must react during a shock to ensure that service users continue to receive assistance. However, in the course of this work, it became apparent that sustaining programmes and systems in the face of a shock or crisis, is not the same as maintaining them through regular, everyday challenges – such as information technology updates, or updating the data populating the NSR. The premise emerged, using language from disaster risk management (DRM), that a shock of a covariant nature with widespread impact and effects felt among a large population, is not the same as the gradual erosion of systems, the shifting situation of recipients and changing programme relevance over time. A stronger distinction is needed between maintaining programmes in relatively ‘normal’ situations versus sustaining systems and programmes during shocks and crises. Greater recognition would thus be given to consequences that are beyond the control of the social protection landscape and architecture (that is, systems and structures, and programmes).

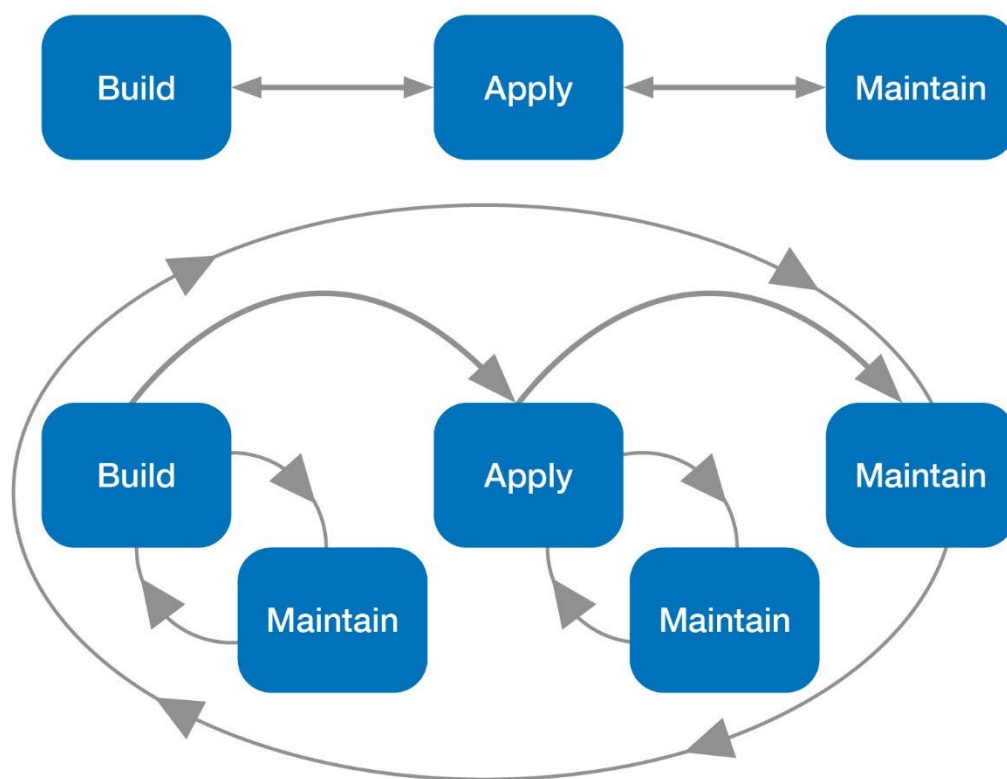
During shocks and in protracted crises when social protection systems are under strain, we want to look at how systems and projects respond. It is important to examine if components of social protection systems and programmes get paused or deprioritised and if they are subsequently revitalised. **It should be noted that Build – Apply – Maintain is not a linear time frame.** It is tempting to see it as sequential but the three phases can, and do, work concurrently, at different rates and can both reinforce or hinder one another’s progress (Figure 3.1). For example, developing the hardware of the MIS may require that as it gets built, the workforce are simultaneously updating their competencies (acquiring technical skills to use the system). Revisions – which are part and parcel of routine maintenance of systems – can also be concurrently happening and feeding into a learning and applying loop.

Figure 3.1: Beyond linear approaches to capacity

Three phases of progression

The trajectory is progressive, not necessarily linear or cyclical...

...but a dynamism of concurrency and reinforcement



Source: Author's own.

Access to different types of material and documentation can improve our understanding of the relationships between the different temporal phases and what this means for capacity-strengthening outcomes. For example, if a capacity initiative was observed in its 'build' phase, we can presume that it would filter through to the apply phase – there would be something to say about its application, and this would thus populate two layers of the cube's framework. If the content is not permeating through to the next layer (i.e. from front to middle to back; or Build to Apply to Maintain), we can presume that there is a capacity gap. A capacity development evaluation would be able to establish if initiatives are being applied. An example of this is the National Scorecard stipulated in the Draft 2021 NSPP which is mandated to provide detailed evidence on programme performance. The policy also states that the scorecard is not operational. So, although the hallmarks of conscientious policy and the tools and processes are in place, and there is (as yet somewhat hollow) infrastructure to grow into, questions emerge. Why is it not yet operational? What are the barriers and challenges for deploying the scorecard? What is needed to ensure deployment and use? This is an example of 'built but not applied'. It demonstrates that transitions from build to apply do not occur automatically, and certainly not in a simple linear way with a clear pattern of causation. A conscious move is needed to implement and build the infrastructure around the scorecard for its use.

Using the Capacity Cube in the Nigerian context creates a granular and detailed picture of capacities (and capacity deficits). Using it will enable the interrogation and unpacking of differences between the federal and state levels of government. It can also provide a space to explore differences within states, looking at local government authorities and implementing partners.

4. Applying the Capacity Cube to Nigeria

The findings from the review of approaches to capacity strengthening in the social protection sector in Nigeria can be summarised in a number of main points. The detail underpinning these points is found in Annexe B.

Examining the sources using the cube structure provides a number of entry points to understanding approaches to social protection capacity strengthening in Nigeria. The cube helps to identify the main focus of the capacity-strengthening initiatives led by development partners, and how far the social protection architecture is set up to be sustained under stressor environments. The Capacity Cube framework focuses on an assessment of approaches to capacity, identifying where investments are made and where there are gaps. It does not, in this instance, assess social protection capacity itself nor has it sought to assess the capacity of the social protection system and architecture including the actors, departments and offices that deliver social protection. To do that would be a different activity for a potential later stage of research. Instead, this paper offers an overview of the general capacity approaches and focus points of the Nigerian government and its implementing development partners.

This section describes what the cube looks like when it is applied to the Nigerian context. By doing so, we can start to build a picture of where the strengths lie in capacity-building efforts, and by extension we hypothesise whether these areas are strongly equipped to achieve desired aims. This will also help us to identify gaps and overlooked areas which, based on our framework, are considered to be essential if social protection systems and architecture are to be resilient and sustained in and throughout crises. Annexe B uses colour coding to provide a visual depiction of where the main capacity initiatives are targeted and provides evidence in support of each colour tag. The colours are reproduced in summary form in the three layers of the cube depicted in the cluster of grids in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Initiatives to build, apply and maintain capacities in social protection

Key:	Blank	Red	Amber	Green
	Unknown. No evidence found in literature review.	Evidence of little to no provision towards this element within the cube.	From review of material there are some provisions towards this element within the cube.	From review of material there are substantial provisions towards this element within the cube.

Build				
Institutional	Green	Blank	Green	
Organisational	Green	Amber	Amber	
Individual	Amber	Blank	Red	
	Competency	Capability	Performance	

Apply				
Institutional	Red	Amber	Amber	
Organisational	Amber	Red	Blank	
Individual	Blank	Red	Blank	
	Competency	Capability	Performance	

Maintain				
Institutional	Red	Blank	Red	
Organisational	Green	Blank	Blank	
Individual	Blank	Blank	Blank	
	Competency	Capability	Performance	

Source: Author's own

In Nigeria, most of the efforts that we could find evidence for were focused on building capacities.

The document review for this paper is predominantly based on implementation manuals, project documents and policies. See Table 4.2 for the major capacity-strengthening investments of the social protection sector occurring in Nigeria at the time of this literature review. These initiatives have been mapped using the Capacity Cube framework and contribute predominantly to building capacities. Substantial efforts and investments are being made in institutional strengthening and coordination, with four focus areas: i) the strategic plan; ii) system development (National Social Registry, payment digitisation, citizen engagement and accountability mechanism, etc.); iii) capacity building (training, technical assistance, technical assistance with data analysis and validation); and iv) coordination mechanisms and policy dialogue. Though the initiatives support and contribute to these four areas of institutional strengthening and coordination, they mostly narrow their focus on a specific social protection programme (usually the HUP-CCT) and/or a particular component of systems development. They apply their focus in a narrow, though important, feature of the social protection system, such as the social registry.

Project documents relating to these investments have been the basis of this paper. The majority of the language is articulated through sector-adopted language for communicating objectives and planning in implementation manuals, and project appraisal documents.

There is much less evidence and less apparent focus on support to enable applying and maintaining capacities that are built. {Footnote 2: For examples from other countries, see Slater (2022) and Slater et al. (2022).} This paper makes the argument that in Nigeria very little focus is on capacity initiatives for maintaining capacity and this is common with the little evidence from other countries that are facing these questions (Box 1.1).

The document review for this paper is predominantly based on implementation manuals, project documents and policies. Mid-term reports and evaluations would support exploration of the extent to which plans and activities are going ahead and how well they are getting done. Such documents in the case of this review were not readily found in the public domain. Articulation of how to maintain Nigeria's social protection architecture is absent, and this is also depicted in the Cube for Nigeria. Furthermore, there is very little from the documentation that can populate the framework in a substantial way to enable us to comment on how capacity approaches contribute to sustaining the social protection architecture at the time of crises.

With regards to learning from experience and evidence around maintaining capabilities during shocks in developing and crisis contexts, it is possible to draw upon proxy best practices, and early warning systems or learning from humanitarian actors. This, however, takes us into the question of 'preparedness' (borrowing the language from disaster risk reduction and management schools of practice). It also prompts the questions of how much we prioritise preparedness to protect our systems, and how much we view that as being too much of an investment – and something that we don't do until it is too late. In this case, social protection preparedness and/or preparedness to maintain capacity is very different from shock-responsive social protection which may steer towards 'build the system and have a registry'. The focus for preparedness to maintain capacity is much more about capacities of individuals and systems, as opposed to the capacities of programmes to keep delivering.

The document review offered a number of perspectives with regard to maintaining social protection systems in general and sustaining social protection specifically during crises. The Nigerian national policy does consider sustainability in terms of 'the degree to which the services or processes continue in the face of a decline or discontinuation of inputs in terms of funds, materials, training etc. provided by the original source(s)' (Federal Government of Nigeria 2021: 19). This is problematic because, given the unlimited possibilities of disruption to the programmes/policy, this view is somewhat narrow and only considers those aspects that are risks which directly implicate the availability of resource inputs. It does not give much allowance for deviance of circumstances or context and is based on a set of assumptions that the inputs are near to fixed, regular and dependable. Nor does it account for external risks and shocks beyond the control of the policy and programme stakeholders which could be debilitating for 'business continuity'. With little mention of the political and security environment, it is unknown whether this is an oversight and there is no provision for addressing the consequences of these factors – or whether it is implying that the assumptions regarding the political and security situation are stable and dependable (Harvey and Mohamed 2022).

Table 4.2: Support and interventions mapping

Support category by components (ILO 2022)	Supporting partners (ILO 2022)	Current/planned donor support measure (ILO 2022)	Projects
Institutional Strengthening and Coordination: (i) Strategic plan • Situation Analysis • Strategic Plan (ii) System Development - NSR, Payment Digitisation, Citizen Engagement and Accountability Mechanism, etc. (iii) Capacity building (Training, TA, Technical Assistance with Data Analysis and Validation) (iv) Coordination Mechanism and Policy Dialogue	World Bank	The World Bank is providing ongoing support through the IDA loan for implementing the National Social Safety Nets Project (NASSP), which includes building of the current National Social Register (NSR) and the Household Uplifting Programme-Conditional Cash Transfer (HUP-CCT). The NASSP support also includes technical assistance and support to NASSCO for coordination and institutionalisation of social safety nets in Nigeria and the delivery systems for the CCT payment. (i) Systems Development – NSR, Payment Digitisation, Citizen Engagement and Accountability Mechanism (ii) Capacity building (Training, TA, Logistics) (iii) Coordination mechanisms and policy dialogue (iv) Research – ‘Beneficiary Satisfactory Survey and Targeting Process Evaluation’ and ‘Covid-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus Program Project’	Covid-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus Program Total Project Cost: \$750m Duration: 14 December 2020 to 30 June 2023 Implementing Agency: Federal CARES Support Unit, Department of Economic Growth, FMBFNP World bank (2020a) Nigeria Digital Identification for Development Project Total Project Cost: \$430m Duration: 18 February 2020 to 30 June 2024 Implementing Agency: National Identity Management Commission World Bank (2020b) National Social Safety Net Program-Scale Up Total Project Cost: \$430m Duration: 16 December 2021 to 30 June 2024 Implementing Agency: Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development Mohammed (2021) National Social Safety Nets Project Total Project Cost: \$ 1.83bn Duration: 7 June 2016 to 31 December 2022 Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development World Bank (2016)
	DFID (FCDO)	FCDO (previously known as DFID) contributes to all support categories, through CDGP and GPF (World Bank). Existing support: (i) Strategic/policy, (ii) systems building, (iii) capacity building and (iv) coordination support to federal government, and state governments in Jigawa, Zamfara, Kano and Kaduna. Planned support: (i) Engagement of two technical specialists (Cash Transfer Technical Officer to the Minister and Social Protection Technical Officer to the Minister) for FMHDS (ii) Capacity building on social protection for relevant officials of FMHDS and other relevant line ministries.	
	UNICEF	Planned support: – Situation Analysis (UNICEF/UNDP/EU) – Coordination Mechanism and Policy Dialogue (UNICEF)	
	EU/ILO-ECDEVCO	Strengthening and Expanding the National Social Registry (NSR) as a shock-responsive social protection system in Nigeria – Strengthen NSR Database with improved mechanisms for interoperability with humanitarian relief as well as rapid relief to vulnerable groups impacted by shocks, including economic shocks in Yobe and Adamawa States – Improve coordination structure and ownership of NSR among stakeholders – (a) Strengthen capacity of FMHDS to implement and monitor gender-sensitive, disability-inclusive social protection systems, (b) improve ability of FMHDS to apply shock-sensitive SP programmes adapted to the needs of people living in protracted fragility and crises, including persons with disabilities, (c) strengthen the knowledge and capacity of NASSCO and partners agencies to use and implement flexible NSR modalities, (d) create guidelines for ‘pilot’ projects coupling cash transfer with health insurance.	Strengthening and Expanding the National Social Registry (NSR) as a shock-responsive social protection system in Nigeria Total budget: \$2m Duration: 1 January 2020 to 30 June 2022 (30 months) UN Agencies: UNICEF, ILO, UNDP, WFP, WHO National Partners: Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning; Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development; National Social Safety Nets Coordinating Office; National Cash Transfer Office; National Health Insurance Scheme; Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on SDGs; Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment; Sokoto State Government, Ministry of Education; Sokoto State Zakat Commission; Sokoto State Ministry of Women’s and Children’s Affairs; State SDGs Office

Source: Author’s own. Information sources cited.

The implementation manual of the national social protection policy uses the term 'enabling environment' to set out the roles and mandates of stakeholders. This addresses some of the wider institutional aspects of capacities but neglects questions of culture, attitudes and values because it is narrowly focused on operations. It does not look at how the stipulated roles and mandates would operate in a context of crises and how they may adapt. By setting out roles and mandates, the manual provides coordination and communication for immediate needs, but does not necessarily allow for the 'what ifs' of adverse circumstances. Should mechanisms for coordination and communication be in operation across the different roles and mandates, that could pave the way for improved efficiency at times of heightened stressors. However, this assumption is implicit as is the assumption that coordination and communication happen.

Beyond references to shock-responsive social protection (SRSP), there is very limited focus on crises. SRSP first appears in the Draft 2021 NSPP. It acknowledges the popular movement for shock responsive social protection favoured by many governments around the world, but does not discuss crises much further. There is little provision in the high-level documents detailing how roles, mandates, systems and processes would flex and adapt in the event of crises. For example, as stipulated in the World Bank Programme Information Document (PID), there is a provision in the NASSP-SU project for operations to continue at times of insecurity in the country with the employment of security personnel. However, the project does not elaborate on the intention and roles of the security personnel. Will they be deployed predominantly on the ground and to protect service users so they can access social assistance if needing to receive it in person? Or will the security personnel be for government staff and buildings so that they can attend work daily?

A second example from the document also illustrates that considerations of how to sustain systems are being made but with little explicit provision of what would happen in the event of adverse circumstances. These considerations from both examples are likely to be insufficient to allow programmes to continue operating in crises. The issue of how to sustain systems during crises is complex – it goes far beyond measures for physical security. Systematic and procedural measures of the social protection architecture also need attention.

Despite little policy provision, it is evident that the agenda for SRSP is growing within Nigeria. Yet it is not clear what the knock-on effect will be for sustaining existing programmes once the crisis triggering SRSP subsides. The interest in SRSP is clear from the investments made by large leading development partners that focus on improving components of the social protection architecture so that in the event of a shock or crisis, critical features (organisational competencies) can be deployed to move implementation from a normative state to a context that is more complex and intensified. Investment has gone into the National Social Registry and complementary programmes such as digitisation and the ability to make/receive mobile payments more easily. The conclusions of this review go on to discuss the nature of projectising these capacity-strengthening initiatives, and by doing so risk dealing with components of the social protection system in isolation and in fragmented ways: this has an implication for capacity to sustain social protection.

On the whole, the headline capacity initiatives can be seen as focused at the organisational level in preference to the individual and institutional levels. The investments summarised in Table 4.2 demonstrate this. Capacity strengthening is at the heart of the projects but this is predominantly focused on building a feature, a component, or contributing in some way to the social protection architecture (such as a registry, a grievance mechanism, MIS). The targeted component is a key building block for successful delivery of social protection, but considered alone, it is a mechanism – a feature that provides a function. In this paper a component of the social protection system is considered as an organisational competency. Significant investment and radio time are given to these features by international agencies (Table 4.1), while the articulation of capacity initiatives is predominantly focused and measured by the tangible organisational competencies that are developed and in place.

This is not to say that there are no individual or institutional capacity initiatives. There are, but they are articulated highly implicitly. Capacity-strengthening inputs are largely delivered at the individual level with the assumption that organisational competencies are built. A narrow focus on developing features at the organisational competency level (e.g. having a registry, MIS), appears to suggest that the input in the supply chain is in one very specific place (individual – competency – build (i.e. people receiving training)), but the

outcomes happen somewhere else (organisational – competency – build). However, the pathways between the inputs and the outcomes are rather intangible given all the different factors, variables, moving parts and varied contexts. A simple theory of change for how capacities are strengthened does not stand up to scrutiny as an approach.

Capacity initiatives aimed at the individual level largely uses the language of technical and hard skills. For example, in the implementation manual for the NASSP, acquisition of skills and improvement of capacity comes from predominantly attending training courses and workshops. With no access to competency frameworks that are publicly available, it is hard to distinguish whether provision for individual capacity initiatives actually result in attaining desired competencies. However, Slater (2024) makes a case that technical skills need to be accompanied by the development of functional skills in order to navigate the complex nature and contexts of social protection in protracted crises. Focusing capacity initiative input at the individual level does not necessarily translate to results beyond the individual level. The narrow focus on building competencies makes it appear that capacity-strengthening approaches do not yet translate to sector- or system-wide intended and anticipated outcomes of inputs at the individual level. It is not clear how capacity initiative inputs at the individual level result in outputs and outcomes other than at an individual level; or whether input at the individual level is focused on the right element (i.e. on competency versus capability versus performance)?

What is evident from looking at the visualisation of Nigeria's Capacity Cube is that there seems to be a divide between the articulation of individual competencies for a role, and the development of systems and structures at the organisational level. There is seemingly a divide between human resource development of knowledge and skills for delivery and the actual development of the social protection system. By this we mean that individual staff are trained to deliver specific areas of organisation-level architecture – for example, to build a registry or use data to establish an algorithm for targeting – but that attention is on individual elements or projects within the system, rather than creating a balanced system. It is difficult to discern what the implications might be for the broader question of how to sustain existing programmes during a crisis.

There also appears to be a break in the translation of institutional policies to organisational practices. Big high-level policies exist, and they are part of the institutional capacity. However, differences at state level with different experiences and different rules and ways of doing things mean that having a policy does not always lead to programmes and operations looking or rolling out the same way in different places. So a break occurs in the vertical translation of policies to states, which tends to result from an assumption that all states have the same capacity. In reality the translation of policies from institutional to organisational to individual level is different in different states. The translation happens in different ways, in part because of capabilities and the different working environments that social protection staff face each day. An example of this would be when translating the same principles and expectations from one state or geographic area to another without recognising the importance of varying factors and contexts. There is provision in the policy regarding differentiation between states; however the current approach – of practising and piloting in areas with relatively greater capacity – risks exporting capacity approaches (and expectations of programme delivery and effectiveness) without paying attention to contextual factors. This is particularly the case where efforts to build and apply organisational competencies take place irrespective of limited institutional capacities.

Historically, the agenda for gender and social inclusion (GESI) has had little provision at the institutional level which in turn has had an impact at organisational and programme levels. Lessons learnt from the implementation of the 2017–2020 Social Protection policy, highlighted that there was little provision and integration for Gender and Social Inclusion. This resulted in very little coverage of social assistance for various populations particularly children, working class (informal sector) people, people who are chronically ill, and people with disabilities. Older people aged between 60 and 65 years were not captured within programmes. The lack of GESI conceptualised at the institutional level had a cascade effect into programmatic outcomes.

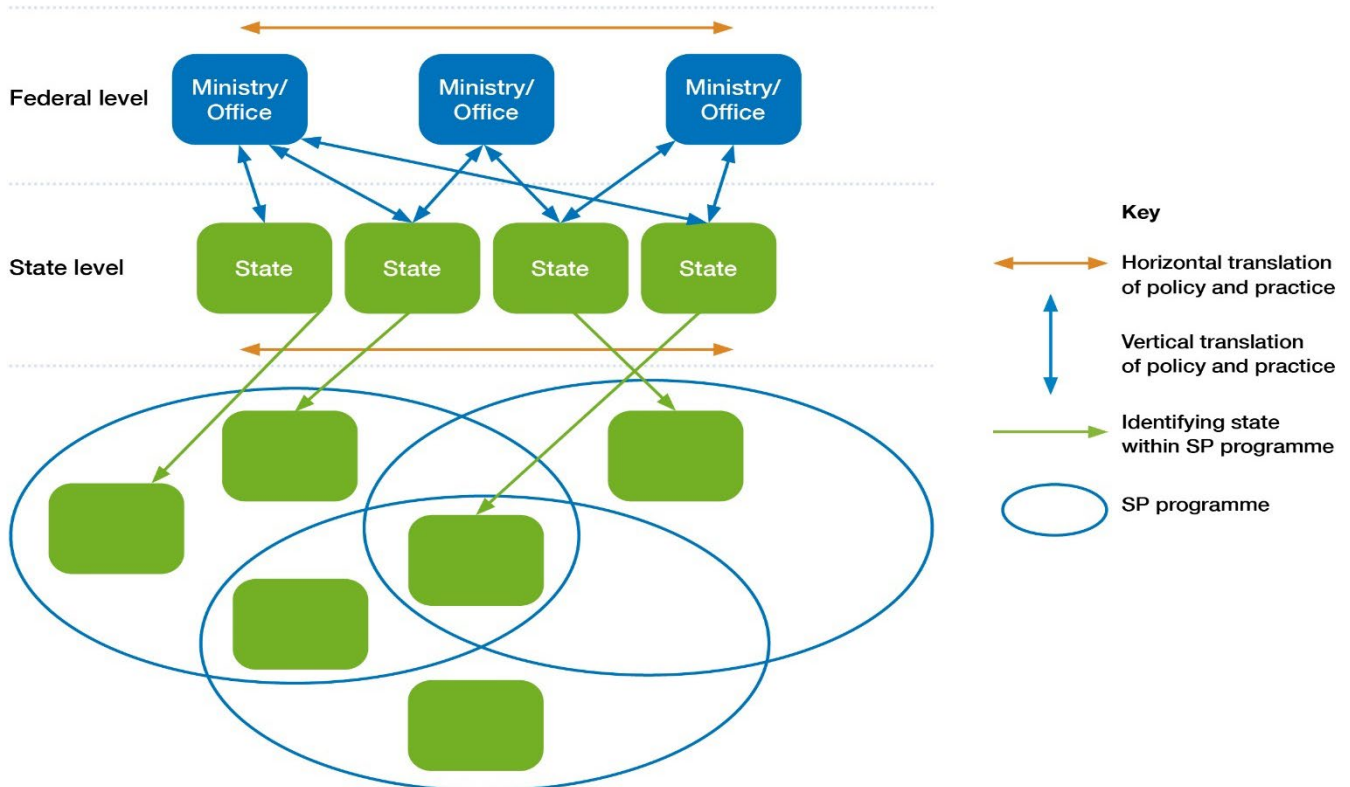
The Draft 2021 NSPP has addressed these shortcomings by introducing policy objectives that explicitly target the GESI populations for improved coverage. Additionally, there are marked efforts to integrate GESI in the design of programmes by donor-funded social protection programmes (NASSP-SU, World Bank).

In the Draft 2021 NSPP there is current provision for GESI-sensitive programming at the institutional level, with policies including features that are clearly underpinned by GESI-sensitive values and a focus on tackling inequality. Yet, the focus of GESI is very much within the realms of programmes. There is not necessarily explicit provision and focus for GESI in the supply chain beyond the programme. In other words, it is not known whether the same principles are applied at the organisational and individual levels. Having a gap at organisational and individual levels will mean that processes and systems are likely to be inclusion-blind and may have only a weak influence on culture, behaviour and attitudes when applied to other programming or sectoral elements. If not integrated at all levels, there is a risk of perpetuating exclusion and of only allowing and encouraging inclusion in the ‘hardware’ of the programmes. While provision is made for GESI institutional arrangements, we do not know the extent to which they work and function on a practical level and whether each entity has what they need to be able to carry out their mandated roles and responsibilities in line with GESI.

These examples further highlight the need to better understand the dynamic and relationships between institutional and organisational levels to ascertain where the capacities are, what are the gaps, and how best to fill them.

One place to start is by recognising that the different social protection programmes and sectors with social protection programmes operate in and among the ministries in different ways and at the different levels. For example, in Nigeria the health ministry operates at a high level of decentralisation, while education operates at a high level of centralisation. Where this is the case and they are expected to use the same systems and features of the social protection system, various questions arise. Are the federal and state levels both well equipped to interact with these different actors on the same issues but at differing degrees of engagement? What implications does this have on, for example, utilising the NSR for both ministries at federal and state levels respectively? Is there provision for capacity building in respective ministries and at respective government levels? How would they need to differ as a result of their differences? Figure 4.1 depicts the complexities of the many different relationships within the social protection sector.

Figure 4.1: Relationships between and among levels and programmes



Source: Author's own.

The Joint SDG Fund project 'Institutionalising SP for accelerated SDG implementation in Nigeria' is trying to bridge between the levels (predominantly with an institutional and organisational focus) so that learning is iterative. By applying learning in concurrent spaces (national and state levels), it is reinforcing that long-term systemic change is needed while accelerating implementation. In doing so, the project spans across the temporal phases of the Capacity Cube framework: build and apply. The project has built a two-pronged approach which combines an institutional approach (policy and capacity strengthening) at federal level with the implementation of tangible interventions in one participating state, as a 'blueprint'.

However, the idea of having a state act as a 'blueprint' for implementing more widely the systemic transformation the project hopes to build is somewhat problematic. It cannot be assumed that all states have the same institutional, organisational, and individual competencies, nor in their architecture or contexts, which then affects capabilities. Referring to a 'blueprint' is futile therefore, because what works or does not work in that particular state may not necessarily reflect what is possible in other states. It cannot be assumed that a horizontal translation of policy and practice can occur between states. Secondly, context is and should not be underestimated: what makes up the architecture and the environment of the social protection landscape in a state should be given great consideration. Taking lessons learnt from one location and applying them to another has the potential to prematurely load (where too much is asked too soon, too often of a fledging service such as social protection) (Pritchett, Woolcock and Andrew 2010). This can paralyse the system and social protection landscape, bestowing negative effects on the parts that actually do work. An explicit example is where proxy means testing is pushed too quickly in places where community targeting is working reasonably well, and then fails to perform because of a lack of recent and robust data to inform the algorithm; or the application of national algorithms in situations where the drivers of poverty and vulnerability may be different from a notional national norm.

Currently the cube composition is more focused on the organisational competency element across the phase axis (Build – Apply – Maintain), but as the visual progresses from the front of the cube (Build) towards the back (Maintain), the considerations become weaker and fewer. This raises questions about whether there is a tangible pathway for achieving: 1) strong organisational capacity presence throughout the three temporal phases; 2) cascading and filtration effects up and down the levels but also through the other layers of the cube; and 3) strong causal relationships identifying the pathway for individual competencies that have real organisational outcomes rather than individual outcomes.

5. Key messages and conclusions

A significant focus on building organisational competency and an accompanying lack of investments in the wider elements (capabilities and performance, apply and maintain) risk leading to an imbalanced, under-performing social protection system.

At the institutional level, governance structures are set out with their expected responsibilities and functions. However, it is probable that these structures will be undermined by the lack of systems and procedures and by data and management information systems that are available and improving, albeit patchy.

In the same vein, with regard to the SRSP agenda introduced in the Draft 2021 NSPP, there are elements which can strengthen Nigeria's capability to deliver SRSP, such as an improved registry system. While this has direct impact on the ability of social protection to achieve greater coverage of the population during shocks, there are elements that are not explicitly being addressed which could also contribute to the improved SRSP services. These are located outside the social protection sector. Examples include having instrumental funding flows articulated and approved at federal and state level; having reliable internet access for states to be operational; having mobile money infrastructure; or physical access to locations that are disrupted by shocks or instability. At present, because elements of SRSP are so focused on registries and targeting, the potential of SRSP goes untapped with some areas of substantial strength dominating the capacity agenda and rendering less visible a number of other areas where resourcing and investments are important. The result of this imbalance can be inadequate or unintended outcomes, or perhaps an absence of results.

In the social protection system, we found a focus on 'build' far more than on 'apply' and 'maintain'. This is just as likely to occur in other sectors such as health, education, agriculture, or rural development. Solutions to this mismatch are likely to be found across development investments, not just those with an emphasis on the social protection system. However, this does not mean that social protection actors should ignore this situation. They should be constantly checking their capacity-strengthening efforts and ensuring that they are focusing on 'apply', 'maintain' and not just on 'build'.

The organisational competency focus means not enough attention is given to foundational capacities. This concerns those that are functional rather than technical, and that are cross-sectoral or cross-departmental, rather than related solely to the social protection sector.

In Nigeria much attention is paid to building the National Social Registry, the MIS and a digitised system for registry and payments. While all of these elements are conducive for creating an improved social protection system, because activities are so focused on these features, the foundations on which to build these features could be overlooked. If capacity is not built holistically across levels (individual, organisational, institutional) and types of capacity (competency, capability performance), it runs the risk of unbalancing the importance of building each of those components where all three levels are required to have inputs to make a change.

However, it is unclear if and how shared competencies across sectors, and wider functional capabilities might be built (and applied and maintained), notably because so many investments in capacity are projectised. There are few incentives to share capacities between sectors and departments, nor is there encouragement to work outside very specific technical activities.

At the heart of the evidence from Nigeria lies a tricky Catch-22: the projectisation of capacity strengthening – with its focus on individual and organisational competencies rather than wider elements – is there for good reasons. International actors in the social protection system have concerns about fiduciary risks, absorptive capacity and corruption when considering their investment. Projectised approaches allow some of the financial management risks to be managed and significantly reduced. However, such an approach also constrains efforts to build capacity in two ways: 1) it ties capacity-strengthening initiatives into tightly bound technical areas of competency, where capabilities and performance receive little attention; and 2) it siloes development that has the potential to have wider investments that mutually benefit the health, education, livelihoods and social protection sectors collectively.

Can actors act on their intentions when it comes to whole-system capacity strengthening? While the representation of capacity strengthening in key documents appears to put capacity at the heart of investments by international actors in government social protection programmes, it is not clear that their projectised approaches are supporting the whole-system building that is needed. The World Bank, the International Labour Organization (ILO), Save the Children, and the European Union all have projects with built-in capacity development components. Articulation of outcome objectives and rationale all point towards a capacity-strengthening agenda of the systems and structures of the social protection landscape. This is explicit and at the heart of international actors' approaches.

However, the projectisation of investments focused on a small number of specific features of social protection systems points to a rather limited, not yet clearly articulated process for harnessing individual capabilities and performance, and for how the organisational and institutional levels intersect.

Even though many investments are essentially capacity-strengthening projects, there is little articulation of a capacity framework and a strategic approach by which projects intend to strengthen capacity within the social protection sector. For example, the project implementation manual of the NASSP is a 154-page document which dedicates two pages to addressing capacity building directly. Among the projects supporting the NASSP, there is little or no articulation of the environment needed to support the capacities of individuals. As a result, the real world (beyond the trainer's classroom and online courses) and how it affects people's capacities to do their work, is under-discussed, under-explored and under-resourced.

The discussion about sustaining social protection is predominantly centred on funding rather than other resources and capacity. Discussion about sustainability, and business continuity in particular, is about the policy outlook for funding, with suggestions about exploring alternative avenues of funding (especially the private sector and trust funds) to find means for continuing in the absence of resources. Capacity to sustain only covers capacity to sustain funding and is not about sustaining a functioning and effective workforce or tackling the reasons for declining performance.

This paper has demonstrated that using the Capacity Cube makes visible the imbalances and the gaps in investments in social protection in Nigeria. This is only a first step towards changing the way that we think about capacity in situations of protracted crisis. Investigating these gaps and missing elements will require more detailed research into actual implementation that goes beyond looking at project documents. It will be important, going forward, to understand more about how these capacities shift and change – as conflicts bubble up and become protracted and create new challenges for the staff who deliver social assistance. Understanding which capacities become increasingly important in situations of protracted crisis, and how they can be protected, could provide pathways to a more effective and efficient social protection system in Nigeria, and beyond.

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Annexe A: Methods and evidence base

Methods

This paper provides a literature review that maps and analyses current (and previous) approaches to capacity strengthening of social protection systems and programmes in Nigeria. It covers what is currently being done, what the approaches are to capacity strengthening, what the main focus points are and how capacity-strengthening objectives are intended to be met.

Literature searches of SCOPUS, Google Scholar and Google were carried out using combinations of terms outlined in Table A1. Each search contained up to three terms, one from each column.

Table A.1: Key words for literature searches

Term 1: Country context	Term 2: Social protection	Term 3: Capacity
Nigeria	Social protection	Capacity strengthening
Western Africa	Social assistance	Capacity development
	Cash transfers	Skills strengthening
		System strengthening
		Organisational development
		Institutional development
		Capacity assessment
		Capacity framework

Source: Author's own.

As with previous experience of searching 'capacity', this yielded very many results as the searches and results did not always distinguish 'whose' capacity was being referred to. The majority of the examples were focused on building capacity of recipients of social protection, and building capacity of features and functions of social protection architecture (digital payment system, MIS, registries). Far fewer sources were focused on areas of equal if not greater interest – namely, building capacity of government institutions and organisations and/or of implementing agencies.

A key deciding factor to help discern whether hits from literature searches were relevant and of interest was whether it had been written within or since the period of either the Draft National Social Protection Policy, published in July 2021, or during the previous social protection policy period, 2017 to 2021. Literature that pre-dated 2017 – of which there was very little – was disregarded unless it was deemed a cornerstone to the development of the 2017–2021 policy (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2016).

It was observed very early on that SCOPUS and Google Scholar searches generated very few relevant hits at this stage of the research because the material of most interest was operational and strategic documentation of national programmes and government systems. Results generated by SCOPUS and Google Scholar were largely focused on humanitarian, cash transfer pilot programmes with little involvement of government structures and systems.

In Google, screening of searches was also challenging because the searches also yielded a large number of results, many from online Nigerian news outlets. These proved helpful in painting a picture of what social protection and cash-based transfer initiatives were occurring in different parts of Nigeria and run by whom. This then allowed for a snowballing approach of sorts and looking into the project donors and implementing organisations to explore project efforts for strengthening capacity of government and how their initiatives linked (or not) to the national programmes and platforms.

Material used in this review had to refer explicitly to capacity strengthening of government structures, systems and national social protection programmes.

These sources were then read and analysed using the Capacity Cube framework. The approaches towards capacity strengthening were mapped onto the cube, allowing for gaps to be identified where there are seemingly capacity-strengthening blind spots.

What does the evidence base look like?

The evidence base of this paper was hard to find through literature searches in part because of the way in which the term 'capacity' is used. A broad and dense collection of material referred to 'capacity', however much of it was discounted using criteria that differentiated it based on 'whose' capacity was being discussed. Material referring to the capacity to receive support, to engage in programme processes, was screened out (particularly because this covers questions of community engagement and inclusion that are the subject of another BASIC Research project). Material referring to a government's capacity (along with development partners such as NGOs and international bilateral and multilateral agencies) was shortlisted, along with other materials describing activities being undertaken explicitly to strengthen federal and state governments' capacities and capacities of national programmes.

Much of the literature found in searches related to cash transfer-based programmes and from humanitarian actors; thus, by nature, these have very little reference to governments and national programmes. While lessons can be learnt from the humanitarian sector and in other programmes besides national ones, the focus of the paper is to primarily understand the national (both federal and state) social protection landscapes and capacity strengthening therein. Publicly available government documents were hard to come by, beyond the national policy and implementation plan for the social protection sector.

Of the material that was of interest, much of it came from agencies and international implementing partners with large, funded projects that focus predominantly on federal-level capacity strengthening and/or a specific feature of the social protection architecture (such as the National Social Registry, digitisation of payments and registration, MIS). The material consequently took the form of project concept notes, business cases, project appraisal documentation, implementation plans, and project information documents. Of the publicly available information found, what can be done analytically with this material is limited because the foresaid types of material focus on plans: they set objectives and mandates, they identify and describe implementation plans – they tackle **what** is intended to happen, and **how** it is intended to be rolled out. However, they are insufficient to appraise the extent to which objectives are being met, and the strengths and weaknesses of the current landscape and actors. To delve into the appraisal of effectiveness, achievements and lesson learning would require mid-term reviews, evaluations, project reports and capacity assessments and frameworks. These would contribute to an in-depth analysis of capacity strengthening in the Nigerian context.

Annexe B: Capacity Cube applied to Nigeria

Annexe B provides a visual depiction of which parts of the cube receive greatest attention in terms of capacity initiatives. It does not seem to assess the capacity of the social protection system itself. Just because government and other actors choose to invest resources in specific parts of the cube, it should not be assumed that these are the areas where capacity-strengthening needs are greatest or most urgent.

Table A.2: Summary of evidence that demonstrates initiatives that ‘build’ capacity in the Nigerian social protection sector

Key:	Blank	Red	Amber	Green
	Unknown. No evidence found in literature review.	Evidence of little to no provision towards this element within the cube.	From review of material there are some provisions towards this element within the cube.	From review of material there are substantial provisions towards this element within the cube.

Build			
Institutional	(Green) There is a policy framework for social protection. There is significant evidence of policy and strategies being developed with regards to the Nigerian SP sector – this is evident from the number of large internationally funded projects headed by the big UN agencies and donors such as the World Bank which have institutionally focused capacity-strengthening activities at the heart of their interventions. Increasingly there is more provision to make the policy more inclusive, which was previously overlooked in the policy and is now regaining a focus. It should be noted that inclusivity is largely discussed when talking about programme delivery and the social protection service users (those who receive assistance). There is significantly less of a focus discussed in the social protection sector about inclusivity of the sector as a whole and encompassing the architecture and workforce. This could be found in more general institutional governmental provision. However, there remains a disjunct between the wider institutional environment and the social protection sector where what is on paper is not being translated into practice.	(Blank) There was no evidence from the literature review whether during policy and strategy development, attention is paid to the practical realities of delivering programmes in specific settings and situations. Or how the enabling environment or architecture outside social protection programmes is articulated within policy development processes.	(Green) There are external and donor-led incentives for improving inclusivity in the form of funding. Projects that have an inclusive angle are more likely to get funded. Political support for improving social protection is contentious as the current draft policy states that a measure it intends to achieve is securing social protection within legislation. The policy recognises the volatility of the political landscape and the pressure that is needed from current administration to secure the future of SP in Nigeria. It welcomes third-party pressure to hold government accountable. In the period of study, there have been political elections. The current level of political will to see through policy measures is unknown.
	Competency	Capability	Performance

(continued)

Table A.2 (continued)

Key:	Blank	Red	Amber	Green
	Unknown. No evidence found in literature review.	Evidence of little to no provision towards this element within the cube.	From review of material there are some provisions towards this element within the cube.	From review of material there are substantial provisions towards this element within the cube.

Build			
Organisational	(Green) Grey unpublished literature suggests that there have been forms of appraisal of the social protection systems' architecture, especially with regards to the state-level offices responsible for implementation of the SP programmes. Gaps in the architecture have been identified using a framework that covers nine domains. It is unknown what the plans are to fill these gaps and how they will be tailored to the different states participating in the unpublished study. Publicly available project documents from development partners offer evidence that there are provisions to heavily invest in features of the SP architecture, nominally the NSR, the digitisation agenda for payments and ID, and MIS.	(Amber) An appraisal of the wider enabling environment (wider policies, intra- and inter-organisational coordination, cross-government systems and procedures, funding streams and pathways, materials and equipment such as buildings and IT) has not been identified in this study. However it can be inferred from the choice of projectised investments on the NSR, MIS and digitisation that these have been identified as critical gaps for delivering social protection, especially in a shock responsive setting. There remain questions through the development of this study as to whether the investment of these features will have tangible outcomes for improving capacity as a whole for delivery because it is unknown whether these features are interoperable with one another and whether teams and processes are being strengthened to use all features concurrently and simultaneously to development. The applicability of these investments is yet to be appraised.	(Amber) There is significant support for improving overall social protection systems and delivery from international agencies that are invested in Nigeria's development such as the World Bank, ILO and the EU as examples of the major donors. To the best of this study's knowledge, the overall performance of the existing social protection system has not been appraised as a whole. It is likely that respective segments of the SP architecture have been appraised by respective invested donors, but it is unclear whether the appraisal is all encompassing. With SRSP becoming a rapidly growing agenda worldwide and within Nigeria, this may be the drive to invest in the SP architecture is an attempt to do the latest popular thing. It runs the risk of premature loadbearing on actors and/or isomorphic mimicry.
	(Amber) For a government workforce there has been no publicly available competency framework that captures specific technical requirements for social protection programmes. There is the provision within policy and implementation manuals of the NASSP of key implementing staff roles and their role competencies and expected responsibilities. Competency-strengthening activities are unspecified and done on an individual basis and seemingly ad hoc.	(Blank) The literature review did not reveal whether a competency framework exists that captures the capabilities important to programme delivery. (These might include capabilities that are not specific to social protection.)	(Red) There is provision in the World Bank CARE project which details performance-related incentives for government individuals. It is not known if this is across all World Bank-funded government activities and projects or teams within the SP sector and/or more widely.
	Competency	Capability	Performance

Table A.3: Summary of evidence that demonstrates initiatives where capacity development is focused on application within the Nigerian social protection sector

Key:	Blank	Red	Amber	Green
	Unknown. No evidence found in literature review.	Evidence of little to no provision towards this element within the cube.	From review of material there are some provisions towards this element within the cube.	From review of material there are substantial provisions towards this element within the cube.

Apply			
Institutional	(Red) The policy does not articulate how it might differ or can be adapted in specific contexts and situations. There is the provision that shock responsive social protection is a growing agenda.	(Amber) What challenges are there to implementing policies or applying them to specific contexts and situations? How and how far are these challenges overcome?	(Amber) What incentives are there to adapt policies and strategies to work better in specific or changing contexts?
Organisational	(Amber) With the limited availability of public literature, it is unknown to what extent new parts of systems and programme architecture (e.g. registries, data collection, analysis, MIS, platforms, payment systems) are used once they have been established. Obtained from online news articles, increased coverage and delivery of assistance in response to the Covid-19 pandemic is an example of how the NSR was able to reach a greater number of people in need. There have been subsequently other humanitarian cash transfer pilot programmes using and contributing to the NSR.	(Red) Beyond having MEL frameworks stipulated in implementation manuals of the NASSP, it is not known whether monitoring takes place of programme delivery and outputs. Another level yet is whether these examine if and how programmes are adapted in the face of specific challenging situations where delivery is disrupted or undermined. MEL frameworks at the time of the study were not publicly found.	(Blank) Hard to appraise without the access to mid-term reports, evaluations and implementation reports.
Individual	(Blank) Technical competencies were not found as part of the literature searches. It is unknown if they exist, whether they are acquired (for example, through training or recruitment) or deployed in practice.	(Red) No mention of specific capabilities that are needed to deliver programmes in more challenging contexts and specific situations. Even though there is the drive for making programmes shock-responsive, there is seemingly an oversight on conflict-affected, fragile contexts.	(Blank) The literature review did not reveal whether there are incentives to adapt and apply technical competencies to real situations. Not covered in the literature and more likely to be reflected upon via stakeholder interviews.
	Competency	Capability	Performance

Table A.4: Summary of evidence that demonstrates initiatives that ‘sustain’ capacity in the Nigerian social protection sector

Key:	Blank	Red	Amber	Green
	Unknown. No evidence found in literature review.	Evidence of little to no provision towards this element within the cube.	From review of material there are some provisions towards this element within the cube.	From review of material there are substantial provisions towards this element within the cube.

Sustain			
Institutional	(Red) There is provision in the Draft 2021 policy for revision of the policy after five years. There is no provision to adequately capture change of circumstances and challenges to delivering social protection that may emerge as a result of incidents.	(Blank) There are no examples of policy, strategy and legislation being explicitly adapted to particular contexts or situations (conflict, displacement, climate-related shocks).	(Red) It is recognised in the Draft Policy 2021 that while the policy is not enshrined in legislation, there is significant political pressure from donors, social protection service users and the sector is open to political influence.
Organisational	(Green) The SRSP agenda is continually improving the ability of the existing portfolio of programmes and building blocks (equipment and resources such as data, computers, payment systems etc) to withstand disruptions that occur because of fragility, conflict, or because of economic, political and climate /environmental shocks. It is not known the extent to which they can effectively do this however.	(Blank) The literature search on capacity initiatives did not generate evidence to appraise whether further mechanisms / resources / arrangements are available to ensure that programmes continue operating in a crisis situation (e.g. alternative data collection or disbursement arrangements).	(Blank) The literature search on capacity initiatives did not generate evidence to appraise whether we know which parts of the system function well under stress and which do not; or whether we use grievance mechanisms to understand which parts of the delivery chain are not working, or have been diverted away from eligible beneficiaries.
Individual	(Blank) Literature searches did not present any evidence of whether staff have the required technical competencies to deliver social protection tasks over the longer term.	(Blank) The literature search on capacity initiatives did not generate evidence to appraise whether staff have functional skills that enable them to navigate shifting circumstances. E.g. can staff negotiate their way safely through a checkpoint? Or use their relationships with another part of government to line up an energy loadshedding schedule with their requirements?	(Blank) The literature searches did not present any information or evidence on the incentives or drivers to keep staff delivering in challenging or difficult environments. Or on what can undermine or block staff competency and capabilities: e.g. how does the safety and security of individual staff influence performance?
	Competency	Capability	Performance

Acknowledgements and Disclaimer

This report was researched and written by Daniela Baur with additional inputs from Rachel Slater. The author is grateful to members of the BASIC Research team for their comments and advice on concepts, methods and analysis. The responsibility for the arguments in the paper are those of the author alone.

This Working Paper was developed by the Better Assistance in Crises (BASIC) Research programme. BASIC is implemented by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and funded by UK aid from the UK government. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IDS or the UK government.

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First published by the Institute of Development Studies in May 2024.

Suggested citation

Baur, D. (2024) *Social Protection in Nigeria: Analysing Capacities*, BASIC Research Working Paper 23, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, DOI: [10.19088/BASIC.2024.005](https://doi.org/10.19088/BASIC.2024.005)